Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Nelson Mandela High School
High school 16K765
1700 Fulton St.
Brooklyn
NY 11213

Principal: Tabari Bomani

Dates of Review:
December 13, 2016 - December 14, 2016

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><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Area of Celebration</td>
</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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<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

| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff using visual, ritual and verbal structures. Teams of teachers also communicate similar expectations with their students.

Impact

Training to support high expectations occurs on going for staff and students so they can collectively prepare students for post-secondary experiences.

Supporting Evidence

- A recent professional development session for all teachers communicated and defined expectations regarding how to improve lesson planning using a tuning protocol. Feedback from trends was initially provided based on the most recent principal performance observation, cycles of observations, and walkthroughs. Staff was challenged with examining their lesson planning documents for opportunities where students could engage in discussions, take ownership of their work, and be assessed for having achieved the learning objective. A purposeful alignment of lesson planning documents emerged more coherently, as a result of this professional development session. Additionally, other communications from school leadership have supported attempts to develop strategies that align tasks across content areas through writing projects. Articles are also provided and reviewed with staff so they develop a common understanding of initiatives such as project-based learning and performance tasks.

- Posters have been created and posted throughout all classrooms and hallways defining what students should expect from teachers in terms of instructional delivery, school environment, and assessment techniques. Building leadership feels it is very important for high expectations to be visually represented and communicated regularly. Additionally, staff joins in the morning circle ritual to communicate a desire for each school community member to apply themselves in the best manner each day.

- All students in all grades are made aware of their progress towards graduation and are able to explain their advancement or regression based on the provision of an individualized student tracker form. A recent purchase of an online tracker was deemed a necessary resource acquisition to support student ownership and increase communication with families. Students receive a hardcopy of a color-coded student tracker form identifying if they are on track, almost on track, or off track regarding their credit accumulation, attendance, Regents exam status, and transcript details. Additional information could be included related to plans for graduation, although that has not been currently completed. Students unanimously value the tracker as a tool helping them progress towards graduation and informs them of criteria they had not previously known.

- As a scholar, students are provided a pledge form to sign indicating they commit to supporting the culture of learning, values and mission, and code of conduct valued “in the spirit of Harambee and Ubuntu.” Harambee and Ubuntu are African principles founded in the beliefs of Swahili culture and communicated by Nelson Mandela. They encourage students to “work together” and have “humanity for others,” respectively. A morning ritual and posters mounted around the school reinforce those principles.
Area of Focus

Quality Indicator: 4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development | Rating: Developing

Findings
The majority of teachers are engaged in professional collaborations that are developing their use of an inquiry approach using analyzed data and student benchmark assessment results.

Impact
Teacher teams are attempting to improve their instructional capacity by focusing on student achievement during inquiry teams, although results do not yet demonstrate progress towards improvement for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- A variety of teams exist and meet regularly to engage in professional collaborations to support the values and goals defined by the mission and vision statements, however, it is not clear how some teams, specifically content teams, are improving instruction using an inquiry approach. Structures are in place for teams to use benchmark data which has been disaggregated. An observation of the instructional team demonstrated the review of benchmark data from an Algebra assessment and an item analysis, however no actionable conclusions were developed that would immediately provide support structures or opportunities for those students to achieve increased performance. Generic next steps were identified including reorganizing programs to put students in a targeted assistance class, increasing use of academic vocabulary, and reteaching. A review of agendas and minutes from several other teams (wellness, attendance, and special education) highlight a consistent absence of solutions being reached based on discussed topics.

- Teacher teams meet weekly during common planning time to look at student work and data sets. Facilitator and participant guides are used for consideration during the meetings. The schedule allows time for teachers to collaborate within content areas. The protocol has been adopted from the School Reform Initiative to support ongoing professional development. However, cohesive strategies for implementation to address achievement gaps and instructional deficiencies do not appear to be clearly formulated, as a result of the looking at student work from collaborative meetings.

- Teachers reported common planning times have afforded them the opportunity to integrate English Language Arts (ELA) instructional shifts also in math classes and link the two departments together. Lessons are designed to purposely improve student progress towards better literacy, one of the school goals. Additionally, data sets are beginning to be used through analysis to drive instruction and promote task-based learning critique. Although staff was not able to clearly identify strategies that have specifically improved teacher practice and student achievement, they report the emerging practice of identifying deficiencies prior to the January Regents examinations should promote academic growth.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
</tr>
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Findings
School leaders and faculty ensure curricula is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and the EPIC model attainments through appropriately designed rigorous tasks.

Impact
College and career readiness is promoted through a coherent curriculum for most students with rigorous habits designed to encourage higher-order skills.

Supporting Evidence

- Common Core Learning Standards are aligned on lesson planning documents with attainments students are expected to demonstrate. The adopted lesson plan template used by most teachers is designed to construct a deliverable quality instruction for all students reflected in key elements of the instructional approach and educational philosophy within the school mission. As such, the attainments are used by teachers as high leverage instructional priorities in each content area. For example, several math planning documents require students to be able to demonstrate their application of real world problem solving and expressions in mathematical form using reasoning and justification to solve a problem, attainments sixty-four and sixty-five respectively. Science, ELA, and social studies planning documents address Common Core Learning Standards and attainments across grades as well.

- Curricular expectations consistently emphasize rigorous habits through tasks developed to challenge and "stretch" thinking. Most tasks require multi-steps promoting critical thinking, such as developing an argumentative essay by identifying the author’s strengths and weaknesses or using previously administered Regents exam essay and documents for analysis in ELA. Social studies lesson planning documents reflect students completing text-based evidence essays followed by peer assessment with written feedback using a rubric. Other curricular planning documents focus on attainments twenty and forty-three, formulating a sound argument based on evidence and ability to cite evidence and information to build, express, and substantiate an argument.

- Structures exists in some classes to provide students access to academic tasks through the development of differentiated assignments, planned questions, graphic organizers, and appropriate vocabulary lists. Self-contained students in an ELA class are provided a body paragraph graphic organizer. Reminders typed on the side of the work space inform students to identify reasons, use direct quotes from text, offer examples while making connections, and draw a conclusion. Additional note-taking forms used when collecting text-based answers for inclusion in essays are often developed for students and a chemistry teacher developed an effective visual representation to support students understanding of electron configurations.
Findings

Scaffolds were inconsistently used with students across most classes even when developed and provided to students for use during discussions and assignments.

Impact

Some students were engaged in their tasks and demonstrated knowledge of the content in a meaningful way that challenged their thinking while others struggled with a clear ability to demonstrate using their work products.

Supporting Evidence

- An instructional focus communicated from teachers and school leadership is for students to have a rigorous learning environment. As such, programming was established to offer students courses in Advanced Placement (AP) classes as a part of the AP for All initiative. In an AP Literature class, students were assigned differentiated tasks based on their reading of the novel, *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker. Students were provided an opportunity to complete the tiered questions with peers. Many other lesson plans included similar scaffolds and differentiated tasks for groups of students, however effective implementation of them varied greatly across classes, thus limiting student’s ability to produce meaningful work. For example, students learning about cellular respiration and photosynthesis were provided an activity sheet, however students were not able to engage in high levels of thinking and some content was incorrectly presented by the teacher. Specifically, a comparison T-chart diagram was incorrectly noted by many students. Similarly, during a social studies lesson, students inaccurately checked off their progress on a task tracker regarding their completed content.

- Small group instruction and structures for accountable talk are implemented by most teachers across all grades and content areas to support a core instructional belief of increasing student ownership with their learning. However, occasionally, the teacher would focus exclusively on one student leading to uneven engagement or demonstration of thinking by other students within the group. Additionally, poor transitions in a math class limited students’ opportunity to discuss and debrief their findings with peers. As a result, student engagement is often limited and effective lesson plans are not executed as well as planned.

- During an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) math class, students summarized the lesson by standing in a circle and shared their understanding, or lack of, based on established protocols and cultural norms the teacher has established. In most other classes visited, a similar reflective practice and adherence to instructional values was not as coherently observed. Some classes did not allow sufficiently for a conclusion of any instructional content. This occurred in a science class where the bell rang and the teacher spoke to students regarding returning items and homework as they left the classroom.

- Practices designed to engage many students in challenging tasks through discussions and participation did appear to be developing and becoming more commonly used across classes, although not effectively yet. Students acknowledge challenging work happens in some classes, especially where teachers use multi-step assignments and they need to discuss or reflect on their work samples with their classmates. Specifically, a focus on using questions from prior Regent exams is used as a do now and exit tickets to promote discussions.
Findings

Across classrooms teachers have administered benchmark assessments and use assessment practices to check for understanding, although inconsistently in classes.

Impact

Results following analysis of benchmark assessments and formative assessment techniques that drive curricular and instructional adjustments are inconsistently applied to effectively meeting the needs of all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Some teachers have created structures to provide students with effective and timely feedback. A special education teacher provides her students with unit assessment reflection forms aligning each question to a standard. Students use the information to identify their strongest areas, weakest area, and an action plan to strengthen their weak area. A review of several students’ completed unit assessment reflection forms, reveals their development of plans, although mostly generic, they are actionable and students understand them. The information collected and reviewed by the special education teacher is used to guide instructional decisions for specific students. Similar structures to make students reflective on their assessment results and use them to make curricular adjustments are not consistently used throughout most other classes or content areas.

- Rubrics are used by teachers and students to provide feedback that informs them of next steps. Teachers mark rubrics for student's accuracy and adherence to expectations while students sometimes complete the rubric as a self-assessment tool. However, additional feedback is usually not included outside of marking the corresponding box on the rubric form. As such, some students shared they are able to explain what they did well on when they achieved a high grade on an assignment, however, were limited in their ability to explain what they did not do well on or how they knew. Limited or no feedback was provided for them to extend their thinking or further enhance their understanding more concretely.

- Mock Regent exams are administered to students across most classes as a baseline assessment. The math department has structures in place to reteach content identified as not mastered on the baseline assessments routinely on Friday's and the special education department uses an online tool to support the reteaching of identified weaknesses across various contents. However, increases in student achievement have not been demonstrated yet, through some of the implemented strategies.

- Teachers assess their students using a variety of formative tools including exit tickets, questioning strategies, and peer to peer reflection, although not as a consistent practice. Tracking of these results is beginning to develop and be used to adjust instruction.
Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: | 4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings

School leaders support the development of teachers with effective, accurate, and timely feedback through formal and informal cycles of observations aligned with the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*.

Impact

Instructional practices are promoted and implemented through clear articulation supporting pedagogical development of teachers.

Supporting Evidence

- A cycle of inquiry is used to support teachers using feedback shared on Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) evaluation forms. Teachers receive either a full period formal observation or fifteen minute minimum informal observation. Both observations are typed up and shared with teachers along with additional evaluators’ notes. Selected components of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* are rated for level of effectiveness based on specific evidence collected during the classroom visit. School leaders share the evidence and provide a comprehensive rationale for the level of effectiveness, along with celebrations and recommendations. Most recommendations conclude with an expectation for inclusion into future lessons.

- Feedback provided to teachers during observations is valued and conducted in a very timely manner. Specific suggestive practices are discussed in person and have included modeling by leadership where applicable. One APPR evaluation form suggested a teacher form instructional groups that will support the intended learning outcomes of the lesson, using specific roles and responsibilities by group members considering their different learning needs. Other APPR forms suggest teachers focus on pacing and the establishment for protocols for class discussion.

- Teachers receive feedback from school leadership on notecards that capture commendations, recommendations, resources, and suggested next steps to move forward. Teachers receive the notecards immediately following an informal observation and are encouraged to have a discussion regarding some of the notes with the respective observer. Teachers stated the notecards help them by identify areas they could improve while also recognizing areas of the lesson that were implemented successfully.