Quality Review Report

2016-2017

DeWitt Clinton High School
High school 10X440
100 West Mosholu Parkway South
Bronx
NY 10468

Principal: Pierre Orbe

Dates of Review:
May 4, 2017 - May 5, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Rosemary Stuart
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**

DeWitt Clinton High School 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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></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>Area of Focus</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>
</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>Area of Celebration</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>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

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

Findings

School leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations for college and career readiness and provide support to students and their families through the Student Support Center.

Impact

Families understand the progress their children are making to become ready for college or career opportunities. Guidance and advisement supports prepare students for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- The Student Success Center (SSC), organized in conjunction with a community-based organization (CBO), and the parent association conduct workshops for parents on the college search, application, and financial aid process, including how to interpret the financial aid award letters. The SSC conducted a college fair to provide students and their families the opportunity to talk to representatives from over 40 institutions. Parents indicated that the center has been an important source of information and support to them.

- Parents stated that they receive information about graduation requirements every year. Teachers review transcripts with parents as part of parent-teacher conferences so that they understand what credits and Regents exams are needed for their children to be on track for graduation. Many teachers and parents use an online grade reporting system to track grades and assignments.

- School leaders have organized events to expose students to a wide variety of information and experiences aimed at increasing college awareness. The alumni association sponsored panels of alumni for a career day, and the principal notified parents "to talk to their children about what they learned" from these former DeWitt Clinton students. Senior students mentor freshmen to encourage them to begin college preparation. One student wrote that, "The student success center helped me to come up with a plan for my future."

- The SSC provides direct support to students as they engage in the college decision process. Staff members track the progress students make with respect to taking tests required for college admission and submitting applications to State, City, and private colleges. Guidance counselors from the small learning communities (SLCs) work with the center to ensure students stay engaged in the process. So far this year, over 700 college applications have been submitted.
Area of Focus

1.1 Curriculum

Rating: Developing

Findings

Teachers are planning units of study and lessons in all SLCs. However, there is inconsistent emphasis on rigorous academic tasks in lesson plans.

Impact

Some lesson plans outline differentiation strategies. However, few lessons provide specific access into the curricula for English Language Learners and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers in each SLC plan units and lessons using the backward design process, and some content area teachers collaborate across the school’s organizational structure to plan and share strategies with each other. For example, social studies teachers created performance-based assessments to promote the use of discussion protocols. Teachers indicated they embed supports for all learners in the planning. However, these embedded supports were only explicitly outlined in three of nine lesson plans for classes that were observed.

- Unit and lesson plans outline tasks with a wide range of rigor. A unit plan in English Language Arts (ELA) outlines how students will read Macbeth as the basis for exploring how to use rhetoric in an argument and to make and support inferences about an author’s word choice. A pacing guide for an algebra course includes topics such as analyzing graphs and solving compound inequalities. However, lesson plans do not always exhibit the same level of rigor. A lesson plan for an English class includes a task requiring students to “place a question mark next to something you want to know more about or something you don’t understand.” The plan does not allow for clarification or discussion of the topics identified by the students.

- Lesson plans do not always outline strategies to engage English Language Learners and students with disabilities. Even in English as a New Language (ENL) classes, the lesson plans do not always explicitly identify strategies to engage learners with differing levels of English language acquisition. For example, the task in a lesson based on The House on Mango Street was to have students create a chart comparing their houses with the house in the text. The lesson plan does not outline how the students with various home languages would be supported in accessing the text. Although the lesson plan for an Integrated Co-Teaching class includes general supports such as, “students with short attention span will constantly be monitored and kept on task,” it does not identify the specific students to monitor, nor does it outline what actions the teacher will take to keep the student on task.
Findings
Across content areas, teaching strategies do not consistently provide entry points for all learners into the curricula. Student work products and discussions are uneven across the SLCs.

Impact
Students do not consistently make their thinking visible or demonstrate mastery of the content in student work products in lessons, homework, and assessments.

Supporting Evidence

- There has been a schoolwide effort to increase student engagement through the use of discussion protocols. In some classes, these protocols were being used by students to explore the curricula. One class was observed using the fishbone protocol to analyze the poem, “Ode to a Large Tuna in the Market.” In a social studies class, the students were using the talk outline protocol to share their thinking about the rise of Hitler. However, in other classes, there were missed opportunities for students to share their thinking. In classes where discussion protocols were used, there were greater levels of engagement as students explored issues using higher-level thinking skills.

- The schoolwide focus on increasing student engagement, including training for teachers on the use of discussion protocols, has not yet resulted in consistent, high levels of student discussion. In one class, several students were disengaged in the lesson with their heads down on their desks. In other classes, the discussions were teacher-centered, with missed opportunities for students to expand their thinking. For example, in a science class, one group of students reached a different, and incorrect, conclusion than all of the other groups. The teacher confirmed the correct conclusion but did not explore why the students had answered the question incorrectly.

- Students are not always challenged to produce work leading to college and career readiness. One assignment on vocabulary development asked students to number alternate lines on their page from one to nine, copy vocabulary words with their parts of speech and definitions, and then write a sentence for each word based on their readings. Similarly, in other classes, students were observed copying problems from the board. Many students are assigned low level tasks, thus taking time from engaging in more academically rigorous work. Occasionally, teachers debriefed the introductory task of the lesson before the majority of students had completed it.

- Teachers in some classes are providing visual entry points for students to explore content. In one class, students, including students with disabilities, were using images of sculpture and paintings as an introduction to the Renaissance. In another class, students were conducting a gallery walk to explore the reasons that a species may have become extinct over a brief period of time. However, there is a notable absence of direct support or translated materials for English Language Learners. A task in a social studies class provided information about Herbert Hoover and the Great Depression in Spanish. However, this is not typical of most assignments. In one ENL class, students were reading an English translation of a Spanish language poem, with no opportunity for English Language Learners to access the original text to scaffold their understanding and interpretation of the poem.
Findings

Teachers use some assessments and rubrics designed to prepare students for Regents exams. Teachers across SLCs are beginning to use common assessments.

Impact

Not all teachers are providing actionable feedback to students and aggregating information about student performance to inform adjustments to future instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Some teachers use curriculum-aligned assessments to ensure that students are prepared for the types of questions and tasks they will face when they take Regents and Advanced Placement exams. In one class, students were examining seven documents related to industrialization in Japan and Russia. In groups, the students were coming to an agreement on the essential idea of each document. The teacher reminded them that the next day they would be writing an essay and that they should remember to include descriptions of the documents, as is expected on the Advanced Placement exam.

- Teachers generally meet in teams within their SLC to create and analyze assessments, thus missing formal opportunities for content area collaboration. Teachers in upper-grade elective courses work together across the SLCs to identify strategies for assessment. Social studies teachers from all SLCs created document-based performance tasks and strategies for using the thinking like an historian protocol for administration in December. They discussed modifications to the rubric they would use to assess student performance and planned how they would analyze the data they collected from this assessment. However, this practice is not consistent across content areas.

- Feedback to students is uneven and not always actionable. Students indicated that they were not sure how the grades were determined on various pieces of work. One student showed classwork in his notebook that received a grade of 97, with three points deducted for one sentence that used a vocabulary word incorrectly. However, there were other errors, such as the misspelling of a vocabulary word, for which no points were deducted. Many pieces of student work contained limited feedback, with checks for correct answers and no comments or suggestions for the incorrect or incomplete responses.

- Some teachers administer baseline assessments as well as mid- and end-of-unit assessments. However, there is not a widespread practice of tracking performance of students on these assessments. Math teachers analyzed the performance of their students after a mid-module assessment and noticed that students were improving in attempting to solve the problem. They also noticed that some students were still having difficulty in describing what variables may represent in a word problem. Nevertheless, analyzing results of assessments to inform curricular adjustments is not a consistent practice across disciplines and SLCs.
### Findings

School leaders support teachers using a procedure that assures an effective and consistent cycle of observations across all SLCs. Feedback to teachers is normed between supervisors and captures strengths and next steps.

### Impact

School leaders encourage teachers to reflect on their practices as part of the observation cycle as they provide feedback that outlines expectations for professional growth.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders conduct norming exercises among themselves to ensure the feedback and ratings they give to teachers are consistent across SLCs with the components and ratings of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. They instituted a template for writing high-leverage feedback that includes measurable next steps with a connection to student outcomes and timeframes for implementing the suggestions. As a result of this norming, ratings for teachers have become more consistent and reflect more realistically the effectiveness of teaching practices.

- During cabinet meetings, the principal has made clear his expectation that assistant principals document weekly support and supervision given to teachers. They also discuss their progress toward completing observations with particular attention to struggling teachers.

- The feedback provided to teachers is actionable and captures low-inference evidence from the observed instruction as well as suggested areas for improvement that are connected to student performance. Several observations include the suggestion to align the exit slip assessment to the instructional objective or the aim of the lesson. One observation suggested that the teacher pace the lesson to allow more time for discussion, noting that doing so would “increase the cognitive challenge.”

- Teachers reported that they have become more reflective about their practices and that having the opportunity to review the low-inference transcripts of their lessons has helped them to reflect more accurately on the impact of their teaching. One teacher reported that the effectiveness of implementing the observer’s recommendation to use the “save the last word” discussion protocol was “more important than I even anticipated.” She added that using this strategy has made the students feel more empowered as they share thoughts with each other.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

Teachers engage in collaborations to examine student performance within their SLCs. Teachers take leadership roles on teams to plan professional development and discuss school improvement initiatives.

Impact

Teachers have a voice in decisions that have an impact on teacher practices and student performance.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal formed an accreditation committee, including teachers and parents, to review the schoolwide grading policy with attention to the weight given to participation and how teachers were determining the participation grade. The result is a policy which counts participation as 40 percent of the grade. The teacher-led professional development committee is focused on identifying proven discussion protocols which they research, practice using, and adapt for use by themselves and their colleagues. They provide training to the entire teaching staff on using these protocols. In addition, teachers participate in the process for hiring new staff.

- Teachers meet weekly in inquiry teams within their SLCs. To accommodate the constraints of their staggered programs and to ensure that all teachers participate, school leaders and professional development facilitators coordinate the activities during periods one and nine. Teachers identify problems of practice using data on student performance and engage in inquiry using the same types of protocols they are implementing in their classes. These practices strengthen the instructional capacity of teachers.

- In one team meeting, teachers reflected on the recent cycle of intervisitation they had completed. They used the microlab protocol to determine how closely the instruction they observed reflected the schoolwide theory of action regarding alignment of instructional objectives with assessments and levels of student discussion. A teacher shared that one unexpected benefit of intervisitation was to see her own students interacting in a way that was different from the way they are in her class. She added that this helped her to reflect on her own practice and think about ways she could use new strategies to engage her students at a higher level.