Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Flushing High School
High School 25Q460
35-01 Union St.
Queens
NY 11354

Principal: Tyee Chin

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

Lead Reviewer: Adam Breier
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

#### 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>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>
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</tbody>
</table>
### School Culture

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</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>Developing</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>Proficient</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 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>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>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>Proficient</td>
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<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>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>Developing</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

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

Findings

Teacher teams consistently analyze data and student work for students they share. Distributed leadership structures are in place.

Impact

Teacher teams conduct inquiry cycles that result in student growth and increased teacher capacity. In addition, teachers have leadership capacity and are involved in decision-making that has a positive impact on student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- All grade-nine math teachers administered a benchmark exam in order to uncover the areas of greatest need. Analysis of the resulting data revealed that students struggled with transformation of functions with only thirty-seven percent of students answering that question correctly. A follow-up assessment administered after this topic was covered evidenced an increase in student understanding as fifty-eight percent of grade nine students answered that question correctly. Teachers then designed a common lesson to more explicitly cover this topic. Results of the follow-up assessment are currently being analyzed. Review of agendas and meeting notes from the math teacher team focusing on geometry revealed their work on developing students’ understanding of geometric transformations in the coordinate plane. Whereas forty-two percent of the target student group correctly answered questions on this topic initially, seventy-three percent of that group correctly answered questions on this topic on the interim assessment. The team is currently creating additional scaffolds to strengthen students’ understanding of this topic.

- Evidence reveals that the English Language Arts (ELA) and social studies teams are analyzing student work through three similar lenses. Each lens is the focus of one of three inquiry cycles. The first cycle is focused on students’ citation of textual evidence. The second cycle will focus on students’ understanding of content. The third cycle will focus on the coherence and organization of students’ essays. At the close of the first inquiry cycle, five out of the seven target-group students evidenced growth in their use of text-based evidence in argumentative essays. Similarly, the social studies teacher team is near the end of their first cycle of inquiry. This cycle involved the administration of a common benchmark assessment that revealed that target-group students struggled with responding to document-based short answer questions with sufficient text-evidence. An interim assessment will soon be administered that will provide the data needed for the team’s self-assessment.

- Teachers reported that their instructional practices have improved as a result of the conversations and intervisitations that result from teacher team meetings. For example, one teacher reported that he has been having students report their peers’ findings in order to strengthen peer collaborations. Another teacher spoke about redesigning do now assignments to serve as discussion prompts in order to increase student engagement.

- Each academic department has a lead teacher who delivers professional development (PD), supports struggling teachers, and facilitates intervisitations. Teacher leaders met with their whole teams and then with the whole faculty to share the notes and findings of these intervisitations. As a result of their work and the resulting data analysis, teacher leaders determined that the common focus of PD was to be developing student ownership. The impact of this work on student learning was evident in the classes in which students were actively engaged as well as in classes where, although students were not actively engaged with each other, there were attempts at facilitating this for students.
Area of Focus

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

Findings
Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to the school's beliefs about how students learn best. Teaching practices inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact
Teaching practices across classrooms do not yet fully reflect the school's belief that students learn best when instruction is student-centered and includes opportunities for students to conduct student-to-student discussions. Additionally, teaching practices result in uneven student engagement in challenging tasks and demonstration of higher-order thinking skills by all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Students in an Advanced Placement ELA class were engaged in a peer-editing exercise. After reading and editing partners’ essays, students shared their comments and suggestions with their partners at which point they discussed the comments and how they should be integrated into new essay drafts. Similarly, students in a grade eleven ELA class also conducted peer editing complemented by student discussion over the edits made to their essays. Students in a grade nine global studies class were studying Machiavelli. Students were asked to turn to a partner and discuss their opinion as to whether an effective school principal is most effective when he or she is loved or feared. Each group’s conversation was facilitated by a student leader who also ensured that the whole-class share-out contained information not already shared by previous groups.

- Although the articulated belief that students learn best through the facilitation of student-to-student conversation was evident in some classes, instruction was largely teacher-centered and student-to-student discussion was infrequent in a majority of classes. While students in an algebra class circulated throughout the room visiting different stations within groups, students were not assigned to work that required them to work cooperatively. In an economics class where the focus was determining how saving and investing money contributes to the free-enterprise system, there were multiple missed opportunities for students to turn and talk with a partner. For example, answers were elicited from individual students without any student-to-student discussion around questions about whether saving or investing money gives the individual a better rate of return and what is meant by the expression “never place all your eggs in one basket.”

- While students had use of English-to-Spanish glossaries in a living environment class and in a global studies class English Language Learners (ELLs) were able to access an online tool for translation services, multiple entry points were not evident in a majority of observed classes. Despite the fact that a grade-twelve Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class was designed for a mix of general education students and students with disabilities, neither scaffolded supports nor differentiated materials were provided for students. The inconsistent provision of multiple entry points limited the levels of engagement for diverse learners, including ELLs and students with disabilities.
Findings
School leaders and faculty are in the process of integrating curricula with the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. Additionally, planning is beginning to reflect an effort to provide a diversity of learners access to the curricula and academic tasks.

Impact
The ELA and math instructional shifts are unevenly integrated across grades and content areas, thus missing opportunities to provide accessible, coherent curricula across grades. In addition, not all student groups are consistently engaged in rigorous curricula and tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- The instructional shift that has students' understanding in math deepen through the application of math in real world application is present in an algebra lesson plan. Students are to learn about different functions and how they can shape peoples’ decisions when offered three formulas as possible methods for determining an allowance they might receive from their parents. However, there is no evidence of purposeful integration of the math instructional shifts in lesson plans for either geometry or trigonometry. A grade eleven ELA lesson plan has students identifying Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy’s position in a written legal decision and identifying evidence within it to use in support of his argument. However, another grade eleven ELA lesson plan identifies the Common Core Learning Standard referencing the citation of strong and thorough textual evidence as central to the lesson but does not meaningfully include that skill in any of the lesson's activities. Among lesson plans for subjects other than ELA, there is an uneven integration of the instructional shifts. Whereas global studies, forensic anthropology, and law lesson plans include activities around the ELA shift regarding the use of text-based evidence, lesson plans for economics, living environment, and Earth science classes lack the same integration.

- Some lesson plans submitted evidence varying levels of planning so that ELLs and students with disabilities have access to the curricula. An algebra lesson plan guiding students through comparing different functions, data trends and patterns and predicting applicable functions includes differentiated worksheets. A law lesson plan that involves student groups emulates the process during which trial juries weigh evidence to arrive at a verdict. This lesson plan indicates that students were grouped by need and ability and that ELLs were grouped together and provided with translated vocabulary words. An economics lesson plan states that students are grouped by personality as well as strengths and weaknesses, and that some are grouped by language in common to work together with a translator. Additionally, it is stated that some students with disabilities are grouped with students without disabilities. However, there is no indication as to which students are grouped together, what data or information went into those decisions, or how students’ individualized education plans (IEP) factored into those decisions.

- Other lesson plans evidence an absence of planning for access for a diversity of students to curricula. A lesson plan format, used by a majority of teachers, contains a boilerplate checklist of differentiation strategies that was left blank on five lesson plans spanning all content areas. While some of these plans evidence attempts at planning for different learners, few plans evidence purposeful differentiation to engage ELLs and students with disabilities in rigorous lessons.
Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings
School leaders and teachers use common assessments to determine student progress toward goals. Across classrooms, teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding.

Impact
Across all classes, an instructional strategy is being implemented to address students' math fluency that was determined based on data. Teachers' use of a tool for tracking students' in-class understandings and participation allow teachers to adjust and modify instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- The school administers common mid-term exams in each academic department. The data resulting from these common assessments is used to adjust curriculum and teaching strategies. Data from the ELA common mid-term exams revealed that in argumentative essays, students were struggling with the use of text-based evidence in support of their arguments. Students were either not including this evidence or using quotes that did not help to support their arguments. As a result, ELA and social studies teachers have increased the purposeful requirement that students use text-based evidence in support of their arguments in writing assignments. In addition, the decision was made to transition to new ELA and social studies curricula for the 2017-2018 school year.

- Similar to the ELA department's work with data from common assessments, the math, science, and social studies teachers also plan and administer common mid-term exams. The data from these common assessments is then used to adjust curriculum and teaching strategies. Examples of common student struggles revealed through data analysis was the answering of extended responses and understanding transformations of functions in algebra, understanding graphs and numbers as they relate to primary and secondary sources in social studies classes, as well as academic vocabulary across content areas. Data reveal gains in students' Regents exam scores between June 2015 and June 2016 in ELA, algebra, living environment and global studies. Additionally, gains have also been seen in Regents exam scores between January 2016 and January 2017 in Algebra, Geometry, Earth Science, US History and ELA.

- In all classes visited, teachers circulated throughout their classrooms while students were engaged in the task at hand. Teachers were checking-in with individual students as well as student groups. A majority of teachers were taking notes while checking-in with students on tracking sheets. For example, in a forensic anthropology class the teacher was using a classwork tracking form to note students’ task completion, level(s) of making thinking visible, use of academic vocabulary, collaboration with peers, and use of tools and resources. A global studies teacher was tracking students’ success in answering four key lesson questions, each connected to one of the four levels of Webb’s Depth of Knowledge tool for writing questions of increasing depth. An ELA teacher was using a tracker designed specifically to measure students' participation in the group discussion activity. This tracker listed each student group with space for notes to detail information as to which groups may have required in-class shifting of members as well as space for the teacher's observations. Additionally, a grade eleven ELA lesson was launched by the teacher's announcement that because of her observation over the week that students are continuing to struggle with connecting textual evidence to their arguments, this would be the focus of the day’s lesson.
### Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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**Findings**

The school provides ongoing information to families regarding student progress toward college and career readiness. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations for all students.

**Impact**

Communication from school leaders and teachers through an online grade book system and other platforms provide frequent opportunities for families to understand student progress towards meeting standards. Through small learning communities (SLCs), college application supports and course offerings, students are being prepared for their individual next-levels.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Parent workshops are held repeatedly where school staff guides parents through improving students’ attendance, understanding high school credit accumulation and graduation requirement policies, how to make effective use of the online gradebook system employed at the school, as well as workshops on applying for financial aid and the college application process. One parent reported and all present agreed that “Whenever there is a school event, I get multiple notifications by phone and by flier. And whenever I have a question about anything, I just call and if I need to leave a message, I get a response the same day.” Parents also praised the school faculty for communicating through the online gradebook system which helps them monitor their children’s academic progress.

- The school has initiated a program titled *Going Green*, designed to communicate high expectations regarding students’ preparedness for their respective next-levels. This involves posting color-coded credit accumulation data and Regents exam pass rates as well as tracking graduation readiness for students of all grades. This information is posted in the lobby, on multiple hallway walls, and distributed to all students. In addition, interim progress reports are distributed to students between official report cards. Teachers use this information within their assigned SLCs. Each SLC teacher monitors specific students within their SLC in order to ensure that they either remain on-track for graduation or take measures to become on-track. Whereas career-themed SLCs include students of multiple grades, the Freshman Academy is the sole SLC including students of only one grade. In order to ensure that students in grade nine successfully transition into high school and remain on-track, the Lucky Five program was launched. This program involves the collection of five different grade nine students every Friday. During the Lucky Five meeting, students eat pizza and talk about academic issues that may be evident as per available data or as having been reported by content area teachers to the Lucky Five committee through a referral system.

- Various activities, presentations, and course offerings also communicate the school’s high expectations around students’ preparedness for college and career. All students in grades ten, eleven, and twelve are in a career-themed SLC. Teachers within these SLCs infuse that career theme into their content-area instruction. Additionally, students have taken trips to visit colleges and completed their financial aid applications with the assistance of faculty. The predicted target of seventy-four percent of students applying to college will mark an almost twenty percent gain from the previous school year. As of April 15, 2007, sixty-three students had already been accepted to two or more colleges. Additionally, one hundred thirty nine students earned college credit through the College Now program while students had fourteen different Advanced Placement courses from which they could choose.
Additional Finding

<table>
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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 teacher development with effective feedback and next steps from frequent classroom observation cycles. An effective system drives the use of teacher observation data in the design and facilitation of PD.

Impact

As a result, support practices are positively impacting teacher capacity and strengthening instruction across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Frequent cycles of classroom observation provide feedback utilizing the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Each rated item on observation reports includes specific language from the rubric, evidence from the classroom that supports the rating, as well as actionable next steps. For example, one observation report includes feedback to the teacher on including the questions and assessments that will be used to diagnose students’ learning. Another observation report detailed the lack of student engagement and advised the teacher to purposefully integrate the use of accountable talk sentence stems and require that students use these in order to both increase engagement and students’ capacity to engage in student-to-student conversations. Other examples of actionable feedback found within official observation reports advise teachers to use protocols that would increase student accountability and not allow students to self-select themselves out of an instructional activity, and to require students to offer text-based evidence to arguments not only in writing assignments but also in the course of student-to-student and student-to-teacher discussions. One teacher reported that due to feedback offered by a school leader, she has been issuing stronger written feedback to students that includes actionable next steps and that students are using that feedback and improving their grades.

- In addition, there are multiple examples of observation reports that reinforce feedback offered in earlier observation reports. For example, one observation report includes feedback that the teacher should make use of a tracking form in order to keep abreast of students’ progress across the year given specific skills addressed within instructional units. The fact that this specific recommendation was made in a previous observation report is also noted. In another example observation report, a teacher is advised to seize opportunities to highlight the school’s instructional focus and integrate teacher-modeling into the mini-lesson. This feedback is further developed by the school leader’s description of how modeling could have been utilized in the lesson observed.

- Analysis of teachers’ observation results from the 2015-2016 school year revealed a trend in teachers’ need for development in effective formative assessment and increasing student engagement. The resulting PD plan evidences a concerted focus on the observed areas of need. Examples of PD topics related to lesson design include designing an effective reading lesson, employing cooperative learning strategies, designing questions so that they build in rigor along the scale outlined in Webb’s *Depth of Knowledge* tool, and in the design and use of graphic organizer-tracking sheets so that teachers can keep accurate data on students’ progress for any number of skills and areas of specific content around which teachers plan. One teacher reported growth in his ability to regroup students as a direct result of the principal’s suggestion that he use a tracking system to monitor students during class.