Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Academy of Urban Planning
High school 32K552
400 Irving Ave.
Brooklyn
NY 11237

Principal: Jorge Sandoval

Dates of Review:
April 20, 2017 - April 21, 2017

Lead Reviewer: AJ Hepworth
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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</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>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>Area of Focus</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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
School Quality Ratings continued

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Systems for Improvement</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<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>Proficient</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>Proficient</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>
</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>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Findings**

Personal attention by all staff members supports a safe and inclusive school environment connected to culture-building, discipline, and social-emotional support. Professional development, family outreach, and learning experiences are aligned to a Growth Mindset ideology.

**Impact**

Students and adults have a respectful and valued learning environment, which supports their academic and personal growth.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Each Tuesday during a dedicated period, students attend a variety of clubs developed by both students and teachers based on mutual interests, such as the Young Men’s Ambassador club, the Young Women of Excellence club, and the Show Time club for artists interested in showcasing their talents in the performing arts including dance, theater, modeling, fashion, and stage handling. Additionally, a girls’ soccer team was recently created because of student interest. The team is expected to compete in the Police Athletic League (PAL) next year.

- Efforts to increase a safe learning environment that encourages increased student attendance include personal outreach by staff and weekly attendance team meetings. Staff is assigned specific students who struggle with maintaining consistently high attendance and they make early morning phone calls to encourage coming to school as well as follow up with those that are absent. Additionally, incentives are created to improve each student’s year to date attendance through a series of prizes and events. During the month of March, students with year to date attendance between seventy and eighty-five percent were targeted for improvement by at least four percent. Some of the incentives include a staff pie-face tossing contest along with weekly prizes. Celebrations during the month included a breakfast, movie screening, ice cream social, and field trip.

- Several course offerings are provided to students to purposefully support their academic and personal behaviors. Grade nine and ten students are enrolled in an Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) college bound program to target skills supporting students both inside and outside of the classroom. Students receive instruction encouraging good study habits and approaches to support their strengths and address their areas of weakness. Teachers also receive professional development aligned to the AVID curriculum through online trainings, tutorial resources, lesson plans, and on demand modules. Additionally, community members are encouraged to be a part of the AVID experience by serving as guest speakers to promote student awareness of the value of positive and successful habits.
Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 1.2 Pedagogy | Rating: | Developing |

Findings

Across classrooms, student work products and thinking are inconsistently supported by efforts to engage students in discussions and differentiated tasks, especially English Language Learners.

Impact

There are uneven levels of engagement with appropriately challenging tasks and uneven demonstration of higher-order thinking skills in student work products reflected by students’ thinking and participation across classes.

Supporting Evidence

- In a few classes, documents translated into Spanish were provided for English Language Learners (ELLs) to help them understand the lesson. However, the majority of ELL students were not given additional support to help them remain engaged during instruction. During an English Language Arts (ELA) Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, groups of students were provided reading scaffolds with vocabulary supports, including some translated words. Similarly, in another ELA class, students were provided Spanish translated versions of the act from *Othello* they are reading. Students were able to highlight and annotate their text to better understand the context of the play and develop an understanding of the character’s attitude. Yet, in most of the other content areas, scaffolds and multiple entry points for students were not in evidence. For example, during a science class, students were to annotate important details from a case study, several students stated they were highlighting everything because it is all important while others did not annotate at all. Students in an English as New Language (ENL) class had to support their argument with textual evidence and although several students had dictionaries at their desk they did not use them. In addition, they were unable to explain specific related terms, which were relevant to their comprehension of the text.

- Most questions reflected generalizations and did not promote higher-levels of critical thinking during instruction. Students in a math class did not respond when the teacher asked them to explain what the problem was asking. After the question was repeated, one student did identify a foundational part of the problem. During one English class students discussed their opinion of a text after reading and developing a writing sample. Although some of the students stated they changed their opinion based on their peer’s feedback, it was not reflected in their writing.

- Across classes, few students participated in whole group discussions and teachers relied predominantly on a few select students. Purposeful selection of students for fishbowl discussions, led to those students being involved in a discussion, while most students outside of the inner circle were passive. Similarly, few opportunities for students to engage one another in their thinking were provided. When students did collaborate it was often to clarify the task, ask for understanding of a term, or limited to low levels of Webb’s *Depth of Knowledge* questions such as, “What is your definition?” or “Which sentence did you pick?”
### Findings

School leaders and staff ensure performance activities are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts with purposeful decisions emphasizing rigorous habits, higher-order thinking skills, and Writing is Thinking strategies with all writing samples.

### Impact

Consistent promotion of college and career readiness skills for all students are embedded into instructional planning documents. Tasks require explanations and critical thinking by all students, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities.

### Supporting Evidence

1. **Lesson planning documents** emphasize the integration of writing, specifically Writing is Thinking through Strategic Inquiry (WITsi) to ensure students demonstrate their thinking. A lesson plan created by an English teacher with her ENL colleague includes an exit slip requiring students to write two expanded sentences using two of the following conjunctions: because, but, so, however, or since. Likewise, a science plan tasks students to employ WITsi strategies to write an expanded sentence highlighting the prevalence of symptoms in the family tree of an individual using WITsi strategies.

2. **Most lesson plans** follow a consistent template and address the Common Core Learning Standards and stress the expected learning outcomes for students. For example, in a social studies plan the learning outcome focused on students being able to argue the reason why the United States should have become involved in the Korean War. The standard underlying the lesson addressed the ability of a student to support claims in the analysis of substantive topics using valid reasoning and sufficient, relative evidence.

3. **Fishbowl, Socratic seminars, and gallery walks** are planned for instruction in a variety of classes based on textual and visual resources and prompted by open-ended questions. Students are expected to share their findings and discuss with a partner. A lesson plan on the Vietnam War requires students take part in a gallery walk, read personal accounts of the Vietnam War and construct a narrative paragraph with a clearly established mood from the perspective of the subject or photographer. The assessment employed a quick-write rubric aligned to narrative writing.

4. **Academic vocabulary** is an essential focus in all lesson-planning documents supporting the emphasis of higher-order thinking across grades. Terms related to real world applications and conditions are consistently addressed. However, in only a few classes was the vocabulary presented and supported in a manner useful for ELL students.
Findings

Although rubrics are commonly referenced as a tool during assessment practices, they are loosely aligned with students’ understanding and feedback across classes. Additionally, teachers’ assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding during instruction.

Impact

Assessment practices are used in a limited capacity, thus diminishing the amount of feedback provided students and teachers regarding student achievement. Uneven adjustments to instruction limit all students’ learning needs being addressed.

Supporting Evidence

- Rubrics are used across many classes with a variety of assignments. However, some students are unable to explain in detail the role rubrics play in providing feedback to advance their achievement. Students shared several assignments with feedback and explained that although the teacher often includes written feedback, some of the vocabulary used is beyond their understanding. Additionally, when the feedback is written in script, students are unable to fully interpret it. ENL students are especially challenged in their ability to explain the feedback they received on their completed work. For example, a next step provided in the feedback on an assignment stated, “develop more concrete next steps,” and the student was not able to articulate the meaning of that statement. Furthermore, when work was graded, it did not always accurately reflect the grading policy. For example, a math rubric indicated zero credit if the explanation is lacking even if the work is accurate. The teacher inconsistently gave one point of credit and occasionally, a comment and a next step. Feedback cards were photocopied and attached to assignments but not connected to the feedback that was provided the student.

- There were missed opportunities to make adjustments during instruction while teachers were posing questions and working with small groups. For example, some teachers did not respond to misconceptions uncovered during class discussions. Many teachers check understanding by looking over student work without providing next steps for students to improve their performance and often provide feedback such as, “good,” “great,” or “wonderful” with no explanation of what the student did well.

- During a science class, students were provided feedback aligned with a rubric from their recent collaboration work that addressed renewable resources. With partners, students worked on identifying the areas for improvement based on the feedback written and the scores received on the various criteria. The improved presentation was resubmitted for an increased grade. Some students explained they could have added more bullet points to various images or provide clearer explanations. Overall, all students were able to make effective adjustments to their work. However, similar effective opportunities were not evident across other classes. For example, in a senior ELA class, students were reviewing their peer’s work and one girl was directed to edit it but did not understand what was needed to be corrected or why. Another student was being directed to change the tense of a word by the teacher, although he could not understand why or how to make the correction, eventually leading the teacher to make the correction herself.
Findings
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations regarding professionalism, building culture, and pedagogy to the entire staff. Staff establishes a culture of learning that consistently communicates high expectations towards college and career readiness through partnerships for all students.

Impact
School leaders established systems for training, and staff are held accountable regarding schoolwide high expectations. Additionally, teachers meet regularly to provide ongoing and detailed feedback to students so they are prepared for their college or career after high school.

Supporting Evidence

- Partnerships between coaches and teachers contribute to improved pedagogy and student learning opportunities. An increase in student-centered lessons and the development of student thinking using strategies based on WITsi is a schoolwide goal. Core content teachers receive training and coaching from outside agencies that address these topics. During a recent WITsi training with the social studies department, teachers were provided strategies to employ to ensure the appropriate exit ticket is utilized. Teachers lead professional development on the instructional goals as well. Several teachers led professional development sessions on topics such as sentence fragments and sentence expansions through an inquiry approach. A recent teacher-led professional development session consisted of modeling how cognate awareness is an organic bridge for activating knowledge in a student's first language and transferring that awareness to their second language.

- Staff has been trained in the Growth Mindset approach. A science teacher shared how previously they would tell students they are smart, which could lead to a student misinterpreting the statement to mean they don’t have to work hard. Through training, teachers use considerable effort to compliment students on the quality of their work. Similarly, teachers who have received training in restorative justice no longer discuss the causes for the punishment but rather discuss next steps and what is necessary to move forward by embracing the underlying belief in the restorative process.

- Students are prepared for their post-secondary education through course offerings designed to teach college and career readiness skills. All students in grade nine and ten are enrolled in an AVID course; grade eleven students are partnered with curricula from OneGoal. Seniors continue to receive support and coaching to be successful with completing college admission applications and job readiness with help from the guidance team, their teachers, and social workers from a partnership with Make the Road New York. Students visit colleges in the region as a part of a three-day overnight tour. The fully funded tour provides experiences into an enriching and fun series of visits that can often be considered overwhelming and confusing. During each tour students are provided opportunities to compare and contrast topics discussed in their classes with the learning they acquire on the tours.
Findings
The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations during common planning time providing opportunities for ideas and practices to be generated that support their professional growth.

Impact
Inquiry collaborations led by lead teachers strengthened their instructional capacity and the promotion of school goals. Distributed leadership opportunities provide probationary and veteran teachers a voice in key decisions that affect student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers often suggest ideas for events and support structures that would contribute to their own professionalism, student learning, and culture. Serving in a multitude of positions, the staff wear a variety of hats and contributes to furthering the mission of the high school, including unique approaches to ensure increased student attendance. All teachers establish a club of interest along with input from students and provide opportunities for students to attend and participate.

- Teams of teachers meet regularly to discuss student work and create new goals that include the WITs strategies across contents. During a grade team meeting, teachers used an inquiry approach to assess student growth on the use of appositives, teachers reviewed written samples from math, science, ELA, social studies, and Spanish. Teachers used a tennis chart to track their work and determine their next steps as a team with upcoming units. Teachers determined, instead of shifting to the next unit with the term “because,” they would do one more round of appositives and then expand to including conjunctions. They also agreed to develop a tracker to be used to monitor verb noun agreement.

- Minutes from several teacher team meetings suggest improvements to instruction planned based on next steps. For example, a teacher team’s focus for inquiry was incorporating more academic vocabulary within US History, Earth science, and global studies courses. The team determined, since the focus will be on collecting information from two content areas rather than one, they will focus solely on the acquisition of tier three vocabulary for each course.