Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Millennium Art Academy

High school 08X312

1980 Lafayette Ave.
Bronx
NY 10473

Principal: Herman Guy

Dates of Review:
March 28, 2017 - March 29, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Jorge Estrella
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

Millennium Art Academy 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>
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</thead>
<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>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>Additional Finding</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>
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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>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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</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>Additional Finding</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>Area of Focus</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>
</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>
</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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Area of Celebration

### Quality Indicator:
1.4 Positive Learning Environment

### Rating: Proficient

### Findings

Grounded under the bully-free and respect-for-all school environment, the school promotes culture-building, discipline, and social-emotional support with a variety of structures.

### Impact

There is a positive school environment and inclusive culture with mutual respect among all stakeholders. Student voice is valued and social-emotional learning is aligned with student learning needs.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school's approach to culture-building, discipline, and social-emotional support is based on the idea of a bully-free and respect-for-all school environment. The social-emotional well-being of students is discussed during grade level meetings, common planning time and one-on-one meetings to ensure that students' personal growth is addressed appropriately. The Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program promoting scholarship, ownership, and respect provides teachers, parents, and students with a shared understanding of the specific behaviors students need to display to be successful. As part of PBIS, students participate in assemblies and town halls where they celebrate their social-emotional and academic accomplishments. As a result, across the school, student attitudes were respectful towards all.

- Another approach to building a positive school culture is a freshman seminar to introduce the students to the school culture, including instructional expectations and norms of conduct. Grade 9 students shared that this summer seminar helped them better understand what is expected from them and what supports are available to succeed in high school. The school welcomes students from different nationalities and acknowledges their value to the school community. For example, English Language Learners (ELLs) published a book titled *My Immigration Experience*. Then, they performed their immigration story for the staff and other students. This was facilitated by the English as a New Language (ENL) teacher in collaboration with the Lincoln Center.

- A student council has been formed to inform school leaders of what is going on in the school from the students’ perspective. Members contribute ideas about how they can be supported towards success. In addition to student council, the school offers a boys to men program, a mediation program, and a school ambassador's initiative. During the meetings with students, they articulated the positive impact that these student-led initiatives had on the school and in their personal experience. For example, students shared that their participation in these programs has helped them reshape their approach of how to tackle issues that they encounter in the school or outside the school and that the programs promote positive behaviors among their peers.

- Structures are in place to support the social-emotional learning of all students. The school has two guidance counselors and a social worker as well as the support of a full-time dean. Two part-time deans are available to proactively ensure that students social-emotional needs are addressed so they can have a productive time in class. Students state that faculty members encourage them to do well and are available to address their concerns and that they feel comfortable approaching their teachers, the administration, or the social worker if they need academic or social support.

- During the parent meeting, one parent shared that her daughter felt out of place in middle school, but since she has started the school she has made significant academic and social-emotional progress and there are positive changes in her attitude towards school work. Another parent shared that the principal has an open-door policy and is grateful for the staff who makes them feel welcome all the time. Additionally, they all recognize the hard work of safety agents for being proactive to ensure the safety of their children inside the school and surrounding areas.
Area of Focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.1 Goals and Action Plans</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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Findings

While school-level goals and action plans are evident in the School Comprehensive Education Plan (SCEP) and are monitored for indications of improvement, the goals may not be relevant in measuring accelerated student learning. Limited data is used to assess school needs and there is limited involvement of stakeholders.

Impact

Goals and actions plans are mostly regarding teacher practice, instead of student achievement, resulting in unclear and inconsistent planning approach to drive efforts to leverage increased student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- The review of the SCEP revealed that four of the five schoolwide goals for school year 2016-2017 are the same to those for the school year 2015-2016. In addition, Advance is used as the metrics to measure those four goals. However, the review of the Advance rating for school year 2015-2016 indicated that 96 percent of the teachers were effective and four percent of the teachers were highly effective. Thus, the metric used for these goals may not be relevant to drive efforts to accelerate student learning.

- The review of the SCEP section on needs and areas of focus lacked specificity and detail, as well as the use of qualitative data to determine the areas of needs. For example, Section 5D - Effective School Leadership the needs/area of focus read, “After a two-year review of our credit accumulation, graduation, and Regents results it was determined that we needed to improve and increase our school standing as evidenced by the prior progress reports and current school snapshot.” As a result, the school missed an opportunity to dive into student data to determine the specific factors that promote higher graduation rates. For example, the review of schools Regents results for school year 2015-2016 informed that the majority ELLs and students with disabilities are scoring below 65 in most Regents’ exams. However, the SCEP goals and action plans do not address the needs of these sub-groups, hindering opportunities to accelerate student learning.

- The school has designed a literacy plan to close the achievement gap in literacy skills supported by instructional foci that include utilizing textual evidence to express ideas and arguments into speaking and writing and improving rigor and student engagement through utilization of agree/disagree strategies, cold calling, whole group discussion, and turn and talks. In addition, the school has a professional development plan to support teaching practice. Although two of the goals refers to improving teacher practice in the instruction domain of the Danielson Framework for Teaching, the literacy plan, instructional foci, and professional development are not included in any of the action plans of the SCEP. Moreover, it is uncertain how school data has been analyzed to arrive to these goals and action plans.

- The review of School Leadership Team agendas and minutes revealed that there were discussions about the SCEP goals as well as communications to staff about the school goals. However, there is no evidence of the process, protocols, and data used to arrive to the SCEP goals. Furthermore, during the meeting with teachers, parents, and students, they were not able to articulate the SCEP goals. Some of them remember conversations about the goals but could not recall being involved in the goal setting process.
Additional Finding

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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Findings

School leaders and faculty are engaged in professional development cycles around designing coherent instruction to align curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards. The use of data and student work is beginning to reflect planning and refinement of planning documents and academic tasks.

Impact

Although faculty members have ongoing support to align the school curricula to the Common Core, there is inconsistent refinement of planning to provide all students access to rigorous tasks and engage them in higher-order thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- In an effort to build teachers’ capacity to align the school curricula to the Common Core, school leaders ensured cycles of professional learning opportunities around designing coherent instruction. The on-site professional development format is used for these sessions which are facilitated by the interschool teacher development coach from the Office of Teacher Effectiveness. In the first cycle two teachers participated, the second cycle added two more teachers and for the third cycle, the instructional team is planning to engage the entire faculty. In addition, the Borough Field Support Center has conducted professional development sessions and one on one sessions with teachers and departments regarding a literacy plan and curriculum development for math, science, social studies, and English. As a result of these professional learning supports, teachers developed common planning templates for units and lesson plans and have begun to align the curriculum to meet the Common Core expectations as evidenced through the instructional planning documents. Unit plans across grade and subjects include several strategies for formative assessments, but lesson plans presented during the visit do not include formative assessment strategies or activities for students to engage in self-assessment.

- School leaders and teachers have designed schoolwide unit and lesson plan templates to build coherence across content areas. Unit and lesson plans are starting to emphasize high-level skills aligned with the Common Core, as well as the school’s expectations for college and career readiness. For example, an English Language Arts (ELA) lesson plan expected students to analyze, “To what extent is Shakespeare’s writing still relevant today?” However, lesson planning across all classrooms did not always ensure that all learners have opportunities to fully engage in high-level thinking. For example, in an Algebra class, the aim of the lesson was “How can we ensure we are prepared for mid-term examination?” As a result of this uneven approach for planning instruction some students do not have adequate access to the curricula.

- The review of instructional planning documents revealed that some teachers use data and student work from formative and summative assessments to plan and adjust curricula and academic tasks to cognitively engage a diversity of learners. In a grade 9 ELA lesson plan, students were grouped based on mid-term results and individualized educational plan information.

- The principal and instructional leaders shared that at the beginning of the school year the school administered learning styles assessments for all students so teachers can address the individual learning needs of the students. However, the review of the instructional planning documents revealed that the results of these assessments are yet to be used to plan academic tasks and activities to cognitively engage all students.
Additional Finding

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are beginning to foster discussion, debate, and active learning so that all students engage in meaningful tasks and high levels of thinking and participation.

Impact

As a result, the evidence of inconsistent teaching practices led to uneven levels of student engagement, delaying students’ ability to fully demonstrate high levels of thinking within discussions and for specific learning tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- Administrators and teachers believe that students learn best when engaged through open-ended questioning, cold-calling, whole group discussion, and turn and talks. However, teaching practices reflect inconsistent implementation of the school belief. In most classrooms, teachers directed lessons where students responded to directives and asked some questions, but mostly to the teacher. In a health class, the teacher asked open-ended questions and promoted discussions by ensuring all students’ participation, using turn and talk and cold-calling for those who did not volunteer. In an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) Earth science class, both teachers posed questions to the students, though there were minimal opportunities to promote discussions. At some point the teacher asked students to turn and talk but not all were involved in conversations. As a result, there are uneven levels of student discourse and limited opportunities for student engagement for deep exploration necessary to meet goals around growth and achievement.

- In an economics class, the teacher implemented several of the instructional practices around the school’s belief of how students learn best. However, the teacher moved from one activity to the other, without much time for students to deeply engage in the learning. In one instance the teacher used the sixty seconds turn and talk strategy, however the activity did not promote high level of conversations, some students were not engaged in the activity, and the teacher did not provide opportunities to the pairs to share their thoughts with the class. Thus, the impact of these practices was not evident on student thinking and participation.

- In an art class, all students were engaged in the lesson. Students had multiple options to select from for their art projects and opportunities to engage in productive conversations to help them visualize their art work. The teacher provided students with a variety of resources and materials to conceive their art piece. The teacher was monitoring student progress, ensuring engagement and providing students with guidance to conceptualize their work in a broader context such as making connections with the symbols they will be using to represent a chaotic urban environment or pushing them towards brainstorming about the colors or perspectives of their visual representation. As a result of effective engagement, students were able to create meaningful work products as evidenced in the art classroom’s gallery and across the school hallways. However, this level of teaching practice is yet to be implemented in other classrooms.

- In a grade 9 ELA class, students worked in groups where each member of the group had a specific role within the group. Once they completed their assignment, they shared their findings with the class. A similar approach was used in a global history class. In both classes, teachers ensured students were on task and working on their roles towards completing their assignment. However, in other classes, while students were sitting in groups, they did not have a specific role to function as a group to complete their task and/or may not have been clear of the expectations for the activity.
Additional Finding

Quality Indicator: 2.2 Assessment
Rating: Developing

Findings
Teachers use and create rubrics and assessments aligned to the curricula, though they are not yet consistently used to provide actionable feedback to students. Across classrooms, assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessments.

Impact
Teacher feedback does not yet consistently empower all students to be aware of their next learning steps for each subject, thus limiting opportunities to support and accelerate students’ academic achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- The new principal is in the process of ensuring that teachers implement the use of ongoing checks for understanding as part of school’s foci and that the do now is used as a formative assessment. During classroom visits, some teachers were observed gathering data at the beginning of the lesson, during the do now activity. However, no actions were taken to make on-the-spot adjustments to the lesson. Teachers moved on with the lesson and in some classes, it was unclear when the do now ended and when the actual lesson started or how the information gathered would be used during the lesson. Minimum interaction among students or with the teacher was observed after completion of the do now. In most classes, it remained uncertain how the do now was used as a formative assessment.

- The review of student work products reveals that offering actionable feedback with next steps to students is not a common practice in the school. There was some feedback in student work presented and on hallways bulletin boards such as “Great Job remembering which plus and minuses signs to use. Be careful with using precise and accurate vocabulary.” However, most classrooms did not have student work on display and student work in portfolios were difficult to find. Some of the feedback offered to students consisted of only grades, highlighted rubrics, or stamps, with no comments.

- Students reported that rubrics are not always used across subjects. One student said, “For ELA we use rubrics for our essays.” Another student said, “We use rubrics most of the time in ELA and math, but only sometimes in other subjects”. Some students were able to explain why they were using rubrics, while others had difficulties articulating the purpose of using rubrics.

- Classroom visits revealed inconsistent implementation of the use of checks for understanding. For example, in an ELA class the teacher circulated checking if students had an understanding of the tasks while students worked independently. Then, based on their responses, the teacher used a different approach to ensure the student understood the concepts. However, in other classes, teachers circulated without a clear purpose, some just checking for procedures but not interacting to check if students grasped the concepts or had misconceptions. Only in two out of nine classrooms visited were teachers gathering data from students’ responses at the beginning of the lesson. Consequently, inconsistent checks for understanding do not allow for sufficient on-the-spot adjustments to lessons, resulting in missed opportunities to meet all students’ learning needs.

- Some students have access to rubrics in class but there is little evidence of established routines for student use of these rubrics to assess their own work. Mostly students rely on report cards, progress reports and grades posted on the online platform to determine how they are doing in class. There are no schoolwide systems for students to assess their progress towards learning goals thus lessening opportunities for students to have a clear and detailed understanding of their own areas for growth.
Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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</table>

Findings

Weekly professional collaborations, including planning sessions and professional learning communities across grades and content areas are beginning to connect to the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. However, teacher teams are in the early stages of analyzing assessment data and student work.

Impact

Inquiry-based teacher team work is yet to result in improved teacher practice or progress toward goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders ensure that all staff members participate in team meetings every Monday. The structure of these meetings is divided into three sections. First teachers receive professional development, followed by discussions on how teachers will implement what they learned in the previous section, and then they engage in inquiry-based activities where they work in team cohorts. These activities are facilitated by school leaders, instructional staff support from the Department of Education, and teacher leaders. In addition to the Mondays meetings, the special education team, career and college readiness team, dean and guidance team meet once a week. Finally, as part of circular six, teachers find time for common planning time during the week.

- Although the principal has communicated in the teacher’s handbook the expectations and detailed guidelines for analyzing student work and provided several professional development sessions during the school year around the inquiry process, consistent and effective inquiry-based practices are yet to be implemented. For example, teacher teams have not formalized a structure to focus on groups of students and are in the process of identifying focus students. School leaders shared that “The school is in the emerging stages to fully implementing the inquiry process, the work they are currently doing will enable them to track students over time moving into next year.” In addition, teams are in the process of refining a schoolwide data collection tool for the analysis of summative and formative assessments.

- The review of inquiry-based documents revealed that there is inconsistent use of student data or analysis of student work to determine the specific learning needs of group of students and the specific instructional next steps to improve teaching practice. For example, the grade nine cohort identified that the common issues a group of students is vocabulary-based reading comprehension and/or language acquisition and the suggested teaching strategy was to identify tier one, two, and three words and assess their progress. However, there is no evidence of how the cohort arrived to these conclusions and no clarity of how the identified vocabulary development strategy is going to be implemented in instruction.

- During an observed meeting of the special education team, teachers were looking at the Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) of one student and they were norming on strategies to make adjustments on the annual review for the student’s IEP. The facilitator went from section to section of the IEP and teachers made suggestions on the semantics and recommendations for services. However, during that meeting, there was no evidence that teachers were using the student’s data to measure his progress towards the learning goals established in his IEP.