Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Voyages Prep - South Queens
High school 27Q261
156-10 Baisley Blvd.
Queens
NY 11434

Principal: Christopher Losurdo

Dates of Review:
January 18, 2017 - January 19, 2017

Lead Reviewer: AJ Hepworth
The Quality Review Report

The Quality Review is a two-day school visit by an experienced educator. During the review, the reviewer visits classrooms, talks with parents, students, teachers, and school leaders and uses a rubric to evaluate how well the school is organized to support student achievement.

The Quality Review Report provides a rating for all ten indicators of the Quality Review Rubric in three categories: Instructional Core, School Culture, and Systems for Improvement. One indicator is identified as the Area of Celebration to highlight an area in which the school does well to support student learning and achievement. One indicator is identified as the Area of Focus to highlight an area the school should work on to support student learning and achievement. The remaining indicators are identified as Additional Finding. This report presents written findings, impact, and site-specific supporting evidence for six indicators.

Information about the School

Voyages Prep - South Queens serves students in grade 9 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>
</tr>
</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>Area of Celebration</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>
</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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</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>Proficient</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>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>
</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>Proficient</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>Developing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings

Curricula, including Guided Learning Books designed by teachers are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and are planned and revised with feedback across grades and subjects.

Impact

Planning documents include and promote college and career readiness skills across courses and core content areas for a diversity of learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Guided learning books (GLBs) are student friendly instructional supporting documents developed by teachers. Each GLB is designed to provide structures to promote academic conversations and interactions for a variety of learners across all content areas. GLBs are planned and revised to accommodate the variety of student learning needs across classes. Some GLBs are designed for groups of students and provide differentiated accommodations. An argumentative essay GBL for social studies challenged students to acquire an understanding of how the use of documents can support the development of claims and counterclaims. Leveled texts about the Affordable Care Act were provided to all students, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities. One version of the text included headings and simplified paragraphs from an online health website, while the other version was an opinion essay from The New York Times. An earth science GBL was refined for students to ensure cognitive engagement of the theory of plate tectonics.

- Graphic organizers are developed to support implementation of the instructional shifts in English Language Arts (ELA). An organizer intended to support writing in-depth responses in literature includes a model using specific techniques; students are expected to restate the question, answer the question analytically, provide an example such as a quote from the text, and develop a final thought (RAFT). Other organizers provide guiding questions to help students understand key points of a story and to use evidence from sources to inform or make an argument when they write. Additionally, the graphic organizers are planned for students to be able to make connections with other disciplines and build knowledge about the world through developing an engaging presentation. Similar organizers are developed to provide Common Core Learning Standards’ aligned student work products in math, social studies, and science.

- Lesson plans are developed following a template and criteria for engaging students in learning and providing structure to the flow of the lesson. Documents focus on real world applications, engaging activities, and the use of varied text to inform writing and build academic vocabulary. A social studies lesson plan included an activity where students will visit four stations and examine primary source documents on the Reign of Terror to create a summary of those documents and a critical question. A lesson plan for an ELA classroom included a gallery walk for students to look at images based on The Cask of Amontillado by Edgar Allen Poe, to predict themes and attempt to determine central ideas. The lesson plans included assessment questions and evaluation strategies for teachers to check for understanding and ensure tasks are cognitively engaging for all students during instruction.
**Findings**

Across classrooms, teachers have administered benchmark assessments; however, there is inconsistent use of assessment practices to check for understanding during daily class lessons.

**Impact**

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

**Supporting Evidence**

- Mock Regents are administered at the beginning of both the second and third trimester to assess student’s readiness for summative course exams and provide context for scheduling students for the next term. The purpose of the exams is to expose the students to the conditions of the testing day and provide support both academically and emotionally to students who have historically had difficulty with attendance, working under time constraints, pressure to perform, and demonstrate academic understandings. Although the assessment results are used to purposefully schedule students and support them on a path towards a timely graduation, they are inconsistently used to adjust curricula and instruction. As a result limiting the full effect of using the data.

- Teacher’s assessment practices across classrooms reflect inconsistencies to determine what students are working on, what they completed, and how they are made aware of their needs through self-assessment and ongoing checks for understanding. During a social studies lesson, the teacher asked students a variety of low-level clarifying questions regarding the main idea that was discussed. As a result of inconsistent monitoring by the teacher more critical questions were not asked, but a possible main idea summary was provided when it was observed the students were struggling. Similarly, in another lesson the teacher asked students what they are writing on their GLB, and after students shared the teacher said, “True, I am hearing some good things, but what are the bad things?” Feedback was often limited to general and vague statements and did not provide opportunity for purposeful follow through by the students.

- In some classes, structures are in place for students to peer assess and track their learning. For example, a form identifying what classwork students finish and how well they understand the objective is used. A review of the tracking forms revealed incomplete use and incorrect alignment with the lesson structure. For example, students would mark the use of the Frayer model, although it was not used, or they would check that they engaged in class discussion, although the quality of their discourse is not referenced.
Additional Finding

**Quality Indicator:** 1.2 Pedagogy

**Rating:** Proficient

**Findings**

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect a set of adopted instructional priorities about how students learn best as observed in student work products and purposeful small group discussions.

**Impact**

Students produce meaningful work products and high levels of student thinking and participation are present, although students lack demonstration of instructional ownership across classes.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Activity-based instruction is a core belief of how students learn best and was observed across classrooms. During an Earth Science lesson, students were provided materials in small groups to detect flow patterns and collect data regarding the concept of how warm and cool convection currents move in water. Students made predictions as to the direction of the flow of water, as water at different temperatures was added. Although some students were inaccurate in their explanation, they attempted to remain intellectually engaged in the lab by drawing observed patterns and developing a conclusion.

- Teachers align their instructional planning to student-centered discovery group work to promote discussions and students’ thinking and participation. A social studies teacher provided students the opportunity to role-play for the purpose of deepening their understanding of working conditions in the garment industry during the early 1900’s. Students engaged in the role-play and reflected on their experience while making connections to previously taught content. For example, several students made connections to child labor laws, pollution, and pay practices used by Andrew Carnegie. Similarly, students in a math class who were absent were encouraged to remain equally engaged by listening to a lesson online with laptops specifically selected to provide instruction on par with the lesson previously taught. Students explained that the use of online resources allows them to pace themselves appropriately and “catch up” or “stay on target.”

- Students are provided significant opportunities to engage in classroom discussions and share their thinking with one another. Students in an ELA class made connections between the ideas expressed during the Enlightenment and how they influenced the United Nation’s Declaration of Human Rights. A station walk protocol was used in a social studies class to enable students to collect information about human rights violations committed in Cambodia and Rwanda. Students supported their claim by referencing the text and using visuals from the station resources. One student extended his thinking and concluded that life in Cambodia during the referenced time was “like living a funeral life.”

- During an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, students were asked to develop a claim or counterclaim addressing how they would respond when presented a specific situation. Students discussed personal experiences and made connections about why they would wither, “bug out” or “mind their own business.” Most students strategically developed a logical argument with evidence to demonstrate their thinking.
Additional Finding

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

**Findings**

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations regarding professionalism, building school culture, and pedagogy to the entire staff. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations for all students.

**Impact**

School leaders have established systems to support accountability regarding high expectations for teachers. Additionally, ongoing and specific feedback is provided to students to prepare them for college or a career beyond high school.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Communications regarding expectations for instructional delivery, curriculum resource development, and student work protocols are regularly provided to staff. A memo referencing Understanding by Design asks staff to choose one vignette they feel reflects their teaching or learning experience, to chart problems they experience with that teaching style, and to offer suggestions to address it. Additionally, participants reflected on lessons they have struggled with and how using training from Understanding by Design can improve their future lessons. Teachers overwhelmingly feel they are provided support for meeting schoolwide expectations and specific suggestions for implementation. One teacher highlighted how the school leadership explicitly taught her how to model instruction more effectively by using attention starters and she then incorporated those strategies into her instruction. Student work protocols are normed across a variety of subjects for teachers. Feedback is provided as to what is done well, whether the work indicates clear understanding of objectives by the learners, and suggestions for future lessons.

- Expectations aligned to the instructional focus are provided to staff. All staff are challenged with improving writing in all subject areas that is consistent with rigorous demands of both employment and college readiness. Additionally, raising student expectations is connected to building their knowledge through reading content-rich nonfiction, and informational and fictional texts that are engaging and increasingly more complex and challenging. It is expected that subject teachers implement strategies connected to the instructional supports with the clear understanding that the focus for all teachers is to cover the curriculum content and the skills that allow students to read and write better.

- Students are provided visual transcripts highlighting credits towards graduation, the Regents exams they completed, and the intended year for graduation. However, as part of holding students accountable, they are required to ask the school leadership to obtain a copy of the transcript. Meetings are arranged between seniors anticipating graduation and a staff member to prepare them for college or career opportunities. College and career expos are offered to students on campus to provide “viable options for young adults to grow, excel, and succeed.” Students shared they are provided the necessary preparation regarding college applications, information regarding financing their education, and military options. Specifically, students acknowledge the staff genuinely cares for them and they are further supported through home visits, and phone calls by school personnel.
Additional Finding

Quality Indicator: 4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision
Rating: Proficient

Findings
School leaders support the development of teachers with feedback from cycles of classroom observations and analysis of student work. School leaders use observation data to design and facilitate professional development.

Impact
Instructional practices and the promotion of professional growth are elevated through these frequent cycles of observation. Relevant professional development is provided teachers through the effective use of observation data ensuring improved teaching practices.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders provide constant feedback to teachers through planned cycles of observations using Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) evaluation forms. APPR forms provided to teachers following an observation include specific evaluator notes with one or two next steps for improvement in the context of the lesson that are transferrable to future instruction. A transferrable next step provided on one APPR form stated, “Allow for more opportunity for students to share their work with peers for review or create a self-assessment checklist.” Other notes suggested the teacher continuing to meet and plan with the evaluator to improve the questioning in the GLBs. Teachers overwhelmingly agree the feedback allows them to tweak their instruction which improves their practice.

- All teachers collaborate with administration to strengthen their pedagogical practices based on teacher observations. Teachers in groups or as individuals discuss student work or data to improve their growth by purposefully going to the school leadership for guidance. Teachers, including those new to the school culture, often ask for suggestions by inviting the school leadership to observe them informally. They report feeling open to the feedback and the resulting constructive criticism which leads to better instruction.

- Being an intimately staffed transfer school, teachers take advantage of purposefully designing professional development to align with the analysis from observations and the trends they themselves notice connected to their strengths and weaknesses. Regularly they develop plans for collegial support or interventions if necessary. Teachers will observe one another based on personal experiences or professional development they have attended to support one another. For example, teacher observations consistently identified questioning techniques as an area in need of more professional development. As such, teachers were arranged into small groups and provided feedback to one another to determine what were the important questions to be planned in a GLB.

- Purposeful professional development that supports the explicit teaching style embedded within the school culture has fostered greater teacher retention. The intimate learning environment and attention by school leaders to connect professional growth with informed decisions, has resulted in high staff attendance, improved quality of instruction, high moral, and accelerated student achievement.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings

The majority of teachers take part in weekly inquiry-based professional collaborations during a common planning period. Additionally, teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for individuals not in their caseload.

Impact

Teacher’s instructional capacity is strengthened through collaborations that promote the achievement of school goals and the analysis of their work during inquiry discussions and common planning time.

Supporting Evidence

- Regular professional collaborations occur within and across content areas to review student work. An inquiry protocol includes identifying a specific goal. The reformatting of GLBs to focus explicitly on reading information, gathering evidence from text, applying information, and writing using correct academic language with multiple representations was one such area of inquiry. An agenda from a math department inquiry meeting included teacher reflections and next steps for two students based on the analysis of a completed assignment. One of the stated math instructional goals for the two students, included intensifying college level skills, especially in the areas of functions and quadratics, through a blended learning approach. Teachers noted the careful analysis of GLBs has had a significant impact on their instruction and resulted in a shift from focusing on skills to more logic and reasoning causing students to think about how they apply their skills.

- During a teacher team meeting, the staff reflected on their use of an instructional approach aligned with the school-wide emphasis on improved writing for all. Staff identified areas where students struggle when writing an essay using specific texts or documents. A method to improve student’s development of meaningful responses was identified. The approach now used across all content areas requires students to introduce the document or citation, cite a specific quote from the document, and explain its importance and how it relates to the task (ICE). Teachers report significant growth in the quality of writing using the ICE strategy and see significant improvement in the quality of quotes selected and how they are used in their writing.

- At a math meeting student work was reviewed to determine if students could demonstrate a deep understanding of mathematical reasoning when given a table or graph, when solving multi-step problems. Teachers concluded that support structures were needed since the Common Core Learning Standards require students to explain their solution when problem solving. Annotation strategies were listed as good tools for students to incorporate. For those students that were already successful, extensions would be created. One protocol students would be encouraged to use is to circle the number, underline key words, box the question, and eliminate unnecessary info (CUBE) when solving math problems.