Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Teachers Preparatory High School
Secondary School 23K697
226 Bristol St.
Brooklyn
NY 11212

Principal: Carmen Simon

Dates of Review:
April 26, 2017 - April 27, 2017

Lead Reviewer: 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

Teachers Preparatory High School serves students in grade 6 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>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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
</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>
</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>Area of Focus</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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.4 Positive Learning Environment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Findings**

School faculty coordinates culture building, discipline, and social-emotional supports for all students. There are structures in place for advisory to support students' academic success.

**Impact**

Structures and systems for culture-building result in a safe and inclusive environment for both student and adult learning. As a result of staff meetings with students across grade levels each semester, every student is known well by at least one staff member.

**Supporting Evidence**

- There is a dedicated guidance counselor for each grade that follows students through their years at the school. In addition, the school’s social worker who works with the Single Shepherds initiative has helped to ensure that students have someone they can interact with on a regular basis to support their social, emotional, and academic needs. The social worker meets with students, especially those who are overage and under-credited. School staff in collaboration with the guidance team and the mental health liaison helps to coordinate and implement a menu of services and programs for the students.

- Students were enthusiastic about the clubs and feel they have helped shape their mindset and disposition toward the school. Most students believe that taking part in school activities has positively contributed to better behavior. For example, there is a young men’s organization, girls’ leadership club, in addition to the National Honor Society and Future Educators Club. All of these clubs help to celebrate students and help them develop positive work habits and communication skills. Students also have the opportunity to informally connect with an adult staff member through participation in these school activities. Students were eager to explain that the administration listened to their ideas and supported the formation of the clubs they had suggested. For example, it was the students who wanted a young men’s organization and a girl’s leadership club at the school.

- During the large group student meeting, the majority of students shared that the school was a safe place for them to learn and grow. Although a few students were unaware that the school had an active student government organization, they all felt they could freely share their ideas and thoughts about what could be improved at the school. Regularly scheduled assembly programs, incentives, pizza parties, and encouragement from school staff were highlighted by the students. They explained the positive impact of having behavior infractions brought to trial before the Brownsville Youth Court. One student said, “Students who act as lawyers give other students punishment for violations to the discipline code and you are less likely to do the same thing again in the future.” As a result, there have been fewer incidents reported on the Online Occurrence Reporting System (OORS) and less repeat offenders. School staff and students alike could articulate the plan, which has helped students understand the consequences for negative behavior but also promoted and celebrated their good decision-making.
## Findings

Some teachers utilize an inquiry protocol during professional collaborations. Teacher teams analyze a limited amount of student performance assessment data across grades and subjects.

## Impact

The work of teacher teams inconsistently focuses on collaborative inquiry to promote the achievement of school goals and implementation of the Common Core instructional shifts. Consequently, the work of teacher teams does not typically result in improved teacher practice or progress towards goals for groups of students.

## Supporting Evidence

- Due to confines related to scheduling and programming, teachers do not have regular opportunities to meet and plan the administration of schoolwide assessments. Analysis of student data from assessments varies by teachers, grades, and departments. There was some analysis of performance tasks related to the instructional shifts. However, there is limited evidence to support the strengthening of the instructional capacity of teachers as reflected in a series of observation reports. For example, teachers shared that they continue to receive ratings of developing from evaluations, as they struggle to use data to inform revisions to lesson and unit plans in response to student learning needs. Teachers shared that they are in the process of adopting an inquiry approach based protocol to help them examine student work products across most grades and departments. Student work products and grades for achievement have not improved as a result of teacher team work. Teachers have little evidence to show improvement of tasks over time.

- During the teacher team meeting, part of the time was spent addressing administrative tasks and announcements. There were limited artifacts demonstrating teachers’ use of a protocol to examine student work products and then use research-based information to inform teacher practices on a regular basis. Teachers shared that they are deepening their understanding of assessment for student understanding and engaging students in meaningful learning activities. Furthermore, during common planning meetings, teachers continue to work on deepening their understanding of item skills analysis across subject areas to view how students are performing and then design group activities to meet students’ learning needs. The teacher team reviewed math problems students solved dealing with the concept of polynomials. A few teachers noticed that students were struggling with conceptualizing inequalities and mixing up greater than and less than equations. Teachers then discussed suggestions and ways to help students remember the differences in solving, however the impact of this work has not yet been realized.

- Teacher teams do not consistently utilize a protocol to examine student work. Teacher teams primarily rely on data, which is outdated or misaligned to the Common Core. Teacher teams were not able to articulate a clear picture of student performance or progress outside of reading levels. Teams are beginning to identify assessment resources they want to utilize in order to yield accurate data on student performance to help them determine student proficiency and mastery across the school. For example, there was an item analysis conducted for a mock test administration earlier in the school year, but teacher teams did not readily review the data and use the information to track student progress across multiple subject areas. In addition, some assessment data was no longer relevant as the test was administered months before and some teachers have not yet reviewed the results.
Findings
Lesson and unit plans are aligned to the school’s priority Common Core Learning Standards across grades and subjects. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize varying levels of Webb’s Depth of Knowledge (DOK) to support a diversity of learners.

Impact
Content standards are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, integrate rigorous and challenging tasks for most leaners, and builds coherence, thus promoting college and career readiness for students.

Supporting Evidence

- School staff adopted and incorporated the use of various curricula resources that are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. Curricula maps align to units in order to build coherence across grades and content areas with students having opportunities to cite textual evidence and engage in analysis. The school adopted a common lesson planning template from the Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC) to help support the planning of challenging tasks across most grades. Common elements in lesson plans include tasks, materials, and opportunities for students to practice and then a discussion of the lesson’s topic. Additionally, lesson plans contain the essential questions, key learning objectives, sequence of learning activities, and assessment to be used. Lesson plans and course syllabi are located on the school’s website in order to help build coherence across the middle and high schools.

- Curricula, across and within grade levels help to promote college and career readiness for most students. For example, geometry curricula documents demonstrated that students have opportunities to make sense of problems, reason abstractly, construct viable arguments, and be able to critique the reasoning of others. Similarly, in a trigonometry unit plan units are organized in progression of based on topic complexity. Learning objectives require students to calculate probabilities, analyze methods of collecting data, evaluate relative and conditional relative frequencies, and make inferences about a treatment to data sources. Written documents reference Bloom’s Taxonomy and Hess’ Cognitive Rigor Matrix and provide opportunities for learners to engage in rigorous tasks.

- Most instructional activities contain planned scaffolds for students, which include the use of varied graphic organizers, translated materials, and applications from online portals to help students’ access challenging content material. Lesson plans and tasks cull out vocabulary work for students who require additional assistance. Most plans explicitly reference entry points for groups of students through video presentations, read alouds, or by chunking reading passages into smaller sections.

- Guiding questions and subject tasks promote higher-order thinking. In a calculus lesson plan, students engage in a jigsaw activity with multi-level questions, which incorporate the use of first and second derivative tests. Students are expected to analyze the behavior of the given functions as well as create new functions followed by reflection and discussion of them with their peers. In a global studies task students are expected to analyze the rubric of a Document-Based Question (DBQ) and write another rubric in student-friendly language. Students are then to use the rubric and complete an outline to develop a DBQ essay. Students are provided with graphic organizers and reference charts to assist in the completion of these tasks independently or with a group.
Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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Findings

Across some classrooms, teaching strategies inconsistently incorporate multiple entry points into the curricula for diverse learners. There are uneven levels of student thinking and participation across classrooms.

Impact

While tasks are being planned to engage a diversity of learners, effective teaching strategies are not utilized for students to demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in their work products. There are limited opportunities for high levels of active student engagement across classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- In the classes visited, there was inconsistent evidence of students’ demonstrating high levels of participation and engagement and this varied depending on the class, teacher, and subject. There were missed opportunities for students to build on each other’s thinking and learn from one another through structured conversations. In a self-contained class, questions were rapid-fire low level questions between the teacher and select students. While in an Integrated Collaborative Teaching (ICT) class, all students were actively engaged asking each other thought-provoking questions that would affect their research project.

- The use of data and achievement levels are not used on a regular basis to develop purposeful learning groups addressing student strengths and incorporate choice. Activities, grouping, timing, and pacing are not always effectively structured limiting the learning that can take place. Teaching strategies and instructional tasks are beginning to meet the needs of individual students and subgroups, such as English Language Learners (ELLs), students with disabilities, and high achievers. Opportunities for students to engage in DOK level three and four tasks on their own, in pairs, or in groups was unevenly observed across the classes visited. However, in a math class, students were asked to construct arguments and critique each other’s reasoning about the concept of polynomials and binomial patterns. The teacher provided concrete examples for students to reference, front loaded the needed vocabulary terms with examples and non-examples. Students were able to persist through the task because they had the relevant vocabulary words to address the topic in discussion with their partners. This level of engagement and high levels of thinking were not observed across the majority of classes.

- There were missed opportunities across classes for teachers to facilitate student-led discussions with accountable talk stems or through the use of protocols. Therefore, students do not regularly explain their thinking or have meaningful conversations with their peers. In one English Language Arts (ELA) class, including students with disabilities and ELLs, students were using laptops to listen to a Serial Podcast and collect evidence to support their writing pieces. Students had choice as to which perspective they wanted to take, the tools they would use, and the structure for their argumentative essays. Students were observed generating questions, making inferences, and supporting assumptions to embody their point of view while conducting research to complete the culminating product. Students were highly engaged in the topic regarding the guilt or innocence of the central character. However, this level of engagement was seen in only a few other classes.
Additional Finding

Quality Indicator: 2.2 Assessment

Rating: Developing

Findings

School staff continue to develop their use of common assessment tools to measure student progress towards goals across grades and subject areas. Teachers do not regularly check for student understanding during lessons and allow students to self-assess their work.

Impact

Teachers inconsistently use data to make adjustments to curricula and their instructional practices based on real-time common assessments. Effective on the spot adjustments in response to student learning needs were unevenly implemented across classes.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers group students according to beginning of the year data and do not have current information to adjust decisions made at the classroom level. School staff primarily uses students’ Lexile levels to group students for instruction across most subjects from a beginning of the year diagnostic reading assessment. Item analysis results are not frequently utilized to monitor student progress over time. The school is developing an action plan to delineate assessments, including performance-based tasks, in all content areas and grade levels by frequency and the periods for each assessment. Since assessments across subjects are not administered on a consistent basis, teachers are not able to use the results of data to revise and add instructional strategies to ascertain academic achievement. Some teachers are still not utilizing common assessments and developing their own tools to assess student progress resulting in uneven understanding of progress to their goals.

- There were missed opportunities throughout classes visited for teachers to collect information and make adjustments to lessons to ensure students understand the content being taught. In one lesson where students were solving quadratic equations in standard written form, the teacher walked around looking over students’ shoulders as they worked but didn’t offer immediate feedback. The teacher asked students to put their thumbs up or down to indicate whether they understood the lesson activity. Some students didn’t respond to the prompt and the teacher resumed walking around the classroom without supporting a group of students who were unable to complete the task. In another classroom, the teacher asked low-level questions about the impact of Greek culture on the modern world but did not correct students who answered in one-word answers or incomplete sentences. Students wrote their responses similar to how they responded verbally. The teacher did not provide a model for the students to help them craft more successful writing products.

- Teachers’ assessment practices inconsistently utilize the data from ongoing checks for understanding to make effective adjustments and revisions to their instruction. Some teachers attempt to use cold call, exit slips, and small group conversations to gauge student understanding during a lesson, however this is not occurring in classrooms on a daily basis. Not all teachers were taking the opportunity to collect student-specific performance information. Students were not always actively engaged in collecting information from assessments and providing input as to the success criteria being utilized.
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

School leaders and staff consistently communicate high expectations to teachers regarding components of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. School staff makes phone calls, sends emails, and communicates a path to college and career readiness and offer ongoing feedback to families.

Impact

School leaders and lead teachers model expectations for staff members and provide training to support schoolwide initiatives. Parents understand the progress their children are making to achieve what is expected for each grade level.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's leadership communicates high expectations for teaching and learning to the staff by conducting periodic instructional walkthroughs using the Danielson Framework for Teaching to provide feedback to staff. The principal created a staff handbook which outlines schoolwide expectations such as teachers standing at the door to greet students, bell-to-bell teaching, infusing technology into lessons, encourage student-to-student conversations, and engaging students in learning opportunities. Reviews of observation reports revealed that teachers received feedback on questioning, engaging students in learning, and assessing student understanding. Teachers reported that feedback is leading to demonstrable growth toward effective teaching strategies across targeted domains.

- Parents shared that the school sends frequent updates on the progress of their children toward the school's expectations for learning. At the beginning of the year, administration provides each family with a student handbook that informs them of the expectations for their children and also has important information for them as well. For example, the handbook contained information about schoolwide events throughout the year to support students’ progress towards meeting college and career readiness goals. Furthermore, the handbook also provides a listing of all courses by department with the expectations and an overview of the content that will be presented throughout each semester. Parents commented that they have a better understanding of the expectations for homework and can access the school's website to view homework assignments and the criteria for completion. Jupiter grades, an online grading platform, also serves as a tool to maintaining reliable communication between the school and their families regarding student performance. Parents commented that school staff tries to host and offer workshops for them in order to help their children transition between grade levels within the school, high school, and college.

- Teachers shared that administration works to ensure that they are communicating clear messages of their expectations for planning and preparing materials and delivering effective teaching to students. During a professional development session, which was conducted earlier in the school year, school staff designed theories of actions based on their beliefs on how students learn best. As a result, each grade developed theories of action aligned to these core beliefs with support from administration and teacher leaders. For example, the middle school's theory of action states, “If we create tasks that are specific with aligned rubrics, students will be able to complete the assignments accurately…self- and peer-assess and this will lead to a more student-centered atmosphere and help students become more engaged throughout their learning experiences.” In addition, teachers shared that they receive ongoing support to fulfill shared expectations from consultants hired by the principal.