Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Antonia Pantoja Preparatory Academy: A College Board School

Secondary School 08X376

1980 Lafayette Ave.
Bronx
NY 10473

Principal: Nalini Singh

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


School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</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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</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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</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>Additional Finding</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>
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<tr>
<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
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<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>
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</tbody>
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Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.4 Positive Learning Environment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

The school uses the restorative justice (RJ) program as the approach to maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that are supported by structures to ensure discipline and social-emotional support, ensuring structures for academic success are in place.

Impact

The school sustains a safe environment and inclusive culture where student learning, student voice, and mutual respect is not only welcomed, but valued. In the addition, coordinated social-emotional learning and youth-development align with student learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- The school is in its second year of implementing the RJ program that is designed to support discipline in the school community. Social and emotional support is provided through counseling, and identifying the patterns and symptoms of behavioral issues to deliver interventions and avert escalations of disciplinary incidents. Students, teachers, and parents mentioned that since the principal started this program, there has been a significant change in the school tone such as a decrease in levels of disciplinary incidents, while levels of students’ engagement, confidence, and positive interactions increased. Also, the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) staff provides classroom support as well as counseling to support the social-emotional needs of the students. As a result, the number of suspensions decreased from 93 in 2014-2015 to 65 in 2015-2016 to 24 in 2016-2017.

- During monthly town hall meetings, all stakeholders celebrate their successes, discuss their progress, engage in conversations with guest speakers, and receive information of what is going on in the school. Students-of-the-month are recognized for academic achievement, leadership, and attendance. Also, student productions are presented and school leaders and teachers inform students of school progress and upcoming events. Students reported that their participation in town halls are helping them work in unity and to contribute to school progress.

- The student council comprised of a representative from each class, meet once a month with an advisor to plan together and make decisions in the school. They have prepared polls to determine what type of clubs and/or activities students’ may have interest in. Based on their responses, the student council prepares proposals to submit to the principal. Furthermore, student council members are actively engaged in a multicultural day celebration where all stakeholders share aspects of their culture, nationality, or ethnicity with other members of the school community through presentations, music, dance, arts, food, and wearing traditional clothing specific to the various cultures represented in the celebration. As a result of the schools’ multicultural awareness approach, students have better opportunities to engage in collaborative instructional activities with their peers, as it was evident in classroom visits.

- Students reported that they have several opportunities to reach out to adults in case they have any issues or concerns that need to be addressed with someone they trust. For example, students can reach out to any adult in the school, including the principal and assistant principals, within their advisory time, or during clubs with the YMCA instructors, or reaching out to core members of the RJ team. In an effort to improve school attendance, school leaders partner with My Brother’s Keeper, a mentoring program that helps chronically absent students. Currently the school is working with 54 students with a 70-90 percent attendance rate. As a result of this initiative 50 percent of student participants have shown improvements in attendance and punctuality as indicated in the school’s attendance records.
Findings
Teachers create assessments and use rubrics that are beginning to align to the curricula, but they are not consistently checking for understanding, and students have limited opportunities to self-assess their work.

Impact
Teachers are not providing consistent actionable feedback to students regarding achievement and next learning steps. There are missed opportunities to effectively adjust instruction on-the-spot to meet the needs of all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders articulated that the school is using Common Core aligned rubrics across contents and grades. However, the use of these rubrics was not consistent in providing meaningful and actionable feedback to students and teachers. Students indicated that they use rubrics mostly in writing and sometimes in social studies and math. Some students were unable to explain how their work was graded or their next steps to make improvements upon their work.

- A review of student folders and work products showed inconsistent use of rubrics and feedback with next steps for students. For example, the work presented during the small group student meeting, revealed limited actionable feedback and a lack of concise next steps to improve their work in student worksheets, notebooks, and work folders. Some student work was posted on hallway bulletin boards showing written feedback and next steps such as, “You need to explain literary elements and then provide examples” or “This can be used as your claim at the end of the first paragraph.” However, other student work presented and gathered during classroom visits indicated feedback such as “Great job”, “Excellent” or “6/10.” By receiving inconsistent guidance or challenges to improve the quality of student work, students have limited opportunities to meet their instructional goals.

- Across classrooms, teacher assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment. It was observed during classroom visits that the practice of adjusting the lesson in response to data gathered during the delivery of a lesson, is not a common practice across classrooms. In a grade eleven ELA class, the teacher circulated around the room, conferred with students, and provided them with feedback to ensure they were on track to complete their task. However, during a sixth-grade math class, students were working in groups while the teacher circulated around the classroom, without interacting with any students or monitoring their work. This was a missed opportunity to have one-to-one conferences with students and to record information about their progress towards their learning targets and to make on-the-spot adjustments to the lesson. As a result of inconsistent adjustments to instruction, student achievement is hindered and teachers are unable to meet all students’ learning needs.

- During the meeting with students, they revealed that sometimes they use rubrics or check lists to engage in self-assessment activities. For example, a grade eight student showed her reflective writing rubric about The Namesake film where she annotated and scored her writing assignment. A grade six student presented his rubric for narrative writing which he used to self-assess his written assignment. However, this practice is not implemented yet across grades and content areas. Some students did not recall being involved in self-assessment activities. Thus, inconsistent practices of self-assessment hinder students’ ability to effectively have ownership of their own learning.
Additional Finding

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

School leaders and teachers are working to embed rigorous habits and high-order thinking skills into the curricula and tasks for all learners across grades and subjects. The instructional team is in the process of using student work and data to deepen the implementation, refinement, and planning of curricular units and academic tasks.

Impact

Curricula and tasks provide limited opportunities to engage all students, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities in rigorous tasks that emphasize critical thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- The review of instructional planning documents informed that learning tasks were moderately challenging. Additionally, tasks inconsistently emphasized higher-order thinking skills and included differentiated instructional strategies. For example, an eighth-grade lesson plan on linear equations had tasks in which students are to write linear equation models for two different cellular phone plans, then students are to determine which plan was the most cost effective. However, some lesson plans included low-level tasks that required students to fill-in-the-blanks based on what was displayed on the whiteboard. In addition, some ELA and Living Environment unit plans did not incorporate any modifications to address the needs of ELLs and students with disabilities.

- The review of unit plans across subjects revealed that data from formative and summative assessments were used infrequently to refine the curricula. Furthermore, some unit plans mirrored the curriculum with little evidence of being refined to address the needs of all learners. Some lesson plans incorporated groupings and differentiated activities, while others incorporated language targets and vocabulary development. For example, a math lesson plan included student groupings based on data where each group had individualized tasks addressing students’ needs. This instructional planning practice is yet to be implemented in other classrooms.

- Although teachers plan lessons to cognitively engage all learners, curricula and tasks are not consistently planned and refined using student work and data. For example, an English lesson plan noted individual student reading levels and identified the appropriate text and task goals aligned to the analysis of student data. However, a social studies lesson plan did not include any reference to student data nor planned refinements to the task or text provided to students.

- Even though the school is using iReady as a supplemental curriculum for ELA and math, student data generated from iReady assessments is not consistently reflected in planning for targeted interventions based on analysis of data where most activities are the same for all students in the class. Planning inconsistently reflects differentiated tasks or strategically designed scaffolds for the diverse learners in the school.

- At the Antonia Pantoja Preparatory Academy, the student register includes 26 percent of students with disabilities and 15 percent of ELLs. Planning for academic tasks inconsistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills that require students to integrate skills into strategies to problem solve, as evidenced by a review of a lesson plan in math where students were tasked with measuring the length, width, and height of a cube. Furthermore, across grades, assigned tasks in math lessons did not demonstrate the rigorous expectations that required students, including students with disabilities or ELLs, to connect their learning to real world connections. This instructional approach does not ensure that all students are engaged and that their learning needs are met, which lessens students’ ability to fully engage in instructional tasks while reducing their opportunities to have access to the curriculum.
Additional Finding

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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

Teaching strategies are beginning to utilize tasks and classroom discussions to promote student-to-student discourse. Teaching practices inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact

Teaching practices reflect an inconsistent delivery of challenging tasks with an emphasis on higher order skills for all learners. Limited opportunities to meet the needs of some learners lead to uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- Classroom visits of high levels of student discussions were inconsistently observed across classrooms. In a grade eleven English as a New Language (ENL) class, students discussed their ability to perform their roles in their literature circles along with analyzing, critiquing, and making connections with the text. All students were engaged in the activity including ELLs with the support of the ENL teacher. During their conversations, students were using academic language and were able to make their thinking visible. In a sixth grade class although students were sitting in groups, some students were not engaged in their task nor participating in discussions.

- The pattern of teacher-to-student interaction in full class discussions demonstrated call and response, with a limited number of students in each class engaged during full class discussions. Teachers called on the few students who raised their hands or students working in groups, but students were not engaged in cognitive learning activities. In a grade eight ELA lesson, the teacher’s questions were low level, and provided little wait time. For example, the teacher asked “Which one is stronger?” and “Which one was weaker?” The two students either called out or raised their hands to indicate understanding while the majority of the class, including students with disabilities, did not participate; thus, resulting in an uneven level of student engagement.

- In a global history Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, students were required to draw conclusions about how Emperor Justinian revived the Roman Empire in the Byzantine Empire by examining primary source reading and visuals. While students were working in groups, teachers ensured that higher-level achievers had an extended response designed to challenge their thinking. However, in a sixth-grade math class, students were sitting in groups working independently using manipulatives to build cubes, where students had limited opportunities to engage in conversations while most interactions were mediated by the teacher. As a result, the level of challenging tasks promoting higher-order thinking for all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities, is not yet implemented across grades and content areas. Moreover, in an ICT algebra class, the task related to solving quadratic equations was not differentiated, few students completed the task, while some ELLs were unable to move forward with the task because they did not receive language supports needed to have a clear understanding of what they were required to do. Also, several students were not able to make real world connections to their tasks, they said “I am doing this because I need to pass the Regents” or “I have to get better grades.” As a result, students were compliant with their tasks but did not demonstrate ownership of their learning.

- In most classrooms observed, teachers repeated student questions and answers instead of redirecting their responses back to the class to promote student thinking and discussion. Some teachers missed opportunities to engage students’ in activities to lead their own learning and to engage in tasks that help them to think for themselves. Most teachers required students to answer questions associated with assigned texts and did not challenge students to extend their thinking or apply what they were learning to make independently deeper connections to the content being taught.
Additional Finding

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

School leaders incorporate cycles of professional development around the Danielson Framework for Teaching to consistently communicate high expectations to the entire faculty. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations for all students.

Impact

Staff are held accountable for meeting the high expectations set by the school leaders. Students receive support that prepares them for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff through bi-weekly newsletters, one-on-one meetings, and through regular classroom visits. In addition, school leaders facilitate professional learning activities via professional learning cycles, during which teachers have opportunities to deepen their understanding of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. There is an emphasis on the instructional domain to support teachers in a shared understanding of the school’s expectations for teaching and learning. The professional learning cycles consists of a six-week focus on the three schoolwide goals for the year: students engaging in the study of rich authentic conversation, more student-centered learning, and the implementation of monitoring and evaluating the progress of students through data driven instruction. The principal holds the staff accountable for these expectations by conducting cycles of teacher’s observations and providing actionable feedback. For example, “Instead of providing general feedback to students, elicit evidence of student understanding by inviting students to make their thinking visible and to assess their own work, as we discussed during your post observation conference, you will incorporate this teaching practice immediately.”

- The school has implemented a comprehensive college access awareness program, allowing students to participate in scheduled college advisory supports as part of their program. Students participate in school and citywide activities that expose them to the requirements of college, and the criteria needed to gain acceptance. College awareness week allows students exposure to various colleges as the college representatives visit the school and present information to the students. Students indicated that these supports have helped them to focus on their college applications and financial aid options. In addition, School leaders ensure that the school offers ongoing opportunities to partner with and engage families via regularly scheduled workshops to support the college application and financial aid process, and student achievement updates to assist in preparing students for college and career readiness. For example, the school partners with Rowe Scholars to provide individualized academic planning and support through middle and high school from specially trained staff.

- In addition, the school partners with a community based organization which matches students with mentors from a company to develop positive one-on-one, career-focused relationships with students. Students, spoke highly about the supports they are receiving to ensure they have their college applications submitted in a timely fashion. Students mentioned that all members of the faculty provided them with support and advice during the application process. As a result, there is an 11 percent increase of students who earned enough credits in ninth grade to be on track for graduation, an 8 percent increase in students that earned enough credits in tenth grade to be on track for graduation in comparison to the results seen in 2015 to 2016. Furthermore, 46 percent of students graduated from high school and enrolled in college or other postsecondary program within six months as reported in the 2015-2016 School Quality Snapshot.
Additional Finding

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<tr>
<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
Structured professional collaborations amongst teachers provide weekly opportunities for vertical and horizontal planning; however, discussions of effective practices are loosely connected to school goals, the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards, and the analysis of student work to identify trends for student academic improvement.

Impact
Participation by all teachers on structured teacher teams does not consistently result in strengthening the instructional capacity of teachers and promote improved achievement for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet weekly and have developed structures including agendas, common planning protocols, and team notes to support student progress. These meetings are beginning to integrate the school goals around using student data from varied assessments such as mid-year Regents assessments, iReady examinations, and New York State data, to determine student strengths and learning needs, as well as, the development of strategies to support active engagement and academic achievement. For example, common planning protocols include the team’s use of a form that includes the interpretation of data review, observations and discussions, implications, issues and concerns for future discussions. Although there are structures in place for teacher team meetings, the level of collaboration to promote the achievement of school goals is not yet fully developed across teachers’ teams.

- The review of the agendas and actions plans generated from previously held teacher team meetings indicated inconsistent outcomes and action plans to improve instruction. For example, in a high school ELA team meeting, the implications noted included: work on identifying central ideas, work on more sophisticated language when teaching characterization, and review common terms such as, purpose, function, emphasis, inference, and transition. However, in the high school math team meeting, the implications include just guided practice. In general, the outcomes of these meetings revealed little evidence that student work or assessment data had been analyzed by teacher teams to inform curricular adjustments and inform teaching practice. Furthermore, there is no evidence of a targeted group of students for which specific data or student work are being analyzed. As a result of these inconsistent approaches, teachers are not effectively using common planning time to improve teaching practice towards goals for groups of students.

- During the observed math team, teachers discussed teaching practices based on data generated from a consultant’s observations around ten elements of teaching practices. In the process, teachers discussed some teaching implications and one of the teachers shared a graphic organizer to support students with problem solving. However, during this meeting, teachers missed the opportunity to link teaching practice data with students’ outcomes.

- Teachers shared that their inquiry meetings have led to opportunities for them to analyze students’ data, improve their teaching practice and collaborate to share instructional practices. Although teachers have structured time to meet in inquiry-based professional collaborations, teams are yet to include in their meeting time activities to look at student work for most of the time is devoted to superficially analyze the results of summative assessments which do not reflect the use of data analysis necessary to further move student progress systematically and have not yielded the strengthening of teacher practice in a coherent manner.