Quality Review Report
2016-2017

Information Technology High School
High school 30Q502
21-16 44th Rd.
Queens
NY 11101

Principal: Joseph Reed

Dates of Review:
November 29, 2016 - November 30, 2016

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

Information Technology High School 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>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</strong></td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>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</strong></td>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>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</strong></td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Quality Ratings continued

### 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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

*To what extent does the school...*  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</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 Common Core Learning Standings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Findings**

Distributive leadership structures described as onion layers build teacher leadership and support inquiry based professional collaboration on school identified gaps.

**Impact**

As a result, teachers have wide latitude in structuring teacher team work that has strengthened their instructional capacity and ensures that they have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning.

**Supporting Evidence**

- In a vertical social studies team meeting, teachers worked on creating a mid-term assessment that would allow students to demonstrate content knowledge, as well as provide teachers with information on the progress towards the school identified gaps. As part the protocol, teachers had to provide cool feedback. One teacher questioned both the format and the purpose of the exam by asking, “Does this type of assessment focus on the gaps?” She stated that the exam measured too many elements including the use of academic vocabulary, the inclusion of text based evidence or on having students work with long texts. In a conversation with this team, they stated that they have been very intentional this year with ensuring that students are exposed to the instructional shifts and to that end, they have developed a list of gaps seen across the department. The gaps included student use of evidence in argument writing and the use of counterclaims. They explained that one of the areas of deep learning has been the use of academic vocabulary. They referenced the intentional focus on Tier II and Tier III words and the professional development that was supporting this new focus.

- All teacher teams spoke about the principal’s focus on building teacher leadership through a distributive approach. Teachers cited formal and informal structures such as mentoring, pairing and intervisitation as capacity building vehicles. One senior teacher stated that the principal has made it very clear that it is their collective obligation as senior teachers, to develop new teachers by building their leadership capacity. The principal refers to this as the onion model with him as the outer layer followed by the instructional cabinet layer and moving in towards new teachers. The senior teacher continued “to that end, the school is programmed so that all departments have common planning each day.” Teams including leads, a data specialist, and guidance counselors, meet anywhere from three to five days a week. Teachers use this time to work together to support each other and students by participating in lesson study, planning intervisitations and helping students prepare for college admission, projects and tutoring.

- Across all teams, teachers stated that collaborative team work was the norm at this school fueled by the trust and respect for their professional judgment that the principal demonstrated. Teachers stated that the principal allowed them to assume leading roles and take on responsibility either individually or as groups, as long as, there was personal accountability to the idea or project and it supported teacher or student development. Teachers enlist each other and work collaboratively to support their new ideas. One group of young teachers being mentored by senior teachers designed an incentive program that is like the honor roll and called Renaissance. Student scholarship earns students’ prestige in the school, trips and other incentives. The teachers modeled this Renaissance program after one that existed in their high schools when they were students and when they consulted with the principal, he told them to “run with it.” Veteran teachers stated that this program resulted in new data spreadsheets that have been helpful in targeting students needing intervention and has inspired students whose performance was average, to work harder. Students stated that Renaissance keeps their grade point averages up and they have fun on the trips that they earn.
Findings

The use of scaffolds varies across classrooms and departments with some scaffolds leading to entry points into the curriculum and others hindering student engagement, products and participation.

Impact

As a result, students’ demonstration of high-order thinking is uneven with some classes, like math keeping instruction rigorous and demanding while other classes using scaffolds that inhibit individual student work and lead to limited student work products and discussion.

Supporting Evidence

- In all four math classrooms visited, students were expected to understand relationships between mathematical operations and make connections to new learning. Every student was held accountable to using academic language and to being able to explain and justify their thinking, thus there was a high degree of student thinking and participation in these classes. In one class, where the day before students had used a two-dimensional shape filled with rice to fill a three-dimensional shape, students used that information to extrapolate the formula for the volume change. In another math class, students engaged in an extended writing activity justifying their calculations and reasoning. In all math classrooms students were able to demonstrate their thinking. Struggling students were able to share the procedure that they needed to follow and show resources that they had at their disposal to complete the work, such as a workbook containing formulas and previous notes including math definitions.

- In two social studies classes, all students worked on scaffolded worksheets comprised of a series of boxes that contained a few sentences of excerpted text followed by three blank lines for students to summarize the excerpted sentences. This resulted in scattered bits of information that were difficult for students to make sense of or use to make a claim or refute a counterpoint which is one of the school identified gaps. In one of the classes, students had to decide if a few lines of text was considered a prayer and take the role of a Supreme Court judge to decide if it violated the separation of church and state. One student stated that she needed a working definition of prayer as she stared at her blank page. Another student simply wrote that he would “find them guilty” Another student completed the sheet with “don’t know.” This scaffold appeared in another social studies class, studying the rise of power in the church during the Middle Ages. The objective of the lesson was for students to understand how the church exerted power through architecture. Students read a few lines of text focusing on the use of flying buttresses to support stained glass. The teacher read one of the question, “What type of statement about the church did a large building like a cathedral make to people who lived in the Middle Ages?” One student replied, “Some kind of special glass or window that helped the church.” The excerpt did not contain sufficient information to answer this question and there were no pictures of buttresses or stained glass to support student understanding of how these structures imparted their influence and control. With limited texts and support, there was little information for writing or discussing.

- A scaffold observed in a few classes including in biology and in a global history class on Muslim achievements was a collaborative group approach where students had discreet roles in the group. As a result of this approach, only one student was doing the thinking and only one student was writing with the other students waiting or looking away. This scaffold hindered student thinking and accountability, as well as, produced student projects comprised of a few sentences.

- A review of student writing across classrooms and on bulletin boards reveal student writing is often only a few sentences written as short responses to a prompt or questions. Most displayed no use of evidence and topics were often underdeveloped.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

School leaders have adopted Common Core aligned curriculum and have set a schoolwide focus on ensuring that maps and planning documents reflect the standards and instructional shifts. School tasks and assignment consistently reflect rigor.

Impact

Students are exposed to curriculum that reflects the Common Core, instructional shifts and task that are rigorous. The Career and Technical Education program prepares students for readiness into entry-level careers and Advance Placement coursework that prepares students for college level.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of curriculum demonstrates that students are engaged in reading complex texts and using close reading, annotations such as in a US History unit that requires students cite specific text evidence to support their analysis of primary and secondary to gain insight of the text as a whole. Students read the First Amendment and analyzed the Schenk vs the US, a case where a citizen is accused of espionage. Students are exposed to academic vocabulary such as maintenance insubordination, espionage, libel, and slander. Students, in this case, will write an argument essay on what actions constitute freedom of speech and what is considered a “clear and present” danger. In a grade nine English Language Arts class, students learn about claim, counterclaim, and rebuttal when they read Anna Quindlen’s essay, “A Quilt of a Country” and use text based evidence to agree or disagree with her central idea of the nation as a quilt.

- Through participation in Advance Placement US History, students are exposed to analyzing evidence in content and various sources. Students learn to analyze and evaluate the ways that historians interpret the past and learn to compare and evaluate multiple perspectives, look for patterns across time, and do formulate claims defending their claims through rigorous analysis of relevant historical evidence.

- In a task on choosing your career path based on future income as opposed to other factors, students read a variety of genres including articles and interviews to write an argument essay on where they are required to distinguish their claim from opposing claims and use relevant evidence from both tests to develop an argument, use academic vocabulary, and defend their choice in evidence.

- In a Geometry class, students are involved in applying a sequence of rigid motions from one figure onto another figure in order to demonstrate that their figures are congruent. Students are required to demonstrate knowledge of pre-image mapping and corresponding sides and angles, as well as, function in notation. In this unit, students fold papers to represent the line of reflections so that they can identify the segment bisects to graph them on the coordinate plane.

- The Career and Technical Education curriculum exposes students to various web design programs including the fundamental digital media and technology, such as computer Networking and Cybersecurity and the A+ computer certification program. Students in these courses are learning all of the technical aspects that they need for certification and also learn soft skills such as collaboration, communications, negotiations and problem-solving.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

Student feedback is loosely aligned to the school's curriculum and consists more of comments, praise or questions. Across classrooms there is inconsistent use or recording of checks for understanding.

Impact

As a result, students receive feedback that is neither actionable nor rubric based and this hinders student achievement. The lack of rubric-based feedback and the inconsistencies in use of checks for understanding also limits teacher’s ability to gauge student achievement and make effective adjustments.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal stated that one foci this year is to provide students with actionable, rubric-based feedback. A review of student work in classrooms, in student meetings and in portfolios submitted confirmed his findings. Some students received rubrics with criteria circled and no feedback informing students if the items circled was a grade or a next step and no suggestions for improvement. Some students' work displayed many non-rubric-based teacher comments and no rubric. Other students received a number such as “88” and no feedback at all. Several pieces of work had comments loosely aligned to the rubric such as “good evidence” or “irrelevant” or “good analysis” with no step to move the student towards mastery. This lack of rubric-based feedback also prevents the teacher from seeing patterns in student performance tied to a particular criterion. This hampers the ability to make effective adjustments to address patterns observed by grouping students with similar needs or through whole class instruction. It also hinders school progress towards their goals. One of the school goals is to close the gap on central ideal and the use of evidence to support analysis. These are rubric criterion and yet students do not get feedback on these nor do teachers collect information on these criterions tied to school goals.

- In some classes, “fist to five” is appropriately used to ensure that students understand the instructions for the assignment or to check on the pacing of the lesson. However, this approach is inadequate when asking students to demonstrate an understanding of how the church used hierarchal power to establish political control during the Middle Ages.

- In an Advance Placement Biology class, students read a pedigree chart and looked for the dominant and recessive traits that determine the likelihood of offspring’s inheriting a disease. While the teacher engaged students at each table, he made no adjustment to address recessive and dominant, which was at the heart of the lesson. Similarly, a class reading Arthur Miller and working on determining the central idea, students demonstrated that they did not understand the concept of central idea. The only adjustment made was to tell students at each table that central ideas “are vague and universal.” Students’ papers continued to be blank after this adjustment.

- Across many classes, teachers engage in “at elbow coaching” of student groups without collecting data on the intended outcomes of the mini-lesson and as a result are unable to make adjustments to the lesson to increase student achievement. In some classes where data is collected, the items being measured are not specified. In one class, the principal noticed a teacher making notes on a clipboard. A closer look showed students’ names with a check or a check minus and no criteria of any kind. This lack of specificity in collected data cannot result in an adjustment as what is being measured is unknown, and it is not possible to know how much a student retained, and how much help is needed. In other classes, teachers took notes that were unrelated to the lesson objectives. A print out from a teacher’s iPad included comments about behavior such as student needs to have less side conversation instead of collecting data about students understanding of the content they were working on.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations such as Common Core-aligned instruction to teachers and provide teachers and guidance counselors with professional development. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture that consistently communicates high expectations to all students connected to career and college readiness.

Impact

Teachers are focused on Common Core-aligned instruction tailored to meeting students’ needs. Students participated in advance placement classes and work internships and feel well-prepared and confident to enter the work place and college.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of the principal’s emails, newsletters, emails, and bulletin post all reveal a focus on ensuring that teachers push thinking by using high-order questions, differentiations including native language supports and using text-based evidence. School leaders remind teachers though various communications, including Monday professional development that as a school they are focused on students’ use of evidence in argument and a focus on strengthening academic vocabulary. This was confirmed in a teacher team meeting where teachers stated that there is a schoolwide focus on using Depth of Knowledge questions and argument writing. Teachers shared that they participate in both in-house and outside professional development and often participate in book study. A review of teacher professional development reflection sheets indicated teachers commenting such as [I learned] “different methods of instruction to support English Language Learners (ELLs) like 411 chart, Mind Maps, and Journals.”

- In a student presentation on Career and Technical Education (CTE), two students shared with their peers how their three years in the video and media production courses had prepared them as one of their movies played in the background showing seamless into black and various camera angles. They listed out all the professional software that they had mastered and the various certifications that they had earned. One student said, “My classmate and I will go into different careers and yet through this program we have developed the types of hard and soft skills that will help us in our careers. I have also developed confidence and I feel like a professional.” Another student in this program talked about the meaningful internship that she had been a part of as she opened a laptop to display an extensive live website that she and her classmates had designed. She said, “I did not know anything about a website and now I know about copyrights in design and how to design for a specific audience’s use. Look at this professional website that we built for New York City Department of Education at Brooklyn North.”

- In a meeting with students, they shared that a team that included a guidance counselor was assigned to a cohort of students for the four years that they are there. Each grade has a guidance counselor and there is a counselor solely dedicated to college. Students shared that they have frequent transcript reviews, case conferencing and academic interventions, as well as, support with financial aid and resume writing as evidence by a recent activity called a “lock down” where eighty parents along with guidance counselors and students spent three hours completing their college applications. In addition to this, stated one student, “Don’t you think that all of our AP [Advance Placement] classes prepare us for college? The school offers five AP classes and all of these give us a taste of college and give us college credits that save us money and time.” Students also spoke about the online grade book that keeps them informed about their scholarship, about attending classes in College Now classes and the preparation they receive for the Scholastic Aptitude Test and the ACT-college achievement readiness exam, both needed for admission to college.
Findings
Teachers receive feedback such as observations and emails that accurately captures their strengths and next steps using the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. School leaders have developed a system to capture information from observations to support further teacher growth.

Impact
Teacher practice is supported through specific, clear school leader and peer feedback that provides both “a glow and a grow” and is aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. School leaders effectively support development by providing professional development aligned to teacher observations.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders use emails to provide teachers with feedback from informal observations. This was seen in emails with comments such as “your lesson and plans were very well prepared” and “your use of scaffolding allowed students to gain higher levels of comprehension and skill acquisition.” The email also references the common texts including books and articles read in the teacher team meetings on the use of multiple intelligences using a strategy called the five entry points. The school leader recommends “continue to build on the five entry points designed to increase student interest, as this will be especially beneficial in Integrated Co-teaching classes (ICT)” and it goes on to say, “consider the recommendations made by your colleagues during the post lesson study meeting.”

- Feedback to teachers is clear and pushes teacher practice as seen in formal observations that state, “The teacher’s plans and practices reflect a familiarity with a wide range of effective pedagogical approaches in the discipline and the ability to anticipate student misconceptions. Teachers provided students with scaffolding charts with guided questions to carry out the task. Most students were intellectually engaged in accountable talk during the lesson by collaborating in their small learning groups and could answer the questions.” This is followed by recommendations such as “As we discussed today, the lesson was overall effective. The following are recommendations that may move your ratings to Highly Effective.” The administrator then provides several strategies to engage those students who were not engaged in the lesson.

- When school leaders reviewed their observation data, they identified comments focusing such as “Plan for the use of Tier II as a scaffold for students’ use of disciplinary language. Use sentence starters and Close activity.” They identified a need to support teachers with vocabulary and differentiation and procured professional development with a leading professor and researcher on second language acquisition and academic vocabulary for English Language Learners. Teachers are reading articles on this topic and have already had two workshops on differentiation for English Language Learners and using Tier II and Tier III words.