Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Alfred E. Smith Career and Technical Education High School
High school 07X600
333 East 151st St.
Bronx
NY 10451

Principal: Evan Schwartz

Dates of Review:
May 3, 2017 - May 4, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Daisy Concepción
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

#### Instructional Core

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<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>
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<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>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
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### Systems for Improvement

**To what extent does the school...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>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>
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<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>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>
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<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>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>
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Area of Celebration

| Quality Indicator: | 1.3 Leveraging Resources | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings

School leaders have ensured that organizational decisions, including hiring practices to close the achievement gap, partnerships, and the use of technology and teacher time, are aligned to and support the school’s instructional goals. Teacher teams meet regularly and their professional responsibilities are aligned to support the school’s goals.

Impact

Resources are procured and used to support the school’s instructional goals and Career and Technical Education (CTE), as evidenced through meaningful student work products. There is a conscious effort to hire staff to effectively support access to college readiness and to focus teacher time on improving instruction and engaging students in challenging academic tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- Resource decisions at the school are intentional and aligned to the school’s instructional goals. There is ample evidence that school leaders have made investments in curricula and materials, and the administration of a grant ensures that students have access to entrepreneurship, robotics, fitness, and supplemental tutoring. As a CTE school in automotive and graphics, there is a concerted focus on ensuring that students have the current technology and equipment needed to support student mastery in this program so that students are career and college ready. The computer graphic classes have the latest software programs. Students in this class partnered with one of the speech therapists and were developing a public service poster campaign on hearing loss and music volume. Students stated that they have learned a great deal during this campaign, resulting in a change in their behavior, including having conversations with peers about hearing loss. The principal has ensured that two live auto shops have been fully renovated and have a variety of cars that have been specifically modified to provide students with access to learning. A visit to the shop revealed students collaboratively engaged in problem-solving issues with vehicles and staging vehicles through the service loop. These shops also serve as service stations for clients from the community who bring their vehicles for servicing, affording student apprentices the opportunity to work on live vehicles and practice customer service skills needed in the career world, thus ensuring students develop meaningful work products.

- Thorough collaboration with the teachers, school leaders have structured teacher time so that teachers meet every day to further the school goals. Teachers meet by grade, department, or inquiry team and also can meet one-on-one with administrators to work on feedback, their professional goals, or professional development. In a meeting, teachers stated that this structure has allowed them to work on developing effective lessons as well as unit planning and engaging in conversations about the use of scaffolds as a differentiation technique. Teachers feel that they have been provided with the time needed to help them improve their skills as well as to plan challenging academic tasks to promote career and college readiness.

- To support students and close the achievement gap, school leaders have made deliberate decisions in hiring to enhance learning opportunities leading to college and career readiness. In addition to supporting current CTE students by hiring master student apprentices with CTE background who are in teacher training programs, the school leaders have hired two more graphic teachers. Additional hires include two instructional coaches, two social studies teachers, two English teachers, and a family worker. These teachers assure a close teacher–student ratio to support student pass rates, as the addition of a CTE component requires students to graduate in four years with fifty-four credits instead of forty-four credits.
Findings

While most teachers are engaged in structured professional collaboration and analyze assessment data and student work, teams are loosely connected to the school goals and the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS).

Impact

Inquiry is still developing as teacher team work does not yet promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of the CCLS, thus limiting teacher practice and progress towards goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- A humanities teacher team meeting began by looking at student work. The task being analyzed was a student created Facebook page for a Renaissance man. Teachers agreed that student work showed a lack of comprehension of the word “Renaissance,” leading to a large number of students not being able to do the task. Teachers stated that they wanted students to write a summary of a Renaissance man demonstrating the use of claim, evidence, and reasoning (CER) strategy. While there was some conversation about the need to clarify the task and what the intended student product was, the conversation quickly veered to particular students and interventions for them, including phone calls home to address behavior. Thus, while this meeting surfaced valuable questions about what comprises a rigorous task, what essential information and skills students need to engage in the task, the quality of student work products, and planning instruction aligned to the content standards, the conversation changed course to interventions for students. As a result, rather than planning the needed scaffolds and changes to create access to the tasks, the team spoke about social/emotional matters. In closing the meeting, the agreement the team reached was to develop a “team way of looking at kids and how well they are doing.” This shows that teacher work is ineffectively connected to the implementation of the CCLS.

- While teachers meet to analyze data and look at student work, school leader observation feedback indicates that lessons do not always address the Common Core standards, including learning objectives that align with the task or reflect rigor. A sample of feedback to teachers includes comments such as, “The lesson did not follow an organized progression and engaged a limited number of students,” “Your lesson plans are not correctly aligned to CCLS,” “Lesson activities did not allow for critical thinking,” and “The lesson plan was well-developed but not fully enacted. This was evident by the number of students who were not completing the assignment.” This feedback demonstrates that although teachers meet regularly to plan together, their work does not typically result in improved practice.

- A review of the math and science teacher team notes reflects a need to increase rigor and provide appropriate scaffolds to support struggling students. However, there was no evidence in the minutes of the data or student work that was analyzed. There was no description of what was seen or any information on how the team members used their understanding of challenges in student learning to inform their instructional practices. Instead, agendas merely listed the need to include appropriate scaffolds. A review of the online curriculum feedback forum shows that teachers need to focus on scaffolds for students and clarify the task. In this forum, regarding Algebra II, one teacher asks another, “What is the emphasis in the two units that we need to clarify?” In English, one teacher asks about the writing standards that she should assess in the end of unit task. Therefore, teacher teams are still developing in their inquiry practices and in aligning their work to the CCLS to ensure students have consistently rigorous tasks and lessons that include the skill, content, and appropriate scaffolds to support higher-order thinking.
Findings

School leaders and faculty are working with an outside consultant and are in the process of aligning curricula to the CCLS and integrating the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks reflect efforts to provide all students with access into the curriculum, but academic tasks do not consistently emphasize rigorous habits.

Impact

While school leaders are engaging in purposeful decisions about the curricula, they have yet to build coherence to promote college and career readiness. Students are not consistently engaged in higher-order thinking tasks, and access for English Language Learners and students with disabilities is limited.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of both the online curriculum maps and the lesson planning documents shows that units are at different stages of development, with a unit on *Romeo and Juliet* only two pages long and listing the English standards including academic vocabulary for the unit, such as plot, setting, and theme. In this unit, instructional shifts are only implied with the line “evidence-based collaborative discussion.” A unit on Western Europe and Russia is five pages long, yet when looked at closely, reveals that it is an extensive list of standards and conceptual understandings and never explicitly references the instructional shifts. A review of lesson plans also reveals that few lessons incorporate the instructional shifts. In those that do reference the shifts, no details are provided as to how these will be implemented or will support engagement in the standards. Consequently, the school is still in the process of integrating the shifts.

- Lesson plans still reflect limited rigor and tasks do not always promote higher-order thinking. A lesson planning document lists that students will be studying how the laws of apartheid impacted South African society, but the task is comprised of students answering questions aligned to Webb’s *Depth of Knowledge* level 1—basic recall questions. A grade eleven honors document stated that students will draw inferences from text and produce clear and coherent writing, yet the task that students will engage in is a fill-in-the-blank paragraph. Two units in social studies require students to use primary and secondary sources to evaluate and construct models of historical periods, demonstrating understanding of political and social context through comparative writing. However, the task call for the class to be divided into three groups, with students in each group working collaboratively on civilizations, searching the internet to complete slides for political, social, and economic aspects of the assigned civilization. Rather than all students being held accountable for the reading and writing, groups will present to each other and students will use a note catcher “to record notes for civilizations that they did not study.” Scaffolds for this task include “questions repeated” and “slower tone used.”

- A review of academic tasks shows a focus on the product and not on higher order thinking. This was evident in a lesson involving “The Tell Tale Heart,” where students will complete a three-page organizer comprised of a series of questions. There are missed opportunities to have students engage in close reading of this complex text, drawing inferences and then engaging in extensive writing to examine perspectives or justify thinking. Additionally, while lessons reference access for all learners, supports for struggling students are limited. The access points listed are instructional grouping, graphic organizers, or “individual check-ins” for students. In some cases, the differentiation listed is “partnering one strong writer with a weak writer” and, in one lesson plan, access consisted of “reminding” students that they should seek “the assistance of their group mates.” Thus, lesson plans do not reflect the use of instructional strategies to create access for different learners.
Additional Finding

Quality Indicator: 1.2 Pedagogy
Rating: Developing

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices, including collaborative grouping, questioning, and scaffolded academic tasks, inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula. Consequently, there is limited student participation.

Impact

Teaching practices connected to access have resulted in academic tasks that hinder cognitive engagement in appropriately challenging tasks and limit demonstration of higher-order thinking in both discussion and student work products.

Supporting Evidence

- Teaching practices engage students in instruction that involves low cognitive demand. Teacher questioning is aligned to Webb’s Depth of Knowledge level 1--basic recall, that does not challenge students to think critically to analyze or evaluate information. While the learning objective in a bilingual global class was to have students understand the impact of the policies of white minority South Africa, many students in the class did not have a text, and those that did sat and waited for the teacher to ask a series of low level questions, such as “What is apartheid?” In a grade nine English class, students read “The Tell-Tale Heart” in order to discuss how the narrator’s point of view contributes to the central idea. However, the questions used by the teacher to spark conversation focused on who was the narrator and a retelling of the plot. When asked to work independently on a page of fifteen questions, most students were unable to engage and conversations were limited to the recounting details of the story. Additionally, the scaffolds of “student pairing” and “repeated instructions” were of little assistance in supporting students with a question such as, “How does Poe manipulate (use) time in paragraph 3?”

- Scaffolds do not create entry points into rigorous tasks. This leads to most tasks being modified so that they have a low cognitive demand yet are tangentially related to the CCLS. This, in turn, changes the focus to creating a product rather than engaging students in higher-order thinking. A grade eleven English honors class was reading a short story to “draw inferences and analysis of the text to determine where the text leaves matters uncertain.” A conversation with the teacher revealed that she wanted students to read the text to analyze the narrator’s tone at the killing of an elephant and identify guilt or self-consciousness. However, groups of students engaged in limited conversation where they stated that people kill animals for sport, self-defense, or food and then completed a fill-in-the-blank paragraph. An exception to this pattern of school practice was seen in a biology class, where students used a genetic code chart to identify DNA and RNA sequences unique to particular plant species. Students in this class were provided with text in Spanish, picture supports, and sentence stems that allowed them to demonstrate higher-order thinking in discussion and work products.

- Across classrooms, teachers include instructional grouping and jigsaw as a scaffold to create access to the task and promote class discussion. Yet structures such as these and collaborative groups with roles hold only the scribe in the group accountable for the work. These structures preclude many students from higher order thinking, since groups of students are not held accountable for reading complex text, using close reading or annotation skills, or practicing college writing skills, such as writing essays. Additionally, student partnering in the school is used largely for translation or for one student to support another, leading to both students’ instructional needs not being met.
Additional Finding

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

Assessment practices in the school inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing assessments. Rubrics, including those for peer assessments, are loosely aligned to the school’s curricula.

Impact

While school practice includes the use of rubrics for various purposes, they result in limited feedback to both student and teacher. While checks for understanding may surface misconceptions or misunderstandings, they do not necessarily result in adjustments.

Supporting Evidence

- In an honors English Regents class, students read and annotated text from a previous Regents exam to locate a piece of evidence that supported their determination of the central idea of the text. Students were provided with the scoring rubric from the English Regents and were able to discuss the criteria on the rubric and their application to the text. However, the focus was not on developing an understanding of how the rubric, as a whole, rated a sample, but to decide which criterion on the rubric was the most important one and why. Although each group gave a reason as to why they thought a certain criterion was important, they struggled to understand how these criteria integrated and their implication in this activity and for their writing. One student was heard saying, “Miss, I think that they [criteria] are all important.” No clarity was provided. In an ethics writing class, it was apparent by the conversation that students did not understand the word “ethics,” as the few that spoke stated that being ethical meant not being able to experience failures in life, and since failures help people grow, they would rather be unethical. This misconception of the definition was not addressed. In the second period of a double period grade nine algebra class on systems of equations, students were still struggling to complete the second problem on their worksheet and the teacher was unable to provide clarity.

- There is not a uniform approach to feedback across classes. In some classrooms, scoring rubrics are used to provide students with feedback, although this tool is not designed for this purpose, since the language in each descriptor is dense and vague. Difficulty with this vague language was seen in a student meeting. In this meeting, students shared that although they have been exposed to the Regents rubrics, they did not understand what feedback such as “depth of development” or “minimally developed” meant. In some classes, student work is not accompanied by a rubric at all, and instead of rubric based feedback, student work products just display teacher corrections or non-rubric based comments. One such comment offering limited support was, “Once again you have failed to complete your classwork. You really must make an effort.” In other cases, student work is accompanied by a rubric where the criteria are circled and no written feedback or next step is provided.

- In some classes, teachers use “group participation rubrics” as a form of peer evaluation. Yet these have limited use as a feedback tool since they neither align with the content that students are engaged in nor with the CCLS. These rubrics require a student group leader to monitor student behaviors such as participating and staying focused. This was seen in the ethics class and in a global class on Mesoamerica, where collaborative groups of students copied and pasted pictures from middle school websites onto their PowerPoint. In this latter class, students were not held accountable for the content or digital research but for being a good group manager or checker. Thus, they did not give each other content feedback essential for improving the quality of their work.
Additiona

Quality Indicator: 3.4 High Expectations
Rating: Proficient

Findings

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

Impact

School leaders support teachers in meeting high expectations by providing them with ample planning time, professional development, and feedback using the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Students receive ongoing advisement that prepares them for college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- A focus of all school leaders at the school is increasing rigor to ensure that students are college as well as career ready. To that end, school leaders have just launched two new initiatives. One involves developing rigorous unit plans focusing on text-based evidence and college writing using an online planning system while the other focuses on building student portfolios. In addition to ample meeting time, a review of the professional development plans shows that teachers participate in curriculum-based professional development and are held accountable to high expectations through observations. In one sample observation, the school leader questions the alignment of the unit to the CCLS and asks the teacher to revise the unit.

- In a meeting with students, they stated that the school has high expectations for learning and career and technical education. In addition to an online grade book that makes students’ grades transparent in real time, there are three guidance counselors at the school. One is dedicated to solely to supporting freshmen, one to supporting seniors as a college and career advisor, and one serves grades ten and eleven. This team, along with teachers, ensures that students receive academic conferencing that keeps them apprised of where they stand with credit accumulation and their Regents exams, providing support and interventions to ensure students meet graduation requirements. The principal has invested in providing ongoing and detailed guidance and advisement to students during their four years at the school. He said, “In a regular NYC high school, students need 44 credits to graduate. Our students need an additional eleven credits to meet the requirements for a CTE-endorsed Regents diploma, and we are held accountable to the 4-year graduation rate. We have to support students every step of the way toward graduation.”

- Students spoke extensively about the career opportunities that they have. For instance, they receive support in preparation for their certification and accreditation by the National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation (NATEF), preparing students for jobs in the automotive industry straight out of high school. An internship coordinator supervises the Scholars at Work program and ensures that students are prepared with not only technical skills but also understand appropriate professional and communication skills for the workplace. Some students spoke about working on cars at the NYC Police Department and busses at the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) as part of their internship programs. Many others spoke about the job offers that they have already had as mechanics at car dealerships. Some students have entered a program with CUNY and are pursuing opportunities in the Success via Apprenticeship (SVA) program, a partnership with the New York City Department of Education that prepares CTE high school students to become assistant teachers in CTE classrooms as they complete requirements to become a CTE teacher.