Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Urban Assembly New York Harbor School
High school 02M551
10 South St., Slip 7
Manhattan
NY 10004

Principal: Jeffrey Chetirko

Dates of Review: January 4, 2017 - January 5, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Daisy Concepción
**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>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Developing</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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Quality Ratings continued

### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</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>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</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>
<td>Well Developed</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>
</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>
<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>Developing</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>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

| Quality Indicator: | 1.4 Positive Learning Environment | Rating: | Well Developed |

Findings

The school’s approach to culture building is informed by the theory that students learn best when in supportive classrooms and engaged in real-world tasks. Structures such as advisory and case conferencing ensure that each student is known well.

Impact

Teams of students are meaningfully engaged in decisions that impact curricula including career and technical education instruction and student workplace experiences. Teacher teams partner with guidance to ensure students receive personalized supports impacting both academic and personal behaviors.

Supporting Evidence

- In a meeting of all Career and Technical Education (CTE) students and their partner, The Billion Oyster Project, scuba students sat around an interactive board looking at a map of marshes around Brooklyn to select a new cleanup site as part of their mission to restore and preserve New York City waterways. Students asked teachers about the accessibility of the site. Students brainstormed and compared different sites before asking teachers to help them acquire water quality reports to look for contaminants. Students also asked for marine vessel traffic reports for safety reasons and discussed the use of other school-based CTE teams as a concerted effort to clean up the waterway. This student-led meeting demonstrates how students are meaningfully engaged in making decisions about safety and field experiences. This is one of many CTE teams that lead the school improvement efforts in shaping the classroom curricula and teacher pedagogy to reflect the real-life world experiences that they will participate in.

- Students shared that there is a strong student council that surveys students and meets with school leaders to lead school improvement efforts. Among the items students discussed was an issue with overcrowding in a stairwell. Students examined traffic flow patterns and made recommendations for a new flow which is currently in place. Students also shared that they were initially unhappy with the Spanish curriculum. Fifty-four grade eleven students called a town hall and created a petition with a proposal to change the curriculum. Representatives from this group, in collaboration with student council, met school leaders who implemented the proposed changes.

- There are multiple structures in place to ensure that all students receive personalized academic, social, and emotional supports. Ninth graders participate in a dedicated advisory period that assists students in acclimating to high school and supports students through their exploration of CTE classes. As an extension of the ninth grade-advisory program, each grade is assigned a Lead Class Advisor (LCA). These advisors are made up of the principal, assistant principal, and dean. The role of the LCA is to act as the main point of contact for teachers and parents concerning students’ behavioral and academic needs. LCAs loop with each class until they graduate to ensure that students and their families are known well by one staff member. LCAs attend all grade team meetings for their grade to understand all social and academic issues for their students. Teachers and guidance personnel meet vertically once a week to identify students who need services and to case conference students receiving services. Supports include counseling, advisement, and academic interventions.

- In a student meeting, students shared that their school is structured in a way where they are known well by many adults in the school including teachers, guidance staff, and school leaders. They stated that relationships are established through team work and collaboration which begins in the ninth grade with the In-Dock orientation. During this orientation, students spend a week, both day and night, on a boat as the crew, to learn teamwork. Students shared that CTE experiences build apprenticeship relationships that create strong bonds between students and teachers and strong work habits.
Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 1.2 Pedagogy | Rating: | Developing |

Findings

Across classrooms teaching practices are becoming aligned to the curriculum and beginning to reflect the school belief that students learn best by engaging in problem solving and discussion. Teaching strategies including questions and scaffolds such as organizers and instructional grouping inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact

While instruction is beginning to reflect a focus on student engagement, teaching strategies include low-level cognitive questions and tasks which result in unevenness in student engagement and hinder students’ ability to demonstrate high-order thinking skills in work products.

Supporting Evidence

- In a tenth class English Language Arts (ELA) class focusing on exploring conflict between the individual and society, the teacher asked students to use an organizer to discuss if a character in the novel, *Fiesta 1980*, knew that her husband was being unfaithful. Three students gave a response and only one student provided text based evidence for his opinion. Although the teacher provided students with an organizer and copies of an annotated text to work from, most organizers were blank and students did not engage in peer discussions.

- In a social studies class focusing on how the court overturned the Plessy v. Ferguson case, the teacher facilitated a large group conversation where students discussed the legal standard for proving harm in a case and referenced foundational court cases leading to separate but equal being systematized in our country. All students were actively engaged in annotating primary documents and using text based evidence to challenge each other as they considered the political implication of Judge Harlan’s public Plessy Dissent letter. This level of engagement and higher order thinking was not evident in a senior ELA class studying satire. Scaffolds included student grouping and the use of a video of a political comedy skit. Students gathered around chart paper labeled “Allusion” “Hyperbole” “Sarcasm” and “Pun.” Despite the scaffolds, student conversation was largely about their inability to define the words. Students were heard saying “I wish we could have a script to be able to go back and see what they were saying.” Many of the charts were blank and those that included an answer, reflected one sentence responses included hashtags and just a single word.

- In a Statistics class, scaffolds included student groupings and a data collection organizer used to record the rebound ratio of various size balls during the hands-on activity. The lesson objective was, “How do we use statistics to model real world data?” After the data collection, the teacher asked students to explain and defend how the data collected represented one of the statistical models that they had been studying. Students defended arguments for linear growth, quadratic model and even reverse exponential. Because of this discussion, students discovered relationships between the statistical models. This level of higher order thinking and discussion was not present in a Global History class focusing on “how extinction drives evolution.” Although students had differentiated questions, these did not support student engagement. Student conversation was limited to a few students who said that if a bear had a thin coat he would die.

- In an Aquaculture Marine Biology CTE lab, students collected water samples of various tanks holding live fish stock and discussed biodiversity. Students shared that this lab serves as the oyster hatchery. Students talked about their partnership with the Billion Oyster Project and their oyster restoration project to reseed the New York harbor with oysters. Students were engaged in problem solving and collaborative discussions of real world problems. This contrasts with a grade nine Living Environment class where students were creating wet-mount onion cell slides. Students copied images seen under the microscope onto their lab report. When asked what they were studying, students were only able to read the procedure directions or material list and could not articulate their learning.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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Findings

School leaders and faculty are in the process of aligning curricula in some grades and content areas to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrating the instructional shifts. Not all curricula and academic tasks reflect planning to provide students with access to the curricula.

Impact

While some academic tasks and lesson plans include opportunities to provide access to diverse learners, not all demonstrate how these access points cognitively engage learners.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of curricula shows that school leaders have curriculum maps for subjects in ninth grade and their Career and Technical Education program and a few curricula in other subjects such as a unit for grade twelve Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition and another unit on chemistry and social studies for grade eleven. The available unit plans listed the Common Core standards, but only the grade nine units addressed the instructional shifts by stating that students will use evidence as the basis for an argument essay. There was no evidence provided to demonstrate that there are curricula for the full complement of the grades and core subjects.

- A review of teacher planning documents for grade eleven statistics showed that there was homogenous instructional grouping and questions were dependent on instructional ability of students with less proficient students working on activities requiring definitions and observations and more proficient students working on making inferences from patterns. Tiered questions and references to a vocabulary bank and Spanish language dictionary were seen in a planning document for a Living Environment. Thus, while some planning documents may reflect planning to provide access to rigorous instruction, the modifications being made do not consistently provide for cognitive engagement for all students.

- Some units reflect planning to provide students access to the curriculum by having an area on the unit for modifications and extensions. While a United States History and Government unit, reflected this section, some of the modifications listed were: students can have text read to them by an older student or para, tutoring, mentoring with older or more successful students, use of para-professional, or one-on-one supervision. These modifications do not demonstrate how curricula are being made accessible for a variety of students so that they have access to the Common Core Learning Standards or the content area standards.

- Some planning documents such as one from a Living Environment class include a list of students who require modifications. This list is not reflective of the use of data nor is it fluid so that it will meet the needs of several struggling students with similar misconceptions. These planning documents reflect a list of the students with Individualized Education Programs (IEP). IEP modifications are listed next to each student’s name. While IEP modifications provide a suggestion for a general modification, these need to be adapted to support the specific task and material students will engage in. One lesson plan listed a student’s name and next to it appeared “Rehearsal and repetition of new information” and “Alternate forms of presentation for work.” There was no evidence of how this was planned into the lesson. While IEP modifications are listed in many teacher plans, these do not reflect how the modifications were applied in the lesson planning to provide access to the curriculum and cognitively engage students.
Additional Finding

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

Findings
Across classrooms rubrics are loosely aligned to the school’s curricula. Although the school leader is currently using several online programs as assessment, the school is developing their use of common assessments.

Impact
Feedback to students is unclear, not actionable and limited in availability thus hindering both student achievement and teacher use to inform curricular decisions. This is further compounded by the school’s inconsistent use of data to make curricula and instructional adjustments.

Supporting Evidence

- Among the assessments listed for the school is the use of pre- and post-unit assessments, mock regents and a new program that tracks student reading levels. At the time of this review, no pre- or post-assessment data was made available. While some data on reading levels was shared, no one could share how this data was used to make adjustments. Notes from teacher team meetings reflect that teachers do not find this reading level information reliable. In a team meeting, teachers could not say how they use this. The data that was available was a component analysis for Regents, such as the Global Regents, but there was no evidence to show that these are used for adjustments.

- While student work with teacher comments were observed in a few classrooms, rubrics were not observed in most classrooms. In a meeting with six students, only one student had two pieces of work with a rubric attached. These task specific rubrics were loosely aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. One rubric was used to measure a one paragraph response on how gold and silver is used as an element in a civilization. Students were measured on the quality of their answers being analytic, vague or offering no information on the use of the element. Another criterion being measured in this rubric was neatness. The rubric reflected a score of 5 out of 5 for a one paragraph answer and provided no comment or feedback. The other rubric was for a creative English project and it measured narrative technique, organization, style and conventions and writing process. This rubric reflected percentages across the continuum and across the criteria. There was a circle around the “Level 2 approaching (80-65)” column, a circle in the “1-not meeting standard (64 and below)” and a circle in the “0 cannot meet Standard (55)” in the writing process section so that the actual rating was unclear. The comments listed were “I want to learn more about the main character” and “What other setting details can you add?” Non-rubric based comments or lack of feedback do not provide the student with clear and actionable feedback to ensure that work products meet standards.

- In a student meeting, a review of student work products evidenced that students receive comments and that student work is graded, but there is no feedback that provides students with comments on what elements are being met and which elements need to be strengthened to meet the standards. There is no actionable step that students can take to improve their work. One note indicated the work was incomplete with a number 55 circled and no comment. Most students in the meeting stated that feedback was generally verbal and it focused on what they did not do. Students stated that since they felt that comments were intended to be correction and not meant to be a next learning step. Students further added that since there would be little opportunity for them to apply the feedback, they generally disregarded the verbal teacher feedback. Conflicting information in scoring, lack of teacher comments and verbal feedback provide students with limited feedback and hinders student opportunity to improve work products and meet standards, as there is no actionable feedback as a pathway to support student progress.
Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: Well Developed |

Findings

School leaders communicate high expectations in academics including Career and Technical Educations to parents. Teacher teams have established a culture for learning that systematically communicates unified sets of high expectations.

Impact

There is a culture of high expectations at the school that has forged parental partnerships and ensures that all students own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- Parents stated that they have a successful partnership with the school where their voices are valued. Smartphone applications allow parents to follow their student’s academic performance and the school advisory program allows for parent support to students. Parents spoke about the college advisory arranging for visits to colleges and the college application process. Some parents shared that they are part of the school’s hiring committee and help select staff. They stated that the school cultivates student responsibility and professionalism through problem solving, explanation, design and collaboration and these are skills that will serve their students in college and beyond.

- Parents are well versed in the CTE program and spoke about the meaningful internships that allow students to network citywide with nonprofit companies such as the Billion Oyster Project, major corporations and the federal government such as the Coast Guard. Parents stated that the school begins to prepare students before they arrive through the summer In-Dock bridge program that allows students to spend a week at the school getting to know the layout on Governor’s Island, meet the teachers, and be exposed to the curricula and the various CTE programs. Students spend a week on a boat and learn how to sail, cook and take a shift as part of the night crew staying up to ensure that their vessel and all passengers are safe. Students learn about maritime traffic and must even build a seaworthy cardboard boat. This week-long orientation program terminates with a family picnic where parents celebrate their students’ induction to the school.

- Students shared that there are six CTE programs that include Aquaculture, Marine Biology Research, and Marine Systems Technology. Students spoke with specificity and confidence about the rigorous preparations that they receive in the CTE program. School leaders take great pride in the fact that 100 percent of all the students participate in this program and receive professional trade recognized certification as part of the school’s four-year preparation. Students stated that teachers communicate high expectations for quality workmanship and professionalism through conversations and meticulous attention to the skills they are learning. Students spoke about how each class builds on the knowledge and expertise of the previous class. They stated that hands-on experience coupled with program certifications ensures that they are qualified in the work field before they graduate. Students spoke deliberately about their careers. One student in the Professional Diving Program shared how classes in marine rescue inspired her to apply for an associate’s degree in a paramedic program to support her decision as she pursues maritime rescue as a profession. Another student stated that his marine internships have led him to want to join the Coast Guard. Two students in the Ocean Engineering program spoke about life as oceanographers. A student in the Vessel Operation program testified to the school’s strong career preparation. She said that her goal is to go into Real Estate so she told her counselor that she had no interest in maritime careers. She stated that the school counselor made her realize that her maritime experience with vessel reparations and designs, provide her with a specialization in maritime real estate. She stated, “I have learned everything about vessels including sea worthiness, reparations and how to sail them. I will be an expert in selling yachts and houseboats and that is exciting.”
Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Team and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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</table>

Findings

While the majority of teachers meet weekly in various teams to analyze assessment data and student work for students whom they share, their work is unevenly connected to the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts.

Impact

Teacher collaborations do not typically result in improved teacher practice aligned to the school focus of creating support that enables all students to be intellectually engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- While teachers meet to examine student data, the focus of meetings will veer towards guidance issues and case conferencing. As part of the school focus of creating meaningful assessments, one Grade team met to discuss mid-terms for students who would not be taking January Regents. While this forum is designed to address at risk students, it is also the forum for discussion about differentiation in instruction. Teachers began by discussing the framework of the exam and debated how the assessment data from the mid-term would be used to refine curriculum. This focus of this meeting quickly changed to discussion of colored hallway passes, the re-entry of students in suspension sites, and determining the definition of chronically absent. Because of focusing on social emotional concerns, teachers did not finalize their assessment conversation which would have provided them with an opportunity to design differentiated exams that would have allowed them to gauge student performance in relationship to the Common Core Learning Standards.

- Three teacher teams focus on the school-wide problem of practice which is “Given the wide range of skills among our students, how can we support and enable all students to be intellectually engaged?” The school demographic shows that 26 percent of students have individualized education programs. Because of teacher request, school leaders have created a dedicated common planning period for special and general education teachers to plan lessons and units together. Department teams focus on meeting the varying needs of students. Grade teams meet to coordinate supports and assist in differentiating instruction. Despite all the programmatic supports and school wide focus on differentiation, there is little evidence that teachers are looking at tasks and planning scaffolds. A review of notes from the special education department meetings memorializes their observations that very few general education teachers have written lesson plans or understand special education and the idea that general education teachers also do not understand differentiation and are not receptive to Integrated Co-teaching strategies. Thus, there is no evidence that looking at student work is improving teacher practice in differentiation to meet student needs.

- The belief that it is not possible to differentiate instruction is consistently reflected in team meetings along with questions of what to do next. Notes from a general education team reflect the “biggest challenge is differentiating content for students of various backgrounds.” Teacher’s inability to address differentiation is also reflected in the team meeting for social studies. Minutes from this team state that there are “17 seniors/super seniors” and “19 juniors” failing the Global Regents. The notes go on to question, “Are we looking for specific numbers to achieve?” Minutes from this meeting never describe where students are struggling or how to address this. Other notes share that it is hard to differentiate when “students are not invested.” In most team minutes’ evidence, teachers surface the need for differentiation and then ask what can be done before moving on to administrative issues. This demonstrates that while teachers meet weekly, there is little evidence that their collaborations further work or that looking at data or student work results in progress towards goals for groups of students.