Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Ralph R. McKee Career and Technical Education
High School

High school 31R600

290 St Marks Pl.
Staten Island
NY 10301

Principal: Sharon Henry

Dates of Review:
February 2, 2017 - February 3, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Tracie Benjamin-Van Lierop
The Quality Review Report

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

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

Information about the School


School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</td>
<td>Area</td>
<td>Rating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>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>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>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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</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>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.4 Positive Learning Environment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Findings

The school community’s approach to culture-building, discipline, and social-emotional support is informed by a theory of action. Structures are in place so that each student is known well by at least one adult who helps to personalize attendance supports and coordinate social-emotional learning and youth development.

### Impact

A safe and inclusive culture supports progress toward school goals, where student voice is meaningfully involved in decision-making. Guidance and advisement supports positively impact students’ academic and personal behaviors.

### Supporting Evidence

- There are opportunities in place for all students to feel welcome and have their voices heard as evidenced by the creation of the student government club, key club, and peer mediation through the New York Center for Interpersonal Development. Students also initiated a school climate survey, which led to a physics course being added to the science department. Each grade has a course based upon Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), an organization that works with schools to hold students accountable to meeting their highest standards using strategies that develop critical thinking skills and providing academic and social-emotional supports.

- Parents agree that students are safe and treated with respect by all adults in the school. Students attest to being treated with respect and having their voices welcomed and valued as evidenced by the creation of the Gay Straight Alliance club that is student led, in collaboration with a guidance counselor, which brings LGBTQI+ and straight students together to support each other, provide a safe place to socialize and create a platform to ensure student equality for all.

- There is choice in how adult and student relationships are formed, which is guided by both the adults in the building and the students. The attendance buddies, community associate, and mental health consultant all provide the school community with resources to support student academic and personal outcomes. Students collaborate with the New York City Police Department’s and the New York City Fire Department’s Explorers programs to develop and expand on their leadership skills. An eleventh grade student expressed her growth both academically and socially as a result of the support she has received during her time at the school from her peers, counselors, administrators, and teachers.
Area of Focus

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

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies inconsistently provide scaffolds and multiple entry points into the curricula. Student work products and discussions reflect uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact

Students are not consistently engaging in appropriately challenging tasks or demonstrating higher-order thinking skills in their work products, as the needs of some learners are not being met.

Supporting Evidence

- The essential question during an English Language Arts (ELA) lesson was, “How do we endure in the face of adversity, tragedy, and conflict?” Students made attempts to answer the question using their interactive notebooks, however, a review of varied work products revealed that some students were unclear of the task, didn’t have a notebook, and few turned to a peer or their teacher for clarification. In a US History and Government class, students used the text of a secondary source document to analyze cause and effect of how railroad companies and the government encouraged settlement in the west. Students annotated the assigned text, using Cornell notes, and discussed their written responses with their group mates. During the classroom discussion, the teacher reminded students to reference the text and those who struggled during the lesson were reminded by the teacher of how the learning target connected to the Do Now activity, which increased student participation.

- In a graphics design class, student learning objectives included explaining the topic choice, demonstrating how to layout an entire Monopoly board, and sketching ideas on a blank board template. At the beginning of the lesson, students immediately went to their workstations to begin their Do Now activity, which transitioned to whole class discussion. Students discussed the game of Monopoly, whether they had played the original or more modern version, what they noticed about the values as they went around the board, and compared and contrasted the two different versions. Students were on task and engaged in their opening activity, however, when the lesson transitioned to the question and answer portion, student engagement levels decreased and some students continued working on their board designs.

- During an ELA class, students were able to determine a central idea by using primary and secondary sources to explain how southern segregation gave rise to the Harlem Renaissance. The lesson included students working in tiered groups, the use of a video, and tasks that were accessible to a diverse group of learners using tiered graphic organizers, readings, and procedure checklists.

- In a Living Environment class, students were tasked with understanding how the endocrine system works in complex organisms. Students were expected to use micro-viewers to observe slides of the endocrine system, analyze eight slides by illustrating them on the lab report, and answer questions by using text based evidence to identify the parts and their functions. Students were seated at lab stations and asked by the teacher to number the paragraphs of their text. This activity was scheduled to take two to three minutes, yet it took eight minutes as the teacher read aloud the numbers for each paragraph in a four page handout. Students became confused during this activity, which led to the interaction with the lab materials taking longer than expected with teacher centered instruction.
Quality Indicator: 1.1 Curriculum

Rating: Proficient

Findings
The faculty ensures that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and content standards. Curricula and planned academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills across content areas and grades, specifically for English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

Impact
School leaders and teachers make purposeful decisions to build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students. The Common Core curricula are designed to be accessible to a variety of learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Lesson and unit plans included Common Core Learning Standards, academic vocabulary, differentiation, tiered questioning levels, and assessment criteria for success. An algebra unit of study on exponential decay included questioning from levels one to three. A level one question was, “What are the parts of the equation?” Level two questions were, “How do we know we’re supposed to be adding and not subtracting in this formula?” and “Explain how you know.” Level three questions were, “What is the rate at which the comic book increases annually?” and “How can we figure that out if it is not given in the question, but in the equation?”

- A lesson plan included an activity involving electrical circuit wiring for a split wire receptacle to enable students to demonstrate an understanding of the tools needed to properly prepare a thermostat cable for installation and describe the procedure to be used when installing the cable. Additionally, the plan included students' assessment of each other's installations and evaluation of the accuracy of their work. Academic vocabulary in the plan included *split wire, grounded conductor, ungrounded conductor, isolating, and splice point*. On the most recent School Quality Snapshot, the school received a rating of ‘good’ based on the question, “How interesting and challenging is the curriculum?” Although the majority of curricular documents include sections and some notes for students with disabilities and ELLs, there was no evidence in the reviewed plans for how all students would demonstrate their thinking.

- Across content areas, the instructional shifts are incorporated into curricula maps, pacing guides and lesson plans. In a grade nine science lesson, students were expected to cite textual evidence to support their thinking using reference tables, articles, and build upon their peer’s thoughts. Students were to work with their partners to fill in appropriate words and identify body systems as related to the respiratory system.
Additional Finding

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

Teachers use or create assessments and rubrics that are beginning to align with the school’s curricula. Across classrooms, teachers’ assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student assessment.

Impact

Feedback on student work varies across classrooms and inconsistently aligns to rubrics. Teachers make efforts to check for student understanding and effective adjustments to their instruction to meet students’ varied learning needs are beginning to emerge.

Supporting Evidence

- The leadership team expects teachers to create and use assessments and rubrics that are aligned to the grading policies and curricula while providing actionable feedback to students in student-friendly language. A review of student work showed that the quality of feedback was inconsistent. Students reported that they receive feedback from both their teachers and peers and were able to speak to the purpose of rubrics, yet some of the student work they presented did not have accompanying rubrics. Students also stated that they receive thorough feedback from their Advanced Placement (AP) classes, specifically ELA, which aligned with the reviewed work products.

- Teachers are expected to use checks for understanding throughout their lessons, along with exit slips, and students are expected to complete summary statements at the end of their Cornell notes. Attempts to check for student understanding were evident in classrooms, but they were ineffective with the exception of the carpentry, electrical circuit wiring, and ELA classes. Some teachers used a “thumbs-up, thumbs-down” approach and in observed classes, students either did not respond or when they did there was no follow-up question by teachers to ensure student understanding. However, in the electrical wiring class, students engaged in peer assessment using a checklist while the teacher circulated around the room and asked students questions to re-direct their thinking when a step was being missed in the wiring process.

- Rubrics used during classroom instruction utilized a scoring range from zero indicating poor to five indicating excellent. Criteria assessed on an electrical job assessment included box installation, circuit installation and circuit wiring. A turn and talk rubric used in an ELA class assessed students on following directions, pair task completion, and connections and text support. A graphic design rubric evaluated students on spaces, imagery, typography, measurements, and game proposal. Success criteria used during an AVID lesson included students’ abilities to address ideas; not the person stating the ideas, justifying their views with evidence and reasoning, and using accountable language at least twice in a judgment free zone in order to push the conversation forward.
### Findings

School leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations that are connected to a path to college and career readiness. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations for all students.

### Impact

Ongoing feedback is provided to help families understand student progress toward post secondary expectations. Staff offers ongoing and detailed feedback and guidance supports that prepare students for the next level.

### Supporting Evidence

- Parents commented that the school’s communication with them has improved and they appreciate the efforts that have been made. The school sends weekly e-newsletters which contain information about scholarships, Parent Teacher Association meetings, and workshops. For example, a special education teacher and paraprofessional worked with parents to help them navigate next steps for their children by having the parents attend a transition fair for students with disabilities at The College of Staten Island. A parent of a twelfth grade student said that the school has helped her to support her son with his organization skills and writing. According to the most recent School Quality Snapshot, 85 percent of parents said that school staff regularly communicates with them about how parents can help their children learn.

- Some parents voiced their concerns about the quality and level of work that their children bring home. One parent stated, “I don’t see as much work coming home and some teachers don’t push students to do more.” Another parent stated that she had a similar concern when her son was a sophomore, however, she spoke with his guidance counselor and she has seen an improvement in the rigor of work he is bringing home now. PupilPath, an online grade book for parents and students, is another avenue for parents to keep track of how their children are performing academically.

- Students expressed their excitement about the College Now courses and shop classes, which students agreed are preparing them for life after high school. Students also concurred that the staff pushes students to do well. “We’re always hearing you don’t want to take remedial courses when you get to college so it’s important to pass your classes while you’re here”, stated an eleventh grader. Students across grades believe that the school’s academic strengths are in math, social studies, and ELA. A student in AP ELA commented, “English is very important in this school. The English teachers have made me a better writer and now my AP class is really pushing my thinking.”
Additional Finding

<table>
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<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

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations in grade and content areas. Teacher teams consistently analyze student work and State assessment data for students they share or on whom they are focused.

Impact

Professional collaborations promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards, strengthening the instructional capacity of teachers and typically resulting in improved teacher practice and progress toward goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet weekly and look at various types of student data in order to inform their academic approaches. ELA and social studies teams use protocols to discuss grade level decisions. Math teachers use Data Driven Classroom sheets to monitor trends and patterns. During an algebra teacher team meeting, teachers reviewed student midterm exams focused on the properties of real numbers, subtracting polynomials, and equivalent expressions using the distributive property. A review of student work indicated that students would benefit from a checklist and discussion rubric for teachers to have a clearer sense of where student misconceptions were happening. The team members also agreed to look at a piece of student work with their classes by projecting it using a document camera in an effort to support student understanding and to identify where mistakes were made.

- Teacher team work is contributing toward students showing improvements on their Regents exams in ELA and algebra. The teachers place a heavy emphasis on looking at student work, dissecting misconceptions and re-teaching gaps in student learning. The school was rated ‘excellent’ in helping students improve from their incoming proficiency levels and performance on exams in algebra and ‘good’ in ELA based on their most recent School Quality Snapshot data. Over the course of one year, students increased seven percentage points in Global History, 14 percentage points in US History, and three percentage points in Living Environment.

- Teachers spoke of the benefits of meeting weekly within their impact teams to look at student work and Regents scores. “We use each other and the resources we have to collaborate and then make adjustments to the curricula and our instructional strategies”, stated one teacher. Teachers began common planning by content area and grade level during the weekly impact team meetings this year. Teachers shared that the impact of their work has been to ensure that the curricula incorporates learning targets that are aligned to the Common Core and the success criteria and that this has resulted in increased coherent student experiences across content and grade levels.