Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Heritage School, The
High school 04M680
1680 Lexington Ave.
Manhattan
NY 10029

Principal: Dyanand Sugrim

Dates of Review:
April 27, 2017 - April 28, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Rosemary Stuart
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>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>Proficient</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</td>
<td>Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

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

Findings

School leaders and staff effectively communicate the expectations for learning and the responsibility to achieve college and career readiness to parents and to students. Parents partner with the staff on the College Readiness Committee to promote understanding of the skills students need to be successful.

Impact

Students are fully supported and take responsibility for their own progress as they prepare for the future.

Supporting Evidence

- The school is closing the achievement gap by moving more students to college readiness as shown by the percent of students with disabilities passing the Common Core English Regents exam, which rose from 24 percent in 2015 to 62 percent in 2016, and the percent passing the Algebra Regents exam, which rose from 15 percent to 54 percent in the same time period. The percentage of students passing all classes has increased for all students and for the sub-groups of English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities from 2015 to 2017. The percentage of students with disabilities passing all classes rose to over 75 percent in that time frame. In addition, students take ownership of their academic futures by taking courses and earning college credit in epidemiology, music theory, computer science, psychology, and sociology for college credit through the College Now program at Hunter College.

- Reflecting the culture of high expectations for student achievement that permeates this school, the principal stated, “All students may not know exactly what they want to pursue or where they want to go to college, but all are clearly aware of the expectations.” In a welcoming letter to incoming ninth-graders, the principal explains that in their first year at the school, “Our course work will be structured to help build your college-ready skills and prepare you for the English Language Arts Common Core Regents Exam.” The letter added that students are expected to read independently and to participate in discussions and debates. Students and guidance counselors use the online Naviance system to identify the college programs that look like a good match with the students’ interests and performance and then track their application process.

- Parents are partners with staff and teachers to ensure their children are supported in achieving their goals. Parents, students, and teachers work together on the College Readiness Committee, which focuses on the college application process and academic skill acquisition. A parent newsletter from January 2017 informs parents what their children should have accomplished by that point in the college process. For example, it outlines deadlines by which all seniors should have taken the required standardized college admissions tests, applied to City colleges and universities, and submitted all financial aid information to the guidance department.

- Parents agreed that they are well informed about their children’s academic progress and their graduation status through the widespread use of online grade reporting programs such as PupilPath and Kinvolved. In addition, parents stated they maintain strong and continuous contact with teachers through email, text messaging, and in-person meetings. One parent stated that her child badgers her to attend parent-teacher conferences and added, “His face lights up when he sees me with his teacher.”
Findings

Not all teachers are consistently providing entry into the curricula and opportunities for students with varied needs to demonstrate their learning.

Impact

Student discussion and work products do not yet consistently reflect high levels of thinking and participation in challenging tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- Student work products did not have consistent levels of rigor across departments. A social studies comparative essay concerned the desire for power that shaped the lives of people in the Ottoman Empire and the Ming Dynasty. Another social studies task involved identifying principal facts and details from primary documents. Math and science tasks were generally worksheets for practicing problem solving, with few instances of real-world applications. On one worksheet for an advanced algebra class, only four out of eighteen problems related the skill to an application that explained a real-life problem, such as determining the distance a runner would travel if she followed a constant increase in the number of miles over a period of six weeks.

- In some classes, the instruction and discussions were teacher-centered, with missed opportunities for high-levels of student participation and thinking. For example, during a discussion about the Lend-Lease Act, students responded to low-level recall questions, such as, “What is the vocabulary word in the last paragraph?” with one-word answers. In an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, the discussion pattern was controlled by the teacher, with few students contributing high-level responses. In the activity following this discussion, one member of the group was actively responding to the questions in five out of six groups observed. In another social studies class, however, students were actively engaged in investigating the Reformation, focusing on how social change creates winners and losers. Students offered a comparison to the Black Lives Matter movement, which is closer to their lived experience.

- In an English ICT lesson, the teachers and students passed a ball from person to person as an invitation to speak, thus providing more opportunities for student-to-student interaction. The students were preparing for a Socratic seminar by generating questions from their reading of Shakespeare’s *Othello: Moor of Venice*. One group of students discussed how “Desdemona is a dream girl” and “Iago wants to see Othello suffer because he [Othello] is in a higher position.” However, this high-level discussion was not consistently observed across classes.
Findings
Curricula unevenly reflect planning to engage all students in rigorous academic tasks that emphasize higher-order skills and content. Some teachers plan generic differentiation strategies that do not address the needs of their students.

Impact
Cognitive engagement in challenging tasks is not consistent across content areas and for all learners.

Supporting Evidence
- Some lesson plans have tasks that are rigorous and challenging, although not all lessons have tasks specifically designed for ELLs, which is a small percentage of the students at this school, or for students with disabilities. One math lesson plan on quadratic equations requires students to graph them, solve them using the quadratic formula, and solve them by completing the square. Students are also expected to conduct error analysis to find errors that are commonly made and correct them. Another lesson includes a text-analysis response based on the memoir *The Glass Castle*. The writing assignment is modeled on those frequently found on the English Regents exam. However, this level of rigor is not consistent across all classes. For instance, another math lesson has tasks that are mostly low-level and not aligned with the aim of the lesson. The plan does not outline how the students will move from the low-level calculation of percentages to the higher-order concept of exponential growth.

- While some plans have a variety of tasks that provide entry points for students with different learning styles, a few lesson plans identify generic differentiation strategies. For example, one lesson plan includes tasks that are differentiated for students who are grouped by the degree of scaffolding, with the lowest performing students receiving the highest level of support in the form of sentence starters and a list of literary terms. Another lesson plan states that the teacher will provide varied activities to meet the needs of different students without identifying what the varied activities will be.

- Teachers use data on how students perform on prior units of study to plan groupings. However, the tasks are not always differentiated for each group or designed to address the learning gaps that led to the group formation. Some teachers use a protocol for looking at student work to evaluate the progress students are making. One lesson plan identifies the students who will work together during the group activity, but does not provide the rationale for the grouping or customized activities for each group.

- Some lesson plans reflect the use of a gradual release model of instruction in which the teacher models the skills, then groups of students help each other practice the before individual students independently demonstrate mastery of the skills. School leaders have trained teachers to create lesson plans to utilize this strategy and expect that the skills and content taught will be aligned to the standards, the learning objectives, and the assessments of the lesson. One science lesson plan outlines how the teacher will model the use a reference table to determine how much energy is released or absorbed when an atom changes energy level. The plan includes the questions that students will answer in pairs and groups and also includes the questions, based on the Physics Regents exam, that will be used for the culminating assessment. This level of specificity is not present in all lesson plans.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

Teachers use and adapt rubrics to their curricula and administer common baseline and interim assessments to determine student progress.

Impact

Teachers gather information on learning gaps to inform curricular adjustments and give students actionable feedback to help them improve their performance.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers administer course-specific baseline and interim assessments during each term. The results of these assessments are analyzed and shared across each department so that teachers can use them to adjust instruction for upcoming lessons as well as to inform planning for teaching these units of study next year. The analysis of a baseline and a subsequent interim assessment on modeling linear functions identifies how well individual students improved in this skill and also aggregates results by class. In one class, the average score, on a range of one to four, for student who took both assessments improved by almost two levels. The English department also tracks student performance by writing and literacy standard to determine which standards need to be retaught and which students are prepared to move on.

- Assessment data is gathered and reports are generated in a graduation tracker created in partnership with New Visions for Public Schools. Teachers use this tool to conduct item analysis and to determine what gaps in learning may be preventing students from staying on track for graduation. The graduation tracker includes information about student performance across all classes, scores on Regents exams, credit accumulation, and whether the student is on track to graduate in four years.

- Teachers create and use rubrics and assessments to provide feedback to students and to inform their understanding of student learning. One rubric from a lesson on the Reformation includes criteria on how well the student develops the various aspects of the task, responds with details, writes with accuracy, and analyzes the information. Teachers also use rubrics that are consistent with those used to score Regents exams so that students understand how they can improve their performance to maximize their score. Before the Regents exams, teachers administer practice exams to help students become familiar with the conditions of testing, the format of questions, and the content that frequently appears on these exams.

- Feedback to students is actionable and detailed. On an essay about the central idea of *Lord of the Flies*, the teacher noted on the State Text Analysis rubric that the student had achieved a level 2 for the criterion of Command of Evidence. In his comments, the teacher wrote, “I don’t think your quotes and their explanations prove your central idea.” On a creative writing exercise, a teacher noted that a point had been deducted because the writer had not created a vivid setting at the beginning of the story, yet also praised her for providing descriptive details. Similarly, a teacher praised a student for writing a detailed and action-packed story and suggested it could be improved by developing the characters through more dialogue.
**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 consistently provide teachers with suggestions on how to improve their practice and provide additional support to new or struggling teachers. Feedback from supervisors and peer intervisitation is actionable and celebrates best practices while capturing areas of growth.

**Impact**

Professional growth is promoted and clear expectations are reinforced so that teachers develop their pedagogical skills.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teacher support is differentiated to account for student achievement and growth, provide professional learning opportunities to new teachers, and outline professional goals. New teachers work with a mentor who is a retired principal, and special education teachers work with a part-time coach to develop skills and improve practices for this high-needs sub-group of students. School leaders conduct frequent rounds of formal and informal observations and then aggregate and analyze the ratings of each component of practice. Subsequently, they share the trends and patterns of practices that emerge from the analysis of the observation data with the teachers to illustrate the common areas for growth.

- Feedback to teachers is actionable and holds them accountable for meeting expectations regarding student achievement and professional practice. For example, one observation commended a teacher for the close alignment of the warm-up activity, the text reading, the aim, and the summative assessment. The observation went on to offer ways the teacher could improve from effective to highly effective in the component of promoting questioning and discussion by having students share their findings about the reading. The observer suggested a discussion related to the aim initiated by giving students a structured question would “allow this discussion to take place in every group, with less guidance from the teacher,” thus promoting higher-order thinking. Another teacher who was rated developing in the component of designing coherent instruction was reminded to provide additional tasks for students who had completed their work before others had finished.

- Teachers agreed that feedback from the school leaders is helpful, personalized for their individual goals, and supportive. One teacher stated that this year is the first time he has received feedback that helps him grow. Another teacher said that, “Individual observations help me to see what I am not doing and must do to get better” and added that school leaders and coaches help him to improve the way he uses backwards planning strategies.
Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: | 4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development | Rating: | Well Developed |

Findings

All teachers are engaged in a wide variety of collaborative, inquiry-based teams, and committees aimed at school improvement efforts that they initiate and lead.

Impact

Teachers increase their instructional capacity and improve the coherence of instruction across the school. Student achievement is increasing and more students are meeting their college and career goals.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers described one collaborative practice they call speed dating, during which they share practices and information about students by rotating every seven minutes between members of their grade-level team. After the round, they reflect on what they have learned and share their reflections with their colleagues. They noted that this type of sharing is particularly helpful in identifying interdisciplinary connections as well as focusing multiple teachers on the performance of high-needs students.

- Teachers routinely conduct intervisitations that provide many opportunities for them to learn new practices that are successful with the same or similar students they teach and to achieve schoolwide coherence in the implementation of the standards and the instructional shifts. Teachers prepare for each intervisitation by completing a pre-visit form that identifies the learning objective of the lesson to be observed, the standards that will be addressed, and the learning that will be assessed. The teacher also explains how the learning objective was chosen. One teacher explained that the learning objective about comparing the outcomes of World War I was chosen because students need to be clear on the long-term impact of agreements such as the Treaty of Versailles, the formation of the League of Nations, and the principles outlined in the Fourteen Points. After the visit, teachers analyze low-inference notes and identify some next steps they share with each other. Teachers agreed that this kind of collegial support helps them evaluate and improve their own practices.

- Teachers participate in committees that examine and recommend schoolwide improvement practices, ranging from grade level and content specific collaborations to student, college readiness, and professional development. The intervisitation practices are organized and led by teachers. In addition to collaborating with each other, teachers also work with parents and school leaders on the college readiness committee to ensure comprehensive support is provided to students in their college and career development. This committee has determined a schoolwide goal of providing preparation courses to achieve a 95 percent participation rate on standardized college admission tests. The teacher leader of this team indicated that every summer the members review cohort data and ensure the necessary courses are offered so that students can stay on track to earn the credits needed for on-time graduation. The four and six-year graduation rates at this school are higher than similar schools, and the average score on the Scholastic Aptitude Test has increased by 100 points from the average in 2016.