The Quality Review Report

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

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

Information about the School


School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</td>
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<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>Proficient</td>
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<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>
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<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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### School Culture

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Area of Celebration</td>
</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>
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### Systems for Improvement

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

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

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

Findings
Teachers know their students well and share positive and meaningful relationships. School culture and student discipline are priorities and supported by all, which is exemplified by the number of Student Explorers who proudly wear their uniforms to school.

Impact
Students take a role in setting and maintaining a positive school environment, and student voice is regularly heard, resulting in decision-making to initiate improvement. Structures, such as the attendance committee, provide ongoing support for students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers and school leadership believe that building a safe, inclusive school culture begins with safety and security, and students play a big role in this. In addition to school safety officers, there is a student presence in the hallways, as many students who are part of the Student Explorers program are in full uniform regularly. Student Explorers are those students who wish to pursue a career as a police officer. During the student meeting, several students mentioned that they feel safe in the school because of the number of officers that are visible on a daily basis, including Student Officers. Teachers and students both shared that students take a lot of the responsibility in keeping the school safe and helping to make this school run well. In addition, the implementation of student government has allowed for a stronger student voice. Female students have helped to create the “Girls on Point” group that helps to give students confidence and prepares them for college. One student shared, “Through student government we get to vote and decide what we feel works best for our school, and this is how our voice is heard.”

- There is an attendance committee that includes guidance counselors, an attendance teacher, and school leadership. The attendance committee meets weekly to identify and discuss students with negative lateness or absence patterns. During data review sessions, teachers and administrators identify certain students and share their names with the attendance committee. Once students are identified, the committee enacts an outreach plan to address the issues. This includes conferencing with the student, the student’s teachers, and parents as well as conducting home visits. Additionally, the school celebrates those students that have shown improvement and have perfect attendance every month. The school has seen a 2.85 percent increase in their overall attendance rate over the past three school years, and for the month of January had a total of 43 students with perfect attendance.

- Student voice is encouraged and appreciated throughout the school. All teachers and administrators have an open-door policy where students know they can speak to any adult about anything. As a high school for law enforcement and public safety, there are large numbers of students who plan on becoming police officers. School leaders and students shared how some students in the school were concerned that they would not be able to pass the physical fitness part of the police officer’s exams. Several students got together and went to speak to the principal about their concerns. After several meetings, the school has now implemented an NYPD physical education course that prepares students for the requirements needed to successfully pass the physical fitness part of the police officer exam. Part of this course is to visit the police training academy and allow students to participate in real-life physical fitness tests. As a result, many students are now prepared for and more knowledgeable about what to expect during the test, and several students are more physically fit, with one student losing 30 pounds.
Findings
School leaders have developed an observation system that supports the development of teachers. Teacher growth and professional reflection is promoted and supported by all school leaders.

Impact
Frequent cycles of observation by school leaders provide teachers with regular written and oral feedback, including clear expectations for teacher practice, and detailed suggestions for growth.

Supporting Evidence
- School leaders have a structure in place to formally and informally observe all teachers. School leaders visit classrooms together throughout the school year and discuss the observation for norming purposes. Evidence from several observation reports reflects a system that captures teacher strengths, areas of focus, and next steps. An observation report from school leadership shared feedback that included praising the teacher for the recent implementation of strategies for utilizing language frames. Leadership shared with the teacher how this was an effective strategy to help improve student engagement. Next steps for this teacher included having “Students come to the SmartBoard, elicit responses from their peers, and complete the language frames themselves.” The school leader also stressed having the students model the math problem for their peers, which would aid in moving towards a more student-centered lesson.

- Teacher observations reviewed displayed feedback that offered next steps and expectations. One observation report reminded the teacher that for his forthcoming formal observation within the next two weeks, school leaders expected that the teacher would present to the assistant principal a more student-centered lesson utilizing some of the suggested strategies. Another observation report reviewed reflected the expectation that the teacher must have a written observation plan for every period that the teacher teaches. The school leader informed the teacher how he would be, “stopping by periodically to ensure that a lesson plan is accessible for review in your classroom.”

- Feedback to several teachers captured the events of the lesson observed along with detailed strengths, challenges, and next steps. However, detailed next steps aligned to specific teacher goals were not always fully evident in observation reports. While some reports included targeted suggestions, others were not as specific with respect to follow-up recommendations and expectations that are aligned to teacher goals. In fact, most reports did not mention teacher goals at all. A math observation reviewed offered the teacher some recommendations for how the lesson could be improved, such as allowing time for class assessments by using an exit ticket or a show of hands to gauge student comprehension. However, there was no evidence of feedback that displayed a timeline for follow-up or an alignment to individual teacher goals.
Additional Finding

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings
School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula integrate the instructional shifts and are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, emphasizing rigorous habits, and higher-order thinking skills.

Impact
School leaders have systems in place so that curricula are aligned and regularly reviewed, exposing all students to challenging academic tasks that promote college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of unit plans reveals planning across the curricula that encompasses citing text-based evidence. Unit three of the ninth grade English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum plans for students to be able to cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly, as well as inferences drawn from the text. Students will do this by using guiding and text specific questions to interpret, analyze, and evaluate a variety of texts such as *Romeo and Juliet*. In addition, students will be able to identify textual evidence to support their opinions about the characters in each of the texts they read. The grade ten global history curriculum also incorporates planning that would have students analyzing and citing evidence from their texts in order to support their claims. One unit plan provides students with opportunities to analyze primary and secondary sources from victims and witnesses regarding the Holocaust during World War II.

- There are two sets of teams that the school uses to ensure curriculum alignment, vertical grade teams, and horizontal department teams. These teams were developed for teachers to have more time to unpack and further develop the curricula. School leaders attended professional development (PD) for unpacking curriculum and then worked with teachers during team meetings on how to successfully unpack their curricula. In effort to help streamline and build coherence, all curricula and modifications are found on Google Docs. As teachers make adjustments to curricula, a record is kept as to who made the adjustments and why the adjustments were made. School leaders have access to Google Docs and monitor and interact with the teachers to help facilitate the process of curriculum alignment. During the teacher meeting, teachers shared how having teams that meet vertically and horizontally gives teachers many opportunities to work with the curriculum and shape it so that it works best for the students in their school.

- Examples of rigorous activities are seen throughout lesson and unit plans. A grade eleven ELA lesson plan allows students to analyze rhetorical devices to create a thesis statement for a rhetorical analysis essay based on one of Robert F. Kennedy’s speeches. A Spanish lesson plan allowed students ample opportunities to engage in the target language, specifically how to use the present tense of regular verbs to conduct full conversations in Spanish. Engaging in activities such as this prepares students for more demanding “college level” presentations in the Spanish language. A global history lesson has students take part in a Socratic seminar where they must summarize and define their understanding in the form of a dialogue of the political, economic and social aspects of why feudalism began and ended in the Middle Ages. During the student meeting, several students shared how they enjoy the Socratic seminar because it allows them to be “actively engaged in the lesson.”
Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

Teaching practices are aligned across curricula, reflecting a belief that students learn best when engaged through collaboration, discussion, and authentic tasks. These instructional strategies lead to high levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact

Students’ meaningful and thoughtful work products and discussions reflect high levels of rigor. Higher level skills and practices such as rhetorical analysis, Socratic seminars, and student-centered research were evident.

Supporting Evidence

- During an ELA lesson, students were asked to create a thesis statement for a rhetorical analysis essay based on a speech by Robert F. Kennedy. During this lesson, students had ample opportunities to engage in group discussions based on the video they viewed. The teachers posed the following questions for students to discuss within their groups: “What is the purpose of the speech?” and “What is going on in the country?” Responses to the question from students included, “He is trying to calm and unite us” and “He is trying to give us comfort during a tough time.” In an Algebra I class, students were asked to use the structure of an expression or polynomial to identify ways to rewrite it in factored form. During this lesson, students were given opportunities to work in groups and discuss steps to help solve the algebraic equations. The teacher in this class engaged students by asking questions and having students come to the board and share their thinking processes for several equations. These lessons both featured collaboration, discussion, critical thinking, and high levels of student engagement.

- Student-centered research and argumentation were evident during an environmental science lesson, where students participated in a formal debate which looked to defend the question, “Which type of energy is the best?” Students were separated into two groups, the “door” group and the “window” group. The teacher gave each group six minutes to construct an argument for their side. Students conducted research and captured their findings on laptops using textbooks and class notes. When groups presented, the students used text and research-based evidence to support why their source of energy was the best. For example, one group argued that natural gas is the best source of energy and stated that this was because it is the cleanest natural source, how it's reliable, how 26.6 percent of the U.S. energy comes from natural gas, how the setup to obtain natural gas is less expensive than most others, and how it provides jobs as well. The second group was just as detailed for their energy source, solar. Throughout this lesson there were high levels of student thinking and participation.

- A grade ten ELA class involved students in group work to discuss the similarities between Langston Hughes’ poem “Mother to a Son” and James McBride’s memoir *The Color of Water*. The teacher first posed the question, “What do you think tone means?” Students engaged in group conversations, with responses including, “The author’s feelings” and “The feelings the author wants you to feel.” During this lesson, students exhibited deep analytical skills and annotated each passage to help identify the tone of each piece of literature. While annotating, the teacher asked that the students use highlighters to prepare for the group conversations. Students were actively engaged during this lesson, and it was visible that student-centered group work was routine.
Findings
Teacher rubrics, assessments, and grading policies are aligned throughout the school. There are regular ongoing checks for understanding that enable teachers to address student concerns and adjust curriculum as needed.

Impact
Teachers provide students with verbal and written feedback that is actionable and timely, and they make instructional decisions based on their assessment practices.

Supporting Evidence

- Throughout the classrooms visited teachers displayed a variety of ways that they continuously check for understanding. During some of the classes, teachers used “thumbs up and thumbs down” to gauge student comprehension and, based on student responses, made adjustments to lessons. For example, during one lesson, based on a “thumbs up, thumbs down” response from students, the teacher directed a small group of students who displayed thumbs down to the back table where she worked with them for a few minutes while the other students were involved in group work. Teachers also regularly use checklists and conference notes to document and assess student progress when they meet with students individually or in predetermined groups. In addition, there were ample opportunities for students to peer and self-assess during many of the classes visited. Teachers provide students with a template in order to facilitate the peer and self-assessment process.

- Rubrics are used schoolwide and are a part of many assignments and projects that students participate in. Both students and teachers spoke about rubrics and the impact they have on them. During the student meeting, all students expressed their knowledge of rubrics and how rubrics help them. For example, one student shared the following when asked about rubrics: “I find it helpful, because I can read the directions first and now I know what I need to do to get the highest grade possible.” Another student stated, “When they give us the rubric before doing our essays, it allows us to try and get that perfect score.” Students also shared how they would find it difficult to do an assignment without having a rubric beforehand.

- Many teachers have incorporated protocols such as using KWL sheets which capture what a student knows, what a student wants to know, and what a student learned (KWL). Teachers shared how this helps them gauge the amount of information the students already know and this helps to avoid spending time on something that has already been mastered. It also acts as a tool for teachers to prepare future lessons in order to assess questions and misconceptions that students may have based on the data collected from the KWL sheets. Additionally, during extra help sessions students have regular opportunities to receive focused feedback, as teachers can individualize instruction and spend more time working with students on specific areas of concern. During the student meeting, one student shared the following: “During extra help, I can sit down with my teachers and they can answer any questions that I have. Extra help is very helpful for me.”
Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

Teachers are engaged in regular collaborative team meetings that promote student achievement and the achievement of school goals. Teachers have many opportunities to take on leadership roles that help to foster ownership throughout the building.

Impact

Teacher leadership capacity is strengthened and teacher voice is heard and acknowledged in key decisions that affect student learning. Professional collaborations have a meaningful impact on planning and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Leadership opportunities for teachers in this school come in a variety of ways. For example, one of the physical education teachers oversees the testing procedures for the entire school. Additionally, teachers have leadership roles on the School Leadership Team (SLT) and crisis management team. Teachers all shared how school leaders are very supportive and urge teachers to take on leadership roles through many different ways. One way is by acting as a resource for other teachers. Teachers shared how intervisitation is not only allowed but strongly encouraged. School leaders find the strengths in each teacher and share those qualities with their colleagues during the observation process in order the help strengthen the instructional practices of all teachers.

- Teachers shared many ways that they have been affected by the teacher teamwork opportunities that the school offers them. During the teacher meeting, several teachers explained that one of the most beneficial results of teacher teamwork has been the ability to share best practices. One teacher stated, “Being able to hear from my colleagues what worked for them and what didn’t is valuable to me as an educator.” Teachers also noted how teacher teamwork has allowed them to collaborate much more regularly, fostering a culture where teachers can rely on and support each other. Several of the teachers that were part of the teacher meeting pointed out how opportunities to collaborate have particularly helped them since they are integrated co-teachers (ICT). Teachers shared that as ICT teacher, collaboration is “essential and valuable.” Moreover, one teacher offered, “If our kids see that we work well together, they will hopefully emulate that with their groups and classmates.”

- Teachers are strongly encouraged to engage in professional development opportunities that are aligned to their teacher goals and/or interests. All teachers who attend any form of professional development are expected to turnkey to all colleagues. There is an overall sense that school leadership is always looking for ways to have their teachers act in leadership capacities. One teacher shared that she was very surprised when she was asked by school leaders to attend a professional development session and then asked to turnkey her learning. The teacher revealed, “I was so nervous because I don’t speak a lot, but now I feel so much more confident and stronger as a teacher.” Teachers also shared that school leaders always support any and all new ideas for PD sessions that they may want to create or facilitate. For example, teachers wanted to gain more understanding with respect to student engagement and assessment and proposed PD sessions on these topics that were all teacher-facilitated, which school leaders then fully supported.