Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Benjamin Banneker Academy
High school 13K670
71-77 Clinton Ave.
Brooklyn
NY 11205

Principal: Kinsley Kwateng

Dates of Review:
March 30, 2017 - March 31, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Jennifer Eusanio
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

Benjamin Banneker Academy 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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
<td></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>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>
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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>Additional Finding</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>
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### Systems for Improvement

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

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

| Quality Indicator: | 1.3 Leveraging Resources | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings

Resources, including the use of community and college-level partnerships, hiring practices, and intervention programming are aligned to and support the school's goals of student engagement and post-secondary readiness.

Impact

Effective supports ensure students access to meaningful learning opportunities, college and career readiness, and lead to stronger work products.

Supporting Evidence

- The formation of multiple partnerships offers students various opportunities to engage in experiences to support their interests in colleges and build expertise in particular careers. For students interested in the medical field, the school has partnered with New York University, which offers a robotics program as a summer engineering internship. In addition, other partnerships such as the Youth Medical Board, Brooklyn Medical Plaza, and a Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM) program through the Brooklyn Navy Yard, support students in gaining experiences in the medical and engineering fields. Students reported that these opportunities expose them to a network of experts and help them prepare for college or future careers.

- Numerous course offerings ensure students have options for post-secondary readiness. Advanced placement (AP) courses such as US History, calculus, biology, physics, as well as an advanced digital cinema course prepare students for college-level work. Similarly, other credit bearing, college-level classes through outside partnerships and a dual credit program are offered to eleventh graders. Additionally, Scholastic Aptitude Testing (SAT) preparation courses coach students around the skills needed to succeed on their college entrance examination.

- To promote college readiness, hiring practices were reconsidered to leverage resources. This year, a committee of personnel use a tiered approach to interview and then make recommendations for hire of new staff. Due to an influx of students with disabilities, there was a focus on hiring content specialists who are dual licensed in special education. These staff members were assigned to self-contained or Integrated Co-teaching classes based on their content specialty.

- New this year, students with disabilities were programmed into term three and four courses by doubling up classes during the fall term as well as being assigned to remedial sessions to prepare them for the Living Environment, Algebra, and US History Regents exams in June versus using previous practices where they were assigned to summer school. Furthermore, after school and Saturday tutoring programs assist students with assignment make-up and credit recovery. Students involved in AP courses received additional support during tutoring.
Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
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<td>Rating:</td>
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<td>Developing</td>
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**Findings**

Teaching strategies and scaffolds do not consistently provide multiple entry points to challenging tasks and classroom discussion for all students.

**Impact**

Teacher pedagogy reflects missed opportunities for all students to participate in higher-order thinking and cognitively engage in challenging tasks.

**Supporting Evidence**

- In an Algebra II class, the teacher reviewed previously taught concepts to build upon students’ prior knowledge in understanding probability, which included showing a video to provide an explanation on the concept. As an additional form of differentiation, heterogeneous ability-based groups of students worked collaboratively to draw conclusions, solve problems, and address misconceptions among each other. Some students explained how to solve certain problems and provided a rationale for why the probability of a particular outcome would occur based on the given data set. Others referred the concepts shown in the video to explain their rationale for obtaining their own outcomes. Across the class, students met the objective by comparing results to the answer in the problem solving task. However, in other classrooms, teaching strategies and scaffolds led to student responses that only reflected the use of recall or basic inferences, unlike the skills demonstrated in the math class.

- In a self-contained US History class, the teacher asked students to take on roles and act as a committee of American anti-slavery society members faced with different scenarios where they must come to consensus on a position. The teacher prompted students with questions to assist them with the process of reflecting on the position and helping them select information relative to citing evidence to support their claims. In one group, a student challenged another student’s position and stated, “You have no evidence to back up your claim.” Other students in the group concurred and stated that the student needed to support his position with text evidence. However, in a chemistry class, although the students viewed a video and slides on chemical equilibrium, several students were unable to articulate how the principle they learned could be used to predict the effect of stress on a system, as the teacher did not provide specific supports for students to work independently to meet the objective of the lesson.

- Across some classes, uneven student engagement and use of critical thinking were prevalent. Although students worked in groups to share their noticings in a US History class, some students did not fully engage with others and copied notes from their peers. In some English Language Arts classes and a Living Environment course, the majority of questioning was teacher directed, which precluded student-to-student responses.
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 curricula is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards, integrate instructional shifts, and consistently reflect rigorous habits in unit plans.

Impact

Content-based tasks emphasize higher-order thinking for all students and promote college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The school staff adaptation of new curricula this year ensures tasks are in alignment with the Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards and includes, in English Language Arts, the use of the *Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Collections* program based on the *New York City Scope and Sequence*. Other subject areas utilize units of study provided through *New Visions* and a blend of other resources. A science unit plan on biotechnology contains tiered focus standards, such as prioritizing certain content standards relative to protein synthesis and mutations, as they are required concepts for passing the Regents exam, while including the history of life on Earth as a lower priority.

- English Language Arts (ELA) instructional shifts relative to complexity, text-based answers, and writing from sources are emphasized in unit and lesson plans. An ELA task requires students to read and annotate a memoir, *Monster*, with a focus on making connections to other memoirs they have read. Similarly, a US History task focuses on annotating a secondary source and citing text evidence to support a position while developing a written argument as their assignment during group work.

- Learning objectives and questions align to Webb’s *Depth of Knowledge* level three highlighting critical thinking skills in tasks. This was evidenced in a lesson plan that had students conducting research on an immigrant group and reading a poem, *The New Colossus*. The US History class’ task includes the following question, “Does the poem reflect the reality of immigration?” In a living environment unit plan, a task requires students to act as researchers to collect information about the Hudson River and determine how the invasion of zebra mussels affect one biotic or abiotic factor in the river’s ecosystem. The culminating task involved students’ writing a scientific explanation and using evidence from multiple sources including texts and videos to support their claim.
Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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Findings

Although rubrics align with the curricula, teachers are in the process of refining their assessment practices to develop consistency in the implementation of checks for understanding and self-assessment.

Impact

Limited feedback hinders opportunities for students to receive actionable next steps and that effective adjustments are made to meet all students’ learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- The use of rubrics for grading purposes is reflected on student work in folders and on posted work on bulletin boards. Some student work reflects warm and cool feedback with next steps referencing a curriculum-aligned rubric. On a social studies task, next steps focused on including at least three documents to improve the quality of the extended response. An algebra task contained feedback which stated that next steps should be to justify the answer when a question asks why. However, a review of student work across classrooms and student folders only reflected these types of next steps on some student work. Instead, other work products contained grades and a check for correct answers, when feedback was provided next steps were vague or unclear.

- During an interview, students stated that rubrics were useful in knowing what is expected to complete a task correctly. Some students were able to share how teachers used rubrics to share grades and based on this feedback were able to know and revise their work to get a higher grade. One student stated, based on the rubric, that she needed to add more text-based evidence to her writing which helped improve her grade. Another student mentioned that using higher-level vocabulary moved his writing further and improved the grade. Yet, other students stated that teachers providing feedback was not a common practice across all their classes. One student shared that his teacher gives out packets and offers no feedback, but just grades each assignment. Other students shared similar experiences where feedback was limited and shared that they would like to obtain more feedback from their teachers to help them improve on their grades.

- During classrooms visited, teachers actively walked around to check on student understanding and monitor that all students were on task. In one math class, the teacher conferred with students regarding a probability problem. Using prompting questions, the teacher guided the students to revise their misconception on how to solve a probability word problem. However, in other classes, teacher conferring was limited to visually checking to see if students were on task. Additionally, in a physics class, students used a rubric to assess each other’s projects. However, students shared this practice is not consistent across other subject areas.
**Additional Finding**

<table>
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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**

School leaders communicate high expectations to staff relative to student engagement and planning of tasks. Staff members communicate expectations connected to course expectations and offer ongoing feedback to families.

**Impact**

Training and other structures support staff and establish a system of accountability for teachers. Parents’ awareness of their children’s progress towards course completion assists in gauging next steps towards post-secondary readiness.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Memoranda and emails communicate schoolwide expectations for meeting the school’s instructional foci on effective planning for student-centered learning and engagement. In addition, expectations are shared and reinforced during one-to-one meetings with school leaders and during professional learning sessions. As part of their professional development teachers conduct a lesson study where their lesson plans are co-constructed and feedback is offered by peers and school leaders with the emphasis on planning clear learning objectives and activities that are geared to incorporate group work and student discussion. A review of professional learning documents reflect training on how to analyze and use data to plan lessons with rigor, which has been an additional emphasis this year.

- Instructional walkthroughs conducted by school leaders allow for monitoring where staff members are in relation to the instructional foci. A review of feedback that was shared with staff includes focusing in on growth areas such as developing learning objectives that are clear and providing students with the opportunity to discuss content with one another. Similarly, post-observation feedback for individual teachers reinforces schoolwide expectations for planning and student engagement. Teachers shared that feedback was helpful in providing next steps to meet schoolwide expectations.

- Parents shared that the school communicates its expectations through multiple ways such as letters, emails, and a school messaging system. In addition, workshops on the college application process and town halls make parents aware of the expectations leading to post-secondary readiness. In addition, online grading programs and teacher meetings enable parents to know how their children are progressing and areas for improvement. One parent shared how the teacher informed her of the possibility of her child not passing a course. With this information she quickly supported her child so she was prepared for upcoming examinations which led passing the course. Similarly, other parents shared that ongoing meetings with teachers have helped their children pass their courses.
Additional Finding

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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

The majority of teachers are on content-level planning teams and members are in the emerging stages of consistently analyzing a combination of student data and work for targeted groups of students.

Impact

Although teacher teams are working to promote the school’s goals, instructional capacity is limited and has yet to result in consistent and improved teacher practice or progress toward student goals.

Supporting Evidence

- Content-level teams review lesson plans which are co-constructed collectively by teachers. This year teams are engaging in four cycles of sharing pedagogical practices where feedback is provided on lesson structures and protocols. A review of agendas and teacher team notes share teachers’ takeaways that include expectations for students’ work and protocols for group work. In addition, several takeaway slips indicate that meetings are helpful in discussing ideas with colleagues and learning how to roll out protocols and activities with students. However, takeaways are limited in their scope of establishing that instructional practices are consistently implemented across classes.

- During a science team meeting teachers used a tuning protocol to review and discuss a selection of student reports on deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA). The team discussed the lesson components and expectations for the construction of the essay. Teachers offered several warm feedback comments on the lesson components including the use of a video and the amount of student writing. Yet, next steps reflected unclear strategies for improving student writing.

- This year the focus for teams has been on lesson study. Analysis of learning objectives and the quality of activities have been foci for the first two cycles of teacher team work. During the third cycle of lesson study, student work was incorporated to gauge the quality of tasks and determine the effectiveness of lessons created by the team. However, reviewing work products and student analysis of data as a consistent practice across teams has only begun during the third cycle. In addition, structures to determine student progress across time has yet to be implemented.