Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Fort Hamilton High School
High school 20K490
8301 Shore Rd.
Brooklyn
NY 11209

Principal: Kaye Houlihan

Dates of Review:
June 1, 2017 - June 2, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Rod Bowen
The Quality Review Report

The Quality Review is a two-day school visit by an experienced educator. During the review, the reviewer visits classrooms, talks with parents, students, teachers, and school leaders and uses a rubric to evaluate how well the school is organized to support student achievement.

The Quality Review Report provides a rating for all ten indicators of the Quality Review Rubric in three categories: Instructional Core, School Culture, and Systems for Improvement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Celebration** to highlight an area in which the school does well to support student learning and achievement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Focus** to highlight an area the school should work on to support student learning and achievement. The remaining indicators are identified as **Additional Finding**. This report presents written findings, impact, and site-specific supporting evidence for six indicators.

Information about the School


School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels</td>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Quality Ratings continued

### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.1 Evaluate the quality of school-level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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### Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations for high quality questioning during instruction to the entire staff. Faculty has established a culture of learning that systematically communicates a unified set of high expectations related to college preparedness to all students.

### Impact

Teachers are trained and supported with strategies to embed student generated questioning into lessons across grades and subject areas and hold themselves accountable to these questioning practices. Students own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level as a result of receiving clear guidance and supports.

### Supporting Evidence

- Expectations for the use of a Question Formation Technique (QFT) are messaged through observation feedback, collegial intervisitation, professional development, and the support provided by instructional coaches. The math and world languages teacher teams referenced QFT as an instructional strategy to determine what connections students make to quadratic transformations, and as a means for students to self-assess, respectively.

- A Question Types and Strategies document informs professional learning and support. It categorizes types of questions by those that help one understand and interpret information, find the answer, think about what they already know, and cite evidence and details from the text.

- The vast majority of curricular documents reviewed showed a schoolwide commitment to QFT, and during instruction, students participated in tasks that required that they question aspects of the content they were learning or the processes they were engaged in.

- All students complete progress and programming reports in collaboration with a staff member twice a year. In addition to tracking their credit accumulation and Regents exams passed, students must also suggest courses to take, state goals for the next term, and name an intervention or support service that they would participate in, if needed. A completed report showed that a student would strive to improve his math and social studies course average by at least five points each in order to bring his overall average up to an 80 or better. Another report showed a student’s intention to attend period nine tutoring in the library twice per week in order to meet his goals.

- A college planning timeline guides students through specific steps beginning in grade nine and ending with senior year. Sample actions in the first year of high school included meeting with a guidance counselor and getting involved in extracurricular activities. The plan leads grade twelve students to actions such as asking for letters of recommendations and comparing financial aid packages. Student are exposed to an internet-based college and career planning tool in grade nine. A sample assignment showed how students would search colleges by various criteria, save colleges of interest, and answer questions pertaining to topics such as percentage of applicants accepted, tuition, and a major of interest. At the time of the Quality Review, 100 percent of seniors had completed a graduation plan. 58 percent of students planned on attending a four year City University of New York (CUNY) school, 14 percent hope to go to private four year colleges in New York City, 13 percent applied to a State University of New York (SUNY) school, three percent aspire to attend four year private schools in New York State, three percent want to go to four year colleges outside of New York, while one percent plan on either joining the military or seeking employment.
Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers’ assessment practices are aligned to the schools’ curricula, but do not consistently offer a clear portrait of student mastery or reflect a varied use of ongoing checks for understanding.

Impact

Students receive actionable feedback, but not all of it is meaningful, particularly with tasks that do not involve writing. Although end of class assessments yield thoughtful modifications to subsequent lessons, checks for understanding during instruction do not consistently result in effective adjustments that meet all students’ learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Students spoke to the prevalence of rubrics in their various classes. A student said that her social studies teacher will change the rubric based on the primary source that they need to write on. Another student noted that in an English class, a rubric is used to grade the types of questions they ask. Students agreed that they are accustomed to using rubrics to self-assess and explain why they gave themselves a specific score, particularly with essay writing.

- In reflecting on their work, students were able to provide actionable next steps for improvement. Examples of how they would do better included adding more information about the topic, including additional evidence to support analysis, and sticking with one side of the argument while providing a counterclaim. Although students received feedback and were able to articulate next steps in all subject areas, the preponderance of clarity regarding their learning was in relation to writing assignments. There was not as clear a portrait of mastery with procedural math tasks.

- A geometry teacher used an exit ticket as an end of class assessment for the day’s lesson on proportion ratios. She noticed some misconceptions that resulted in the following day’s do now being an error analysis question on partitioning line segments. In another math class, a do now was adjusted to show students the various methods of solving consecutive integer problems. This resulted from the teacher noticing that students were struggling with it as she circulated and assessed student levels of understanding during the previous day’s lesson. Similarly, in a science class, a teacher noted that students were not successfully conceptualizing food chains, so for the following lesson, she used text and images to illustrate a food chain more clearly.

- In a social studies class, the teacher checked for understanding by posing questions that ranged from low level such as, “Who charges you property taxes?” to higher-order thinking questions like, “Why would Paul Krugman say to this, and why?” This discussion led to a student stating that he would want to ask Ronald Reagan whether or not he regretted his tax cuts. However, in a science class, the teacher’s check for understanding questions remained closed ended and low level such as, “What did the deer do when they overpopulated?” and “Wolves, how do we classify them?” As a result, students were not aware of how the discussion related to the next learning step of making larger connections to how plants and animals depend on each other and their physical environment.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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Findings

School leaders and faculty strategically integrate writing from sources in curricula that are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. In addition, student generation of thoughtful questions and engagement in discussion are emphasized coherently across grades and subjects.

Impact

College and career readiness are promoted coherently within curricula across grades and subjects for all students. A variety of learners have access to curricula and tasks that are cognitively engaging.

Supporting Evidence

- Across all English Language Arts lesson plans reviewed, there was a shared emphasis on speaking and listening standards that required students to discuss topics, text, and issues building on each other’s ideas and expressing their opinions in a persuasive manner. The plan for an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) lesson would have students working in groups to develop claims and counterclaims for or against the guilt of Lennie from Of Mice and Men. The learning target in an English as a New Language (ENL) lesson plan was for students to identify arguments for and against high school football, and an Advanced Placement (AP) Language and Composition document showed that students would use quotes, motifs, themes, and literary techniques to analyze relationships between characters.

- The curricular documents from a global history two class, a global history four, and a United States history class were all informed by the Common Core literacy standard that prefaches the citation of specific textual evidence to support the analysis of primary and secondary sources. In one global course, the students would collaborate in groups on analyzing text related to absolute monarchs. In the other global plan, students would work in groups to use a questioning strategy to analyze political cartoons. According to the plan for the US history lesson, students would analyze text and images from various reform movements. This coherent emphasis on citing text based evidence was also present in a living environment lesson where students were to be provided with clear expectations for annotating as they would engage a text on the Kaibab deer population in Arizona from 1905 to 1939 to determine the factors responsible for the changing population as well as the carrying capacity of the Kaibab Plateau.

- The use of a QFT was evident in documents throughout subjects in all curricular areas. In a geometry lesson plan, students would discuss questions that they came up with relating to a diagram of a quadrilateral. An honors English task would have students create three critical thinking/analytic/inferential/scaffolded questions related to Greek mythology, Beowulf, Macbeth, or all three. During a chemistry lab, students would have to come up with as many questions as they could about acids and bases, indicators, concentration ions, everyday substances, or the experiment itself.
Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: 1.2 Pedagogy | Rating: Proficient |

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers provide students with opportunities to develop questions intended to deepen their thinking; however, the implementation of this practice was not coherent.

Impact

Although high levels of thinking and participation were evident across classrooms, student ownership of tasks and their own learning processes was not consistent in the vast majority of classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- Students in an ENL class used accountable talk sentence starters to share their observations and questions related to a movie trailer from the *Hunger Games*. In groups, students began to formulate questions such as, "What does the symbol mean?" and "Why did they try to get people to hate Katniss and not Peter as well?" After the teacher modeled how to use a rubric to evaluate responses to analyze a text, students began to use it on other students' work. Criteria for evaluation included the degree to which the questions were open-ended, the amount of evidence used to support the answer, and the degree to which the question encouraged critical thinking and discussion. Ownership of the task was not fully evident on the part of students as most students engaged in the learning activity as a result of the encouragement and prompting from the teacher.

- During a chemistry lesson, although some students did not have a strong conceptual understanding of key concepts such as molarity, groups were engaged in formulating questions as they interpreted changes in acid-base indicator color, and identified solutions as an acid, base or neutral based on the pH. Such questions included, "What would have happened if the sodium hydroxide and hydrogen chloride were not mixed properly?"

- Students in a global history class also evaluated questions of their peers on interpretations of political cartoons. In one instance, a group rated the question, “Is Louis XIV a god?” a two because it was too literal and closed ended. It was based on the fact that the monarch was referred to as the sun. To deepen the question, they offered, “Why would people refer to him as the sun?”

- Unlike students in some classes, those in a math class came up with questions based on a math sentence, yet with no way to check for the quality of their questions. Sentence starters were provided for those who needed it, but there was no rubric or criteria available for students to know whether or not their questions were effectively supporting cognitive engagement.
### Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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#### Findings

Teachers are supported by effective and frequent feedback from supervisory observations of their instructional practices. Feedback accurately captures strengths, challenges, and next steps aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

#### Impact

Feedback articulates clear expectations for teacher practice and promotes professional growth.

#### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders observe teachers on average two to three times per term in addition to the four required formal observations, ensuring that the minimum number of times any teacher is observed by a supervisor and provided with feedback is eight. Teachers commented that observation feedback is very timely, always constructive and never punitive or judgmental. One noted that her feedback always starts with something to celebrate.

- All observation reports include a low inference account of key instructional moments by Danielson components to contextualize guidance toward improvement. In addition, a low inference flow of the lesson is provided that captures both teacher and student actions.

- Commendations in one observation report noted how the teacher’s rapport with students resulted in their comfort in asking questions throughout the lesson. The teacher was also commended on establishing expectations for students to provide each other with feedback to expand their thinking. Recommendations focused on time management, specifically noting how long the do now was as well as establishing a set time in the lesson to respond to homework questions.

- A report for a foreign language teacher praised the teacher for providing students with vocabulary sheets that they add to and refer to as needed. The teacher’s clear modeling of a writing activity was also acknowledged as a strong practice that should be continued. Constructive feedback included incorporating a photograph or drawing to support student facility with the target language as opposed to a matching vocabulary exercise that relies on the translation of the English word for comprehension.
Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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</table>

Findings
The majority of teachers participate in inquiry-based professional collaborations that involve the consistent analysis of assessment data and student work.

Impact
Teacher team work promotes school goals related to writing and questioning, strengthens instructional practices as well as typically improves writing and questioning skills for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- An ENL team focused on English Language Learners, who are at the expanding level, looking at student work protocol that began with presenting the context for the work being analyzed and then included discrete amounts of time for participants to engage in a student work note taking tool. The tool provided space for notes related to successes, challenges, and strategies that resulted in student success, modifications/new strategies, student feedback, and next steps. The task involved students analyzing text by asking and answering questions related to characters from the story. Strengths included students’ abilities to find relevant textual evidence and use academic language. Challenges were with the quality of the analysis and limited exploration of possible answers. Implications for instruction included developing a graphic organizer that allowed multiple students to answer the same question so that they could compare quality as well as requiring that students provide more than one answer to complex questions.

- Notes from another team indicated that they looked at ways to utilize graphic organizers to help students use evidence from text to support their ideas, and evaluate the strength of evidence. They followed an action plan that outlined which resources/actions the team intended to incorporate into their instructional practice, what adjustments they needed to make to best respond to the needs of their team and students, and their timeline for implementation. This meeting yielded a decision to model annotation to collect evidence that would be placed in graphic organizers so that students could refer to it later in their writing assignments. It was also decided to provide articles written between Lexile levels 780 and 1160.

- Teachers spoke of how their collaborative work during their meetings inform intervisitations, where one teacher implements an agreed upon strategy while the visiting teacher takes low inference notes on students’ engagement with the strategy. Afterward, they debrief and look for patterns that inform a new lesson plan. One example was the work done by a team that focused on students’ abilities to dissect evidence in order to explain it.