Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Quest to Learn
Secondary School 02M422
351 West 18th St.
Manhattan
NY 10011

Principal: Nicholas Jurman

Dates of Review:
March 1, 2017 - March 2, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Michele Ashley
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

Quest to Learn 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

#### Instructional Core

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</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>Proficient</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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</td>
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<tr>
<td>School Culture</td>
<td>Area</td>
<td>Rating</td>
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<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>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<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>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Systems for Improvement</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
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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>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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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>
<td>Developing</td>
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</table>
## Area of Celebration

### Quality Indicator:

| 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: | Well Developed |

### Findings

School leaders and teachers provide training and leadership consistently communicates high expectations to all faculty and staff via weekly staff emails, observations and team meetings. School leaders and staff effectively partner with families to communicate expectations connected to a path to college and careers.

### Impact

Faculty and staff hold each other accountable for schoolwide expectations for teaching and learning and families partner with the school community to support student progress and school improvement efforts.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers provide consistent training for faculty and staff to support the school’s instructional focus and the differentiated needs of teachers. Teachers created a professional development committee this year based on teacher feedback requesting more voice and choice in their professional development plan. Teachers on the professional development team conducted a survey of teacher professional needs and created *Studio Q*, a professional development calendar that provides teacher-led professional development sessions to support the identified needs of their peers. The 2016 – 2017 *Studio Q* calendar includes four October sessions on the norming of teacher understanding of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Topics included: norming and reviewing the Danielson rubric; reviewing teacher observations using the Danielson Framework for Teaching; how a lesson can move from effective to highly effective. *Studio Q* sessions are led by teachers with expertise in the area of focus.

- School leadership meets regularly with the professional development team and includes reminders in the principal’s weekly emails to all staff. *Studio Q* reminders highlight the teacher-selected topics and team expectations for their peers who will be attending each session. A February reminder highlights the location and time for the *Studio Q* session on reviewing the schoolwide lesson plan format. The email reminds all staff to bring computers, a digital copy of a lesson or unit plan and a sample of the formative assessment for the week. The email also reminds teachers that they will be using a Tuning Protocol regarding their use of formative assessment. Teachers facilitating each sessions prepare all materials and hold their peers accountable for being present and prepared. A review of *Studio Q* agendas and sign-in sheets demonstrate that attendance is consistent.

- School leaders and staff effectively communicate with families in a variety of ways including phone calls, emails, parent conferences, progress reports and parent access to an interactive online grading platform. Parents shared that the grading platform allows them constant access to their child’s status in school, pending or missed assignments and email access to teachers. Parents shared that they participate in a variety of school information sessions including Curriculum Night, Financial Aid workshops program orientations.

- Parents partner with the school to volunteer in classrooms, chaperone trips and school events, and reach out to community representatives and philanthropic organizations to solicit funds to support social and academic efforts. A November Parent-Teacher Association agenda includes parent planning to support the October *Boo Bash*, picture day and the Thanksgiving Luncheon. A December meeting agenda includes parent planning to support the school’s Spring Auction and upper-school theatre program.
Area of Focus

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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

The school analyzes Regents and baseline assessment data, but is not yet administering common assessments across grades and content areas. Some teachers have begun to use peer assessment and questioning to check students’ understanding.

Impact

The school uses Regents and baseline data to inform instruction, but the absence of common assessment data and inconsistent use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment hinders teachers' ability to make effective adjustments to meet all students’ learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- This year, the school leadership added a beginning-of-the-year baseline assessment which was administered across the grades to obtain data on student proficiency in English Language Arts (ELA) and math. Teachers reviewed 2015-2016 New York State ELA, math and Regents assessment data to look for patterns in student learning needs. Although some teachers administer periodic assessments in some classes or content areas, periodic common assessments are not administered across all grades and content areas, hindering teacher access to ongoing student performance data.

- A review of grade-team agendas and notes reveals that teams have begun to use student work, teachers' formative assessment data and Individual Education Plans (IEPs) to plan interventions and scaffolds to support student learning. September grade twelve notes include teacher planning of behavioral and academic interventions for target students. A March grade twelve agenda includes a review of current interventions, the planning of next steps as a grade, and “How will we measure progress?” However, a lack of established common assessments that determine student progress toward goals hinders teachers’ ability to make effective adjustments to curricula and instruction.

- Across classes visited, teachers have begun to ask questions to prompt student thinking; however, self-assessment and exit tickets were used inconsistently across classrooms as a means for checking understanding. A math teacher asked students prompt questions that required them to assess their own work and that of their peers. The teacher’s prompting led to student revisions in their work. The summary for this lesson also required students to complete a self-assessment rubric. The level of checking for understanding and purposeful use of self-assessment present in this class was not evident across classrooms visited. Inconsistencies in this practice across classrooms limit students’ ability to assess their own learning and teachers capacity to make effective adjustments that meet the needs of all learners.
Findings

School leaders and teachers utilize a school-wide lesson planning template to ensure that curricula is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and plan purposefully to incorporate writing from sources and text-based answers. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student data.

Impact

The school-wide template and use of student learning data build coherence and provide access for a diversity of learners including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers have created a school-wide lesson plan template that outlines the expectations for planning instruction, aligns to Common Core Learning Standards and creates a common language for lesson planning across grades and content areas. All lesson plans reviewed used the template and included expected components which include a lesson summary, a brief explanation of the learning content, a mini-lesson and independent work or group activity, plans for differentiation, and assessment. Teachers use this format to plan lessons that follow a common structure and use a common language.

- Across lesson plans reviewed, teachers purposefully integrate the instructional shifts and plan opportunities for students to write from sources and provide evidence for their claims and opinions. A math lesson on systems of equations requires students to identify a method to solve an equation and explain why that is the best method. A science lesson requires students to participate in a Socratic Circle and respond to prompt questions regarding the circulatory system. This lesson requires students to support their claims using evidence from their reading and guided notes.

- Teachers plan and refine lessons and tasks based on assessments of student work, IEPs and teacher observation data. Teachers adjust lessons to provide scaffolds and supports for students that incorporate students’ learning styles. A grade six lesson plans for students to work in heterogeneous groups and includes three-dimensional shapes for tactile learners and recorded instructions for students who need directions repeated aloud. A geometry lesson includes teacher notes that assign students to groups based on formative class work performance and learning styles. An English lesson includes visuals to support students’ character study by linking character traits to visuals of the head, mouth, body, heart, hands, and feet. For example, the visual for the feet indicates where the character is from or would like to go.
### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices align to the curricula and reflect an articulated belief around purposeful learning and instructional supports for students. Across classrooms, teachers use questioning and graphic organizers to engage students in independent and collaborative tasks.

### Impact

A structured planning format, focus on instructional shifts and instructional scaffolds allow students to produce meaningful work products and engage in challenging tasks across most classrooms.

### Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teachers incorporate opportunities for students to discuss content and apply it to their own lives. In an English classroom, students responded to the *Rhetorical Quote of the Day* by A.N. Wilson, “The fact that logic cannot satisfy us awakens an almost insatiable hunger for the irrational.” Students discussed the meaning of this quote at the beginning of their lesson and made connections to real-life situations. During a history lesson, students in small groups discussed the meaning of various sections of the Preamble of the United States Constitution in order to answer the question “What is the purpose of the Preamble?”

- Across most classrooms visited, teachers provided students with instructional supports via graphic organizers, manipulatives, visuals and teacher or peer support. During a science lesson, the teacher provided students with *Note Catchers*, accountable talk stems and observation checklists to support their work in Socratic Seminar. During a math lesson, students had the choice of using graph paper, highlighters and graphing calculators to support their chosen methods. To support one student during this lesson, the teacher drew a representation of the x and y-axis to help the student understand, visualize and check his solution.

- Across most classrooms visited, teachers used a variety of questions and prompts to push student thinking as they listened in and observed students working. In a math classroom, the teacher asked a student a variety of questions regarding the height and base of a figure to prompt the student to use the information he had to calculate the area and solve the equation. In an English class, the teacher used questioning to help students clarify their understanding of key vocabulary words. The teacher placed the responsibility for understanding on the students stating, “We have to figure out the difference between an assertion and a claim. Together students refined their definition of each term.”
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, including those new to the profession, with effective feedback and next steps from formal and *Snapshot* observations. Feedback captures strengths, challenges and next steps aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* with a focus on instruction.

**Impact**

Collaborative discussion of teaching practices and student work and clearly articulated expectations for improvements in teacher practice supports teachers’ professional growth and development.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School leadership and the Peer Collaborative Teacher (PCT) provide teachers with frequent cycles of observation and support. Leaders follow observations with face-to-face sessions in which teachers and leaders review low-inference notes on teacher and student work. The face-to-face conference allows teachers to bring sample student work, ask questions, receive constructive feedback and collaborate to plan next steps. The PCT schedule includes time to observe and meet with teachers and is revised weekly to meet teacher support needs. A review of the PCT schedule reveals opportunities for the PCT to join team meetings, co-plan with new teachers and conduct observation and feedback cycles.

- School leaders supply teachers with verbal and written feedback that includes low-inference notes on teacher and student work and next steps for instruction. Leaders offer teachers recommendations to improve instruction. A review of feedback demonstrates that leaders usually provide teachers with one or two new strategies to implement in their classroom. One observation recommends that the teacher provide students with sentence starters to help students begin to self-reflect. Another report recommends that a teacher enforce a seating chart that places target students in locations with minimal distractions and assign them to groups with students that will support their learning.

- A review of formal observations reveals that leader feedback to teachers captures strengths and challenges as they align to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and articulates clear expectations for improvements in teacher practice. In one observation, leadership highlights the teacher’s use of student self-assessment and recommends that she continue to implement this structure as a best practice, as well as, adding opportunities for students to assess the work of their peers. Another observation report highlights teachers’ high expectations for their students and use of small-group instruction, and also recommends spending more time with each small group to clarify misconceptions, model expectations and provide an opportunity for students to explain their work.
Additional Finding

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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 structured inquiry-based collaboration on grade and content teams and in collaboration with consultant support. Distributive leadership structures are in place for teachers as grade and team leaders.

Impact

Professional collaboration promotes the sharing of instructional best practices and improvement plans, strengthens the instructional capacity of teachers and incorporates teacher voice in key decisions that affect student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers meet on content and grade teams to plan instruction and analyze student work. Teachers lead team meetings and follow a pre-set agenda with priorities set by administration, team leads and the PCT. Team leaders upload minutes from each meeting to an online platform which is accessible to administration and other grade and content teams. Team agendas are in alignment with the school instructional focus on Domain three, Instruction. Leadership has also secured consultant support through the Institute of Play to support teams in aligning instruction with the school’s mission to “empower and engage all students by connecting rigorous learning through innovation to the increasing demands of the global society.”

- Teacher teams analyze student work to look for patterns and trends to support individual students. During the grade nine team meeting, the teachers reviewed grades and samples of individual student work to look for patterns in their learning. After identifying patterns, teachers reviewed current interventions for each student and recommended next steps. Next steps for students included peer support, individual goal-setting cards and checklists for all subject areas. Teachers planned to implement these strategies and report back on student progress. Teachers interviewed shared that collaboration and the sharing of student trends in learning and next steps has resulted in the enhancement of teacher practices. Observed practices include the common lesson structure, evidence-based paragraph format, word walls, differentiation by learning styles and sentence starters.

- Distributive leadership structures are in place that provide teachers with a venue for their voices and ideas that have an impact on key school decisions and affect student learning. Teachers take on a variety of leadership roles including grade and content leaders, peer-collaborative teachers and mentor teachers. In addition, teachers are members of the hiring committee and professional development committee. Teachers participated in a 2016-2017 Principal Survey in which they provided the incoming leader with recommendations for areas of focus, highlighted activities in which they would like to participate and identified specific areas of concern as they align to the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

- School leadership utilized the feedback from the Principal Survey to address areas of need within the school community that affect student learning. Some of the school enhancements for this year include content team (Domain) meetings, the formation of a professional development committee and Studio Q (teacher-led professional development).