Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Millennium High School
High school 02M418
75 Broad St.
Manhattan
NY 10004

Principal: Colin McEvoy

Dates of Review:
March 28, 2017 - March 29, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Heidi Pierovich
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

Millennium High School serves students in grade nine through grade twelve. 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><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></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 of Celebration</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>
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</tbody>
</table>

## Systems for Improvement

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Celebration</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>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>
Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff and provide them with training to achieve such. Unified expectations connected to a path of college and career readiness are systematically communicated by staff and school leaders to students and families.

Impact

Staff and families work together in a culture of mutual accountability that supports student progress toward high expectations. Students own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- College and career readiness is evident in Exhibition, a structured, long-term research project which includes student choice of topic that culminates in a research paper and public presentation. Starting in freshman year students begin preparing for college success through Exhibition. Students work for over four months with a sponsor and a teacher of the subject they are researching to write their eight to ten-page research paper and to present orally to a panel of teachers and an audience of parents and lower grade students. The panel grades the report and speech, which are 30 percent of the seniors’ grade. Students stated that it was a lot of hard work but enjoyable and that they learned so much.

- Students are supported in their college and career research and application through college tours. College counselors provide a monthly college newsletter, for the lower and upper schools to keep parents abreast of events, tools, articles, and summer opportunities. College fairs are held at the school, where over a hundred colleges and universities present. To support all students in school, teachers work with students after school much like in college, during office hours. One student stated, “If I do the assignment ahead of time, I can get support at [office hours] to adjust my work before I submit.” Students also email staff regarding assignments, during the week and even on weekends. Parents stated that students always receive answers directly. Parents and students agreed that they check the online grade portal portals at least weekly, but also because college information and Naviance, the college and career portal are also there. Progress reports are given every two to three weeks between report cards. Parents stated that educating their children is a partnership with staff and administration. Parents support their children at home through the support and communications from parent coordinator, advisors, counselors, and other staff. Parents fund one college counselor and after school clubs, investing in their children’s education. Whether it is a new policy on homework during breaks or updating the honor code, parents’ voices are respected, accepted, and implemented. A parent noted her senior is ready for college, stating, “This education prepares her for college because I don’t have to tell her what to do anymore; she finishes one task, on time, and manages her time well.” Students agreed that they have learned about skills needed in college, such as coping with stress, time management, and self-advocacy.

- The administration provides consistent communications to all staff through a multitude of measures including bulletins, a staff handbook, and professional development. Some of these schoolwide expectations include Exhibition, advisory, and counseling. Support by administration to implement these expectations comes through a consistent cycle of observations and actionable feedback aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Data collected informs the professional development, which is reactive to teachers’ needs. This collaboration demonstrates a collective accountability for staff growth. When selecting their Exhibition topic, students stated that they do not necessarily work with a sponsor with whom they have had a class; thus, staff have a mutual accountability for supporting students to reach the high expectations.
Area of Focus

Quality Indicator: 1.2 Pedagogy
Rating: Developing

Findings
Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to the curricula and are beginning to reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best. Teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple-entry points into the curricula, student work products, and discussion.

Impact
As defined by the instructional shifts and the Danielson Framework for Teaching, all students including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, are not yet consistently engaged in high levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence
- Staff believes that all students learn best as they collaboratively examine and communicate about content, face challenging tasks that promote productive struggle, and have clear and consistent support. To achieve these beliefs, staff agree to use questioning to initiate student-to-student discussion and student inquiry with the pair and group work during lessons and projects. Yet, these practices are beginning to be implemented across classrooms.

- In some classes, the level of rigor and questions was evident and provided students with differentiation for multiple entry points into the materials, while in others it was uneven. In a biology class, students watched a video and there was a projected timeline of human birth on the interactive whiteboard to support students in drawing or describing the stages. Students worked individually at a group table. However, although students had drawings, a video, and visuals, the task was a low-level review and did not engage students in higher-order thinking skills. Additionally, in a world literature class, a group of students presented their chapters of questions for the class to answer using an online system showing immediate results. The questions and the follow up questions were low-level Webb’s Depth of Knowledge (DOK), not necessarily aligned to grade level. Although students posed questions, the level of questioning was also lower-level DOK and student-to-student discussions were also low level. Presenter follow up questions did not probe as expected but instead remained in the lower levels of DOK.

- Across classrooms, the level of differentiation was inconsistently implemented. In a global integrated co-teaching (ICT) class, groups of students were given the task to reflect on their outlines and make improvements based on a mentor text. Yet the pacing was slow and students did not start the task as planned. Additionally, the ICT model called for the teacher of special education students work one-to-one with students and yet no scaffolds or multiple-entry points were provided to support their learning at the same level as others. Across classes, all students received the same materials without scaffolding or extensions.

- Although discussions are a main area of focus this year, the level of student-to-student discussion was at a lower level as per the DOK scale. In an Advanced Placement language and composition class, and similarly, in a British literature class, students led a focused discussion, using a literary criticism and referring to peers’ comments as they posed their own questions. Yet, this level of discussion was not consistent across classes. In a US history class, students worked on individual laptops, in live time on a shared online document, to create a podcast using their topic. Students were researching as they negotiated content and questions to ask each other. Student-to-student discussion involved some intermittent discussion. In an Algebra II class, students were solving problems individually or in pairs and often asked each other questions or points of clarification, but there were no intentional questions provided nor a discussion that was planned; this discussion was incidental.
Findings

Collaborative planning builds coherence and ensures the alignment of the curricula to Common Core Learning Standards and content standards while emphasizing challenging tasks that encourage higher-order thinking for all learners.

Impact

Students benefit from access to engaging and rigorous tasks across content areas and grades. Curricula promotes college and career readiness for all.

Supporting Evidence

- At the foundation of the curricula is Exhibition, where each teacher intertwines the skills needed for students to be academically ready to conduct research on a topic and subject of their choosing. To this end, students learn the foundational skills of research, thesis statements, selecting the strongest quote to support the thesis, analysis of quotes, and writing incrementally longer essays. In addition, students are provided multiple opportunities throughout their years to gain the skills to give presentations publically and write speeches. Staff stated, “We work hard to equip students with skills in and out of school content, to set them up for success, to be excited about their learning and the world around them through smaller or larger academic projects or Exhibitions, and ultimately, to support students to be empowered and own their learning.”

- Curricula planning documents demonstrate a set of components including but not limited to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards, essential questions, students will be able to (SWBAT) statements, aim, learning objectives, do now, vocabulary terms, mini-lesson, class discussion, guided or independent practice, summary, homework, and assessment. Unit plans consistently include the Common Core and/or content standards, big ideas, content and skills from unwrapping the standards, assessment, and evidence.

- To consistently emphasize higher-order thinking skills and to be inclusive of the 13 percent ELLs and students with disabilities, lessons in this screened school and curriculum maps include rigorous tasks to provide students with opportunities to meet the instructional shifts through activities such as annotation, making inferences, analysis, problem solving, and evaluation. A schoolwide initiative is for staff to intentionally incorporate discussion in both small groups and as a whole class to support students to meet their needs. Administration explained that, “Lesson plans allow for mini lesson/lecture introduction, with substantial room for students to explore and express, with the teacher as the facilitator with opportunities to bring students together in discussions.” Staff engages in discussions about rigor, posing questions to determine if the units and tasks provide students with an incremental staircase of complexity that is challenging, checking that it is the “right work not just a lot of work, and ensuring that the students, and not the teachers, are doing the heavy lifting”.

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**Quality Indicator:**

| 1.1 Curricula | Rating: Proficient |
Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

School leaders support the development of teachers with feedback that captures strengths, challenges, and next steps from frequent cycles of classroom observation and analysis of student work and data, using the Danielson Framework for Teaching. School leaders use teacher observation data to effectively design and facilitate professional development (PD) and to make decisions about staff.

Impact

Professional learning and observation cycles support the elevation of schoolwide instructional practices and strategies that promote professional growth and reflection.

Supporting Evidence

- Administration supports the development of teachers as aligned to their needs and the school-level goals. There are frequent cycles of observations in two forms, coaching and formal feedback. After the observation, administration reviews student work and data, collected and observed during the class visit, and notes the quality, quantity, and alignment to the intended outcome. Administration refers to student work and data in both verbal and written feedback to the teacher. Additionally, when selecting student work to review, administration selects students who reflect the demographics of the school. Together, staff and administration reflect and discuss the student work and data as well as the next steps.

- Using questioning and discussion techniques in the classroom, the instructional focus, to promote more student discussion is the focus for administration and staff. Feedback is aligned to the focus and accurately captures strengths and challenges. Administration provides questions to probe and for thoughtful reflection by teacher. For example, "While students shared out, how could they, and the audience members, be more frequently expected to question and challenge each other? What would shift the emphasis from sharing to actively discussing?" Additionally there are concrete next steps and potential methods or ways to implement. Through multiple rounds of observations, staff stated that they receive actionable feedback with clear expectations and that formal observations are followed with more informal visits. In this way, the administration helps coach teachers towards their goals.

- In addition to a focus on advisory and Exhibition support during PD meetings, the other main topic is the use of department and intradepartmental intervisitations as the vehicle to support teacher growth in pedagogy. The instructional focus and observation cycles feed the intervisitation cycles. Staff stated, "We do it because we want to do it; it is not top down. It is for us to determine how we can use questioning and discussion techniques and how to apply it." Staff follows an agreed-upon protocol to debrief and determine what was useful and how to use or adjust it for a different subject. Staff agreed that the intervisitations provide opportunities for the exchange of ideas, low-inference observations, and development around probing questions. In the current cycle, staff members choose a partner who has the same cohort of students, but from another department. One pair stated their topic is to learn questioning and discussion techniques from colleagues. Additionally, the intervisitations, both inside and outside departments have supported teachers, as evidenced by administrative observational data and peer discussions. One teacher stated that she and her partner are focused on determining which activities engage students the most. Some stated that the intervisitations have helped them to become stronger in their work and has widened the practices that they implement in their own classes.
### Findings

Although teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies across classrooms as aligned to the school’s curricula, teachers’ assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

### Impact

Student and teachers receive limited feedback regarding student achievement and teachers inconsistently make effective adjustments to meet student learning needs.

### Supporting Evidence

- Administration expects that teachers provide students with actionable feedback, especially for those tasks that spiral up, are process tasks, or is a task that students will complete again in the future. Feedback should include what is done well and what needs to be improved with steps and comments rooted in the rubric. Yet, feedback to students is inconsistently actionable, as feedback on their work products varies from no grade, a check mark, percentage, letter, number grade, or rubric grade, and often a congratulatory statement such as “Good job!” Although some include feedback on process writing work, and some next steps, this is not consistent across grades and subjects. For example, this feedback provides actionable next steps, “Make sure your analysis is supported by the text and maintain your focus on one literary device throughout the second paragraph.” In a math task, there are comments identifying what is missing or stating “Not specific enough.” However, across most classrooms, there is little to no actionable feedback to support students in improving to their own next level.

- Students explained that they use rubrics to assess each other’s work any time a major project is due. Students stated that they engage in peer editing for a couple of days and then at home different students will work on a Google Doc to be edited by friends. Students and teachers shared that staff provide access for students to submit outlines, projects, essays, or anything typed, through an online program that is aligned to Google Docs. A student stated, “I feel we do get written feedback when we turn in online and not so much feedback in lower grades.” While rubrics exist for assignments, they were not observed being utilized as a self-assessment tool.

- The expectation is that teachers will know their students and determine the best method for checking for understanding based on the task and students’ needs. Staff is expected to use entrance and exit slips, questioning, and assessments, as well as to collect data using some form of documentation that the teacher determines is best for themselves. However, checking for understanding is uneven across the classes visited. Although some teachers move from table to table, only one adjustment was made in biology class where the teacher brought everyone together regarding directions to remind students how to work with the group so that individual pieces fit with the rest of the group. No adjustments based on student work were observed. In an algebra II class, the teacher walked around answering questions and checking on progress, but no adjustment was made. In an Advanced Placement language and literature class and an English Language Arts class, teachers collected information and noted it on a clipboard as they moved from table to table giving feedback and asking probing questions. Yet this was not the norm across the majority of classrooms.
Additional Finding

### 4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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**Findings**

The majority of teachers are engaged in organized, inquiry-based professional collaborations. Distributed leadership structures are in place.

**Impact**

Professional collaborations promote the achievement of school goals, the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards, and strengthen the instructional capacity of the teachers, who have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teachers have time built into their schedule to engage on a weekly basis in multiple team meetings, organized by advisory, grade, and course level. There is evidence across courses and grades of teacher teams looking at student work that shows strengths in student work, concerns, and next instructional steps. Staff stated that their instructional practices have improved as a result of collaboration. A staff member explained how working together has supported his practice by planning for all students. “We created systems for the students to use, to support students with disabilities and ELLs, and they were better able to understand the charged ion and oxidation process; I learned so much about planning for all students.” Advisory facilitators for each grade meet on Mondays to create agendas and discussions. Department meetings focus on horizontal and vertical alignment, through aligning rubric language, discipline, and content-specific tasks, including labs, tests, quizzes, process writing, and the weighting of tasks.

- Each grade team conducts inquiry cycles, analyzes student work, and uses it to inform instruction and curricula. During an English teacher team meeting, they analyzed three levels of student drafts in preparation for a five-paragraph essay on the novel *Frankenstein*. Students chose a quote from a group of chapters to analyze. The teachers reviewed the student work and determined trends in strong work and in areas for growth. From these areas of growth, the teachers selected three upon which they will focus. Then teachers determined next steps, such as providing students with multiple opportunities to use the model essay, to determine selection of the strongest quote, and how to revise their opening paragraphs for proper placement of the thesis statement, plot summary, and analysis of quotation. A teacher agreed, “We co-plan and adjust to support the students’ needs.”

- Teachers have a voice and leadership positions in several positions across the school. One teacher per subject is a trained facilitator and meets monthly in a cabinet where together they shape and deliver professional development (PD) for dedicated PD days. A teacher proudly stated, “We have the freedom to develop two big PD days on best practices, which were organized and presented in a multiple-sessions format.” One team is called the Kitchen Cabinet, and includes the administration and two teachers who discuss school-based issues such as scheduling, programming, PD, Exhibition, and Saturday school. Staff selects teacher team topics, creating the agendas and focus. Additionally, staff mentor teachers new to the building or to the profession. There is also a teacher-driven intervisitation cycle across different departments. Teachers choose whom to visit, when, and their own area of focus. One teacher summed it up for all, “We do [intervisitations] because we want to do it. It is not a top-down decision. If I want to see how other teachers in other subjects implement a questioning and discussion technique, then I can go see them and adapt it to fit my class.” Another agreed, “There is trust and it is not about filling out a form. Instead it is about motivated people who want to learn from each other.” Teachers agreed that visiting classes outside of their own subject has supported their growth as a teacher.