Quality Review Report

2016-2017

High School for Civil Rights
High school 19K504
400 Pennsylvania Ave.
Brooklyn
NY 11207

Principal: Dr. Michael Steele

Dates of Review:
December 20, 2016 - December 21, 2016

LeadReviewer: Marion Wilson
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

High School for Civil Rights serves students in grade 9 through grade 12. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm.

School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</td>
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</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>Proficient</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>Developing</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>Developing</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### School Culture

**To what extent does the school...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</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>Area of Celebration</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>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

**To what extent does the school...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</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>
</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>
</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>
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<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>
</tr>
<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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

| Quality Indicator: | 1.4 Positive Learning Environment | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings
A positive school culture is evidenced throughout the school. Effective support structures, including the school’s attendance team and child study committee, provide services to address students’ academic and social emotional needs.

Impact
The school’s coordinated efforts to support students has led to improved student attendance, and behavior. While addressing student learning needs, these structures have led to a more positive and respectful relationship between teachers and students where student voice is valued.

Supporting Evidence

- There is de-escalation training in place to help students have better relationships with each other and engage with the school community. Students feel comfortable in sharing their thoughts on their interactions with select teachers without fear of repercussions. The school targeted approximately 40 students who demonstrated negative behavior. These targeted students are responsible to have daily conduct sheets signed by all teachers and then shared with parents. The latest data indicates that the majority of targeted students is modifying their behavior, displaying positive conduct, and is experiencing an increase in positive interactions between fellow students and faculty.

- During the large student group meeting, students shared that the school’s atmosphere has changed and that students have opportunities to help coordinate activities to help other students feel welcome at the school. Student government members share ideas and have input for school improvement. Students have college counselors, advisors, and other staff that offer counseling and bolster students’ self-esteem. The school community adopted the use of the term Come Prepared for the Next Day (CFND) to help remind students to be organized, which is an important characteristic of being prepared for college and career. The school offers various clubs, sports, and enrichment activities to support student leadership and provide opportunities for various student-learning needs. For example, the school has a choir, debate team, mock trial team, and sports teams where some students participate in national and local competitions. Present data indicates there has been a decrease in the number of incidents and behavior infractions as a result of these coordinated efforts to help promote positive academic and personal behaviors.

- Every student is known by at least one adult who helps to coordinate their social-emotional learning. Students said they feel safe at the school. Guidance counselors review transcripts periodically to ensure that all students are on track for graduation. At risk students are monitored closely. Meetings are held with students to discuss options and to support students in developing positive study habits to make improvement. The school counselors monitor student progress to ensure they are on track for graduation and credit recovery classes are offered before school, at lunchtime and afterschool to help students earn missing credits. Additionally, the attendance team tracks students who need support to make sure they attend school regularly. The school’s recording studio and mock courtroom are used as incentives to promote regular attendance for chronically absent students, which has resulted in less truancy and improved punctuality.
Findings
The school is developing its use of uniform assessments to track student progress. As yet teachers do not consistently use formative assessment practices and student self-assessment.

Impact
While teachers are using exit slips, the results are not used consistently to make effective adjustments to instruction that would result in increased learning for all students.

Supporting Evidence
The school inconsistently uses the results from common assessments to reflect students’ actual progress towards goals. The school relies upon aggregated data yielded from scholarship reports, which includes assessment data from teacher created assessments, mock Regents exams, and benchmark exams, to determine student progress which does not always provide accurate data to guide adjustments to curricula or teaching practices. However, some of the results from these assessments are used to guide minimal adjustments and modifications to written curricula plans and to change teachers’ practices across subject areas. For example, the results of a science project based task led to changes in the task itself to become more aligned to the curricula because students were not applying the skills previously taught. Changes were made to incorporate additional work time, provide content notes for students and small group learning activities. This practice of using common assessments to inform curricula adjustments is being developed.

- Teachers have attempted to incorporate various checks for understanding protocols across classrooms such as the use of exit slips, entrance slips and observation of students working in groups. For example, in one math class, students had to circle their level of understanding of material covered in the class and whether they could teach it to someone else, could work independently with some additional support, or need support from the teacher. In a math class where the lesson focused on triangles, students self-assessed the quality of their group work based on how well they were able to identify the steps that they should have used, their ability to graph and find the vertex and state the correct answer. However, the results from the exit ticket were not revisited and students expressed that they were confused about the concepts previously taught. While a few classes had incorporated formative assessment strategies, teachers missed opportunities to follow through on the information gathered to improve student understanding before, during, or after instruction.

- All students are required to complete a Student Evaluation Self-Assessment (SESA) form at the beginning of each marking period for all subject areas in addition to reviewing their report cards and the school’s grading policy when completing it. Students assign ratings using a Likert scale in response to statements such as, “I am always engaged and stay focused in class; I am ready to participate in classroom discussions to get a better grade; and I understand how my work is being evaluated in order to get good grades.” The information from the SESA is to be utilized regularly by teachers to support lesson planning and adjust their instructional practices to better support learning outcomes. Yet, many teachers do not use this information and students do not feel that the SESA results change or improve their learning.
Additional Finding

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

The administration and teachers ensure that lesson and unit plans incorporate the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts across grades and departments. Tasks and activities provide consistent opportunities for all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities to create, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate concepts and information.

Impact

As a result of the school’s template for planning units and lesson plans, staff are making purposeful decisions to build coherence across the school so that students have to use evidence to explain and analyze their thinking. Curricula tasks across grades and subjects require English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities to engage in rigorous tasks and use critical reasoning.

Supporting Evidence

- Curriculum maps contain references to the applicable Common Core Learning Standards for all subject areas. Instructional shifts that are part of the instructional focus are highlighted. Academic vocabulary, citing text evidence, text complexity, linking topics across grades to extend previous understandings, as well as planning for procedural skills and fluency for mathematical concepts are focused on this school year. For example, a sample lesson plan included information about the prior knowledge students should have, varied resources to supplement student learning, as well as steps for guided and independent practice. Most plans include the key vocabulary that students must master in order to understand the content-concepts being taught throughout the unit. Across grades, plans focus on specific higher-order thinking skills to help build coherence. For example, most plans reviewed include requiring students to analyze text and explain their thinking behind the strategies they use to complete assigned tasks.

- Curricula maps include higher order thinking tasks and activities such as; solving quadratic inequalities with one and two variables; citing strong and thorough textual evidence to support the explicit analysis of the text as well as what is inferred; writing and analyzing proofs related to the similarity in triangles using postulates and theorems; and analyzing patterns of circular motion. Most lesson plans and maps referenced Universal Design for Learning (UDL) strategies to support varied student learning styles. For example, in Physics discussion protocols are used to help both verbal and social learners, and audiovisual presentations are employed for auditory and visual learners.

- Across grades and subjects planning materials highlighted modifications to support students with disabilities and ELLs. Color coded materials as well as visual aids such as graphic organizers, and different reading materials to support multiple entry points were in evidence. Additionally, the Spanish version of textbooks, calculators, visual representations and simulations, auditory tutorials, and assorted worksheets were included to ensure all students engaged in higher-order thinking and rigorous learning habits.
Additional Finding

Quality Indicator: 1.2 Pedagogy
Rating: Developing

Findings

Teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple means of expression, and representation for all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities, to actively participate and engage in meaningful discussion and high order thinking.

Impact

Although ELLs and students with disabilities are exposed to challenging tasks, the inconsistent effective application of technology tools, visual aids, and multiple entry points prevents the successful and independent completion of learning tasks and overall improved performance by all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teaching strategies across the school inconsistently address the needs of individual students and subgroups, such as ELLs and students with disabilities. In an English Language Arts (ELA) class, supports, scaffolds and multiple means of engagement for students were evident. The aim of the lesson required students to analyze the text and substantiate connections between the theme and the symbolism used by the student authors. Students utilized the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) question stems affixed to their desks to ask their peers questions after reading excerpts from their own written responses about their chosen symbols representing their native countries. Students had choice in the topics they wanted to write about, and had to compare and note commonalities between their written memory and the memories from the anchor story entitled Rituals of Memory. Sentence starters, word lists, and graphic organizers were effectively utilized by students to produce typed essays using a student friendly checklist, which was also available in their native language. Students were able to speak about the purpose of the lesson and their understanding of how to analyze text to make connections with other texts and their own lives. However, these types of practices were not consistent across all grades and subjects in the school.

- In a Social Studies class, the aim of the lesson was, “How did African Americans, women and young adults gain the right to vote?” Struggling students were seated next to stronger students to work together yet, students were working independently on completing the worksheet. The teacher asked low level questions that did not require inferences or higher order thinking. For example, questions included, “What is the 19th amendment? What are the qualifications to vote? What age is required to vote now?” The directional flow of the discussion remained primarily between teacher and student. Specific opportunities for students to pose their own questions or to deepen their understanding of the topic beyond recalling facts, and dates was not in evidence.

- In an advanced placement class for English, students were asked to analyze their peer’s argumentative essay to critique their own work. The task first required students to verbally share their thinking in response to the following quote, “Things always seem greener on the other side,” and then critique their own writing piece about a separate and unrelated topic. There were missed opportunities for all students to take part in the discussion and use accountable talk to share their responses. Students were unsure of how the discussion would help them critique their own work. One student shared, “There is some hope on the other side.” Another student stated, “Life is better in other places. When I was in Cuba, everyone talked about coming to the United States because it was the best place for them to live but life is hard and it is a lot of work.” Students continued to share their responses without offering their perspective or thinking critically about the previous students’ statement.
Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

The administration consistently communicates high expectations to the staff based on the elements of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Parents receive regular written and verbal communication from the school.

Impact

This culture of high expectations promotes accountability for improving teaching and learning. The effective collaboration between the school and families results in student progress toward achieving the expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders share expectations for staff performance on a regular basis using various methods including online tools, a staff handbook, weekly memos, face to face conversations, and letters that remind teachers of what is expected regarding teaching, learning, assessment, and meeting their professional responsibilities. Support for staff to meet these expectations is provided through professional development opportunities and peer collaboration as well as administrative support. For example, teachers provided input and modified a lesson planning template that was originally created by administration. Teachers shared that they were able to modify the template to suit their own needs.

- One parent shared and others agreed that students are able to take Advanced Placement (AP) courses regardless of ability, to help them prepare for college beginning, as early as grade nine. Parents are happy to report that the school coordinates supports to ensure that their children have multiple opportunities to be successful. An online communication tool allows parents to review grades, view comments, and keep abreast of any outstanding projects or homework assignments. Parents receive emails, newsletters, and letters from teachers so they know of programs, scholarships, and opportunities that will help their children move to the next level.

- Teachers send home information regarding the topics that will be covered in each course during the semester. For example, one social studies teacher provided parents a packet of materials with an overview of the world history course. The packet contained websites, books, and materials which would support the child’s learning experience in the class. Parents shared that the school not only supports their children academically but also supports them socially as each child’s learning styles are factored into lessons. Trainings are held to inform parents of their child’s learning styles. One parent said, “My daughter is an auditory learner and needs opportunities to hear material repeatedly in order for her to retain information. Her teachers are aware of this and provide this support to help her. She is now finding her own and becoming more confident in her work.” Furthermore, parents were pleased that grade nine students could participate in the College Now program, which enables them to take college level courses and walks them through the college application process. Additionally, this program provides families help with developing portfolios highlighting their student’s best work products.
## Additional Finding

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

### Findings

Teachers are attempting to engage in structured professional collaborations and the use of an inquiry approach loosely connected to goals is developing across teacher teams. Teachers analyze assessment data for students whom they teach.

### Impact

This ineffective connection of teacher inquiry collaborations to school goals has not led to the strengthening of teacher capacity in revising or adapting curricula as evidenced by Advance observation reports. There is little evidence indicating progress toward goals for groups of students.

### Supporting Evidence

- Some teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations using an inquiry approach. An interdisciplinary team of teachers from the ELA and social studies departments, were observed attempting to utilize a tuning protocol to look at a student’s written essay in response to reading a graphic novel and comparing and contrasting the novel with Vincent van Gogh’s *The Starry Night* painting. Teachers shared their personal knowledge of the student’s academic strengths and challenges in their respective classes, but missed the opportunity to carefully analyze the reasons for the student’s choices on the graphic organizer and final writing piece. Teachers discussed that the student’s work product lacked the elements required for satisfactory work in both content area classes but did not elaborate on specific reasons. Teachers then immediately began sharing instructional strategies they thought would help improve the student’s writing sample such as offering an alternate graphic organizer, showing a video related to the piece, assigning smaller tasks for homework completion, and incorporating more content background information to support the writing assignment. While teachers shared best practices during the meeting, there is little evidence in Advance that inquiry work is strengthening their practices and improving student progress and achievement.

- The school has a comprehensive schedule for teams to meet a minimum of one time per week. There are specific teams analyzing student performance data to support the work of interdisciplinary, departmental child study, and professional development teams. While teachers meet at least once per week to review and compare classroom assessment data from test scores and assignments across classes, they are focused on culminating marking period grades based on the scholarship report. Teachers are working on using the results from item analysis of mock regents exams to further their work of finding the gaps between student performance on coursework and increasing the number of students demonstrating mastery on NY Regent exams. However there is little evidence that the work they are doing is positively impacting student progress to their goals.

- Teachers across departments try to look at the work products from a cross section of students they service. Analysis of data shows that results from Friday common assessments and uniform exams administered every marking period do not correlate with student performance on standardized tests. As a result, teams are developing more standards aligned school assessments in order to help predict student performance on state exams. Teachers recently started focusing on groups of students who were struggling across departments. The analysis chart included the student’s background and profile of observed strengths and gaps depending on the subject area. Teachers’ next steps are to address the key learning and instructional needs of these students but the impact of this work is not yet evident as this practice is new across the school.