Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Herbert H. Lehman High School

High school 08X405

3000 East Tremont Ave.
Bronx
NY 10461

Principal: John Powers

Dates of Review:
March 9, 2017 - March 10, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Rosemary Stuart
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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></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>
</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>
</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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Culture

### To what extent does the school...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<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>Additional Finding</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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Systems for Improvement

### To what extent does the school...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3 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>Area of Celebration</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>
**Findings**
School leaders and peer teachers give effective feedback to teachers through formal and informal observations as well as through frequent intervisitations between peers. Feedback includes strengths, challenges, and next steps that are aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*.

**Impact**
School leaders identify additional resources to support the development of instructional skills and outline expectations for professional growth.

**Supporting Evidence**
- Teachers often invite school leaders into their classrooms to receive guidance and feedback on how well new instructional strategies are being implemented. These informal visits provide a safe and supportive platform for teachers to explore pedagogical improvements. One school leader provided feedback to a teacher following an informal visit to a lesson noting that the teacher was commended for “trying a new strategy, that of using a Socratic seminar.” The feedback provided some suggestions for increasing the engagement of all students by allowing time for the students in the outer circle to give advice to the students presenting from the inner circle.

- School leaders norm their ratings of teacher practice to ensure that new and veteran school leaders are providing the same feedback to all teachers. Actionable feedback to teachers in observation reports is aligned to the components of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. For example, observation feedback to one teacher who had received a developing rating for the component regarding questioning and discussion techniques suggested that the instructions for the turn and talk should be clearly outlined and then consistently followed. Another observation included the suggestion that students should create their own clues for a Jeopardy game using prompts from the *Depth of Knowledge* wheel to increase the level of complexity.

- School leaders provide resources to teachers to help them reflect on their practice and increase the instructional strategies available to them. Many observations include resources to help teachers improve components of their practice. For example, one teacher was given a graphic organizer to self-evaluate her own lesson plans with categories such as, “Are my lessons designed to engage students and advance them through the content?” Another school leader provided several discussion protocols to implement in lessons.

- In addition to reviewing lesson plans with the resulting student work during the observation process, school leaders provide feedback and reinforce expectations of teaching practices by celebrating strong practices, such as noting that co-teachers “seamlessly take turns leading instruction, assessing instruction, and assisting students with their work.”
Area of Focus

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

Findings

The catch and release (CAR) assessment strategy is being used by some teachers to encourage ongoing formative assessment. Teachers are beginning to create and use common assessments in all content areas.

Impact

Not all feedback to students on their performance and achievement is actionable. While teachers indicate that results of assessments are used to group students, adjustments to curricula are inconsistent.

Supporting Evidence

- Some teachers use the CAR assessment strategies to determine if students understand what they are learning and why they are learning it before they engage in individual and group activities. The thumbs up or thumbs down strategy for assessing student understanding before proceeding with a lesson was observed in a few classes. However, there was little evidence that the information gathered from this form of check for understanding was used to adjust instruction or to track individual or group performance.

- Although some teachers circulated throughout the room taking notes on student performance and participation during work periods, this practice was not consistently observed across lessons. One teacher recorded how well students completed the do now opening task and their level of participation in another lesson activity. A few teachers indicated that these notes help them make decisions about future instructional grouping.

- Some teachers are beginning to gather baseline information and are creating assessments to determine learning throughout the course. Individual departments have grading policies to reflect the specific content of each course. For example, the importance of lab reports is reflected in the science department grading policy, which established that they comprise 20 percent of the grade.

- Feedback to students is not always actionable or clearly aimed at helping students understand what they need to do to improve their performance. One teacher gave feedback to a student on an annotation and reflection for a Socratic seminar that she “liked that your evidence was from the text and connected to the real-world.” Feedback from other teachers on many other pieces of student work was not as detailed.
Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: | 1.1 Curriculum | Rating:  | Proficient |

Findings

School leaders review unit and lesson plans and provide feedback to help teachers align curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards and ensure that rigorous tasks are incorporated to challenge all students.

Impact

Tasks are designed to promote college and career readiness and to be accessible to students of varying ability levels.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders review lesson plans during visits to classrooms and provide supportive feedback, both formally and informally, to help teachers improve their planning. Teachers are expected to make connections between the learning objectives of the lesson and the real life of students in order to increase the motivation of students to engage in the lesson. School leaders determined that although teachers were including pivotal questions in their lesson plans, they were not routinely asking those questions during instruction. They worked with teachers to refine lessons to explicitly incorporate opportunities to ask higher-order questions. To help teachers be mindful of what students should know and be able to do and the assessment of the learning in each lesson, school leaders created a suggested lesson planning template, which is now being used by many teachers.

- Lesson plans commonly include rigorous learning objectives or aims that are aligned to the Common Core standards and the associated assessments. For example, one lesson plan addressed the skill of developing a topic with well-chosen, relevant, and sufficient facts. The task required students to analyze primary documents related to the temperance movement, capture evidence in their double entry journal (DEJ) to explore what the temperance movement might look like today, and then to write a paragraph with a claim, evidence, and analysis. This lesson plan included scaffolds to support English Language Learners (ELLs) in developing academic vocabulary. Another lesson plan outlined the connections between the math skills needed to access the science content and identified the standards related to translating quantitative or technical information into words.

- Lessons in many subjects included tasks that were designed to challenge students at all levels of ability. The task for a self-contained class would have students use tablet computers to record videos of a robot that they would have constructed and tasked to move forward. A task card entitled, “Don’t call that a ‘thingie’” on display in a classroom, encouraged students to use the proper terms for the 437 components of a robotics kit. In a computer technology lesson plan, the real-world based task required students to determine how to use F-type connectors with coaxial cables. Another lesson plan for an Integrated Co-Teaching class included three tasks, all dealing with graphing functions with differing levels of cognitive challenge and scaffolding. The task for one group of students included the graph and prompts for each step of the process while another group had to create a graph to match a real-world story.
**Additional Finding**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Findings**

Teachers are consistently incorporating strategies, such as the use of DEJs, to engage all learners. Most students actively participate in sharing their thinking.

**Impact**

Students engage in challenging tasks and produce work with high levels of rigor.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The practice of using DEJs, implemented schoolwide this term, has become consistent across departments. Students shared work products based on this tool and spoke about how they now use the DEJ to reflect on their learning and to study for tests. One student made notes in a DEJ about another student’s class presentation on the topic of immigration. Students in a chemistry class used a DEJ to record their initial reactions and their deeper understandings about the result of an experiment dealing with how copper sulfate changes when heated.

- Many pieces of student work indicated high levels of engagement and participation in rigorous tasks. For example, students presented findings of science investigations that dealt with “The Effects of Number of Siblings on Adolescent Risky Decision Making,” and the effect of schizophrenia on the ability to recognize facial expressions. One project, “The Effects of Adiposity on Memory,” was named a finalist in the 2017 New York City Science and Engineering Fair.

- Most teachers provide opportunities for students to develop their thinking through peer discussions. In a turn and talk during a ninth grade English lesson, students identified the dramatic irony in the play “Romeo and Juliet.” One group of students described the tension when the two title characters first meet and do not know each other’s identity, but the readers “know that Juliet is from the opposite side.” As a regular practice in another class, names of students are posted each day on wall charts to indicate which group they should join to explore the topic of the day.
Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings

Expectations for teacher performance and student achievement are consistently communicated to stakeholders in the school community.

Impact

School leaders provide training and hold teachers accountable for meeting high expectations. Students understand what they need to do in order to be on track to graduate on time and be prepared for college and career.

Supporting Evidence

- Expectations for teaching practices are clearly explained in the handbook for the faculty. For example, the handbook states that, “The principles of evaluation must be explained to your students. The evaluation technique must be non-arbitrary and non-discriminatory.” Teachers are also advised that they should be entering at least three grades per week into the online grade reporting program so that students can track their performance. School leaders track the entries for teachers to ensure the grades are up to date.

- The principal sends memos to the staff every week, reinforcing the expectations for professionalism. In one memo at the beginning of the school year, he referenced the work of Paulo Freire and reminded teachers that, “we believe that we have a moral imperative to create lessons that engage students and help humanize teaching and learning experiences.” The memo went on to explore the need for students to be skilled readers, writers, and thinkers and outlined the support for teachers in making the changes needed to accomplish these goals. A few weeks after this memo, the staff participated in a professional development session on using a protocol to examine beliefs and values.

- In a presentation at a whole-school assembly, the principal gave a shout out to students “who have not yet learned how to put their best foot forward because they need a giant, gentle pull from all of us.” The guidance department produced a handbook for students to guide them through the college application process. This guide includes a checklist that starts in January of grade eleven and concludes with graduation in June of senior year. Students stated that they get “the talk” about college at the beginning of grade eleven and that they are encouraged to apply to college, even if they are unsure at the time about how they will pay for it. The guidance department provides help to students and their families in completing the financial aid applications.

- Students on the law team work with law firms to learn about career opportunities. One student said a lawyer told her that in college, you have to open up and be more confident. She said that the experience of a mock trial “broke me out of my shell” and that she now has much more confidence. Students who are taking advanced classes stated that they are college ready and some are taking college level computer coding classes at Lehman College.

- Students understand what they need to do to be on track to graduate as a result of the Go Green posters, which display which students are on track (green) with credit accumulation, Regents exams, and attendance. Students also demonstrate their understanding of what they need to do to become college and career ready by conducting student-led conferences with their teachers and their parents. Students prepare for these conferences by inviting their parents to the conference. One student wrote, “I have been learning how to become a better writer and speaker.” Other letters reference how proud the students are to demonstrate to their parents how hard they have worked, how much they have learned, and how much they want their parents to support them as they work toward college readiness.
Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: | 4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings

Teachers are regularly engaged in collaborative teams to analyze student work and identify strategies that can be implemented to improve student performance.

Impact

Teaching practices are improving and teams are creating rigorous tasks in alignment with the Common Core standards and the instructional shifts.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers conduct intervisitations to strengthen their practice by observing successful practices and collaborating with peers by sharing instructional strategies. After intervisitations, participants reflect on their experiences by filling out a form that asks them to identify the focus of their visit and to outline how the experience will affect their practice. A teacher wrote that the goal of one visit was to see ways to increase student engagement and the use of technology to assess student learning. The teacher further explained that the intervisitations will “enable me to grow and develop professionally.”

- Teachers engage in regular collaborative team meetings. The science department team looked at student work and discussed ways to improve how students write about scientific topics. One teacher noticed that some students were referring to letters rather than base pairs when describing the structure of genetic material, and others noted that often students were annotating by highlighting the entire text. To address the need for additional support for ELLs, the team decided to provide tasks with sentence starters for students who might struggle with scientific writing.

- Teachers indicated that their collaborative inquiry teams include general education teachers as well as teachers of students with disabilities and ELLs. These teams have begun to follow a two-week cycle that includes looking at student work to determine gaps in student learning in week one followed by implementing the suggested strategies in week two and then analyzing the resulting student work to determine if the strategy was successful to begin the cycle again. Schoolwide, teams are focusing on incorporating the use of instructional shifts in lessons to have students state a claim, provide text evidence, and analyze the evidence.

- Teachers indicated that collaborative team work has helped them to improve their lessons and the level of student performance as well. The practice of using the DEJ was highlighted as an example of the schoolwide impact of their work. The art department uses the DEJ to help students add more detail to their analysis of artwork. The science department realized that they could modify the DEJ to incorporate the use of diagrams and charts as well as texts in order to allow students to think about the topic before analyzing and interpreting the data.