Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School
High school 12X682
1021 Jennings St.
Bronx
NY 10460

Principal: Jeffrey Palladino

Dates of Review:
December 15, 2016 - December 16, 2016

Lead Reviewer: Rod Bowen
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

### Instructional Core

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</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>Well Developed</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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</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>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### School Culture

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Celebration</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>Area of Celebration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<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>
Findings

The school's purposeful approach to culture building uses *Habits of Mind* and *Habits of Work* to inform student learning experiences, staff expectations and training, as well as parent outreach.

Impact

The school's safe and inclusive culture honors student voice and leadership, and promotes the adoption of effective academic and personal behaviors.

Supporting Evidence

- School leadership asserted that students engage in learning experiences that stress intellectual development as well as political and social involvement in our society. *Habits of Mind* and *Habits of Work* inform how students relate to their work as well as each other. While commenting on the leadership skills he’s learning, one student said, “I understand that it’s not all about you. Everybody has something to offer.” He went on to share that while collaborating on a class project, he learned that he could only succeed if he allowed his peers to help him with the work.

- The student government designs and coordinates an annual peace block party. Those involved spoke of how they are charged with clarifying a specific sub-theme, identifying and securing speakers, designing t-shirts, publicizing, and working with the media. This year, the sub-theme is “Say Her Name” for women who have been kidnapped or brutalized by police. With the support of select staff, one student is organizing a gender conference with the intent of focusing on other women’s issues. Students were responsible to develop the school’s mascot, serve as ambassadors when visitors come to the school, and have roles in planning the college fair and opportunity fair.

- The design of the advisory program assigns students to the same advisor for two consecutive years in order to ensure meaningful relationships amongst students and staff. New teachers are trained in effectively facilitating advisories, including circles. Within grades nine and ten advisories, sophomores serve as peer guides for freshman who are acclimating to the school’s culture.

- Students spoke of the restorative and mediation practices that are embedded in the school’s culture and conducted by both students and staff. A student noted, “When harm has been done, whoever does the harm has to be a part of the solution.” Select upperclassmen conduct restorative circles. Students claimed that one of the reasons they feel safe in the school is because of circles and their role in ensuring that you get to know your peers well. They also noted that the school is a place where everyone feels they belong because of things such as mediation to address conflicts, the No Hate campaign and student groups like the Gay, Straight Alliance.

- Parents agreed that school staff frequently reach out to them as needed via texts, emails, and phone calls to either update them or get their support in addressing not just academic performance, but other issues that may impact student performance like punctuality or personal issues outside of school.
Area of Focus

Quality Indicator: 1.2 Pedagogy
Rating: Proficient

Findings
Student work products and discussions do not yet reflect the strategic implementation of entry points, supports, and extensions across the vast majority of classrooms.

Impact
Though all learners are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks, the levels of student thinking and participation do not yet reflect student ownership of learning across the vast majority of classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- In a math class, discussion involved both concepts and process. At one point, the teacher asked a student to elaborate on her observations of the rate of change. The student thoughtfully responded, acknowledging numerical patterns. The teacher encouraged students to make connections and ask questions. Though the conversation was rich and aligned to discussions that might take place during panel presentations, it was teacher centered as students consistently responded to her prompts and were not provided with the opportunity to engage each other in mathematical discourse.

- Students in a literature class were engaged in group work as they identified quotes from *Othello* that related to topics such as gender roles and class. They typed the quote they had selected, as well as the connection to the topic into a Google platform using laptop computers at their tables. After they collaborated, representatives shared the work which was visible from the interactive white board at the front of the room. Rubric-based peer feedback included a student saying that the work shared earned the level of “meets” given the criteria of clarity and depth of thinking, but to receive a “distinguished” rating, the group should use an outside source to support the connection with the quote. The use of both purposeful grouping and technology in the class cognitively engaged all learners.

- During a science class, the teacher projected visual representations to support a lesson about chemical bonds. She asked several higher order questions intended to push student thinking, such as, “What do you think we need to do, and why?” However, in some cases, she answered her own questions and limited her students’ abilities to demonstrate higher-order thinking related to content that was not new to them.

- A humanities teacher led his students through a review before showing a video which would allow them to go deeper into the topic. He asked, “Why do people fight for change?” One student responded with a general answer while another replied by reading an excerpt from text about slavery. The teacher encouraged the class and then guided student thinking with, “Based on what we talked about this week, does change require a moment; yes or no? We need to take on a position.” Students shared their opinions and the teacher illustrated the Haitian Revolution with a slide that highlighted a specific figure connected to the historical event. Though the pacing of the review was quick, resulting in missed opportunities for more students to evidence higher-order thinking, the arc of questioning provided an effective entry point into the curricula.
**Findings**

*Habits of Mind* are purposely embedded throughout curricula as are modifications of tasks that are informed by student work and data.

**Impact**

All students, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), have access to cognitively engaging academic tasks that require them to demonstrate their thinking.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The five *Habits of Mind*, which inform the design of rigorous learning tasks across grades and subjects, are viewpoint, evidence, connections, conjecture and relevance. The emphasis on the habits results in a coherent approach to how students are expected to show what they know.

- A lesson plan for a psychology class focused on skills needed to write an academic research paper grounded in a debatable essential question. Criteria for the use of evidence included that it must vary, be both primary and secondary and be discussed in a way that supports the thesis. Student specific support was outlined for individuals and pairs of students based on the teacher’s understanding of their learning needs. Students with IEPs were purposefully considered in the planning of the task. The strategic differentiation practices included a visual component to the research process for a student with weak reading and writing skills. In addition, two students who tend to be ahead of their peers would be encouraged to go back and ensure that they have sources found in Google scholar or the American Psychological Association (APA) database.

- A social studies lesson plan outlined how students would use evidence from a text set to engage in a Socratic seminar. At the end of the instructional period, students would evaluate themselves using a debate log. Student specific modifications noted in the plan included the use of prompting questions, using a handout to support a student’s development of a viewpoint, and skill-based check-ins during student work time.

- A science class consisted of a morning and afternoon session. According to the lesson plan, in the morning students would read and annotate an article and then answer questions related to data collection using technology. In the afternoon, groups would present their viewpoints, evidence and connections to the class. Two students identified as in need of targeted assistance would have an opportunity to watch certain clips from a video again so that they could focus on the use of vocabulary in context.

- The objective of an English lesson plan was for students to write about a work of literature through researching the text and gathering evidence relevant to their interests. The task required that students select sections from the text that could be related to one of three topics. Using a rubric, they would explain why the connections were profound, precise or they could suggest how the sections could be improved to make them so. This kind of task design emphasizes the rigorous habit of analyzing by making connections.
Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: 2.2 Assessment | Rating: Proficient |

Findings
Across subject areas and grades, teachers create rubric-aligned performance-based assessment tasks (PBATs) and engage in purposeful assessment and grading practices, including checks for understanding.

Impact
Students receive actionable feedback that informs the improvement of their work. Teachers are responsive to student misunderstanding during instruction and make effective adjustments to meet student learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Using Consortium subject area rubrics, teachers develop PBATs in both Division 1 (lower grades) and Division 2 (upper grades). Within departments, PBATs are vertically aligned through the divisions ensuring that student achievement is purposefully increased as students progress toward graduation. Alignment and coherence in the design of PBATs is also supported through the grading and panel processes where teachers across divisions assess the portfolios of all students.

- Students discussed the ways in which they receive ongoing feedback and they noted that they are consistently being pushed to be more specific, find more evidence to support their theses and make more connections to other sources or the outside world. One such piece of feedback read, “If you can be specific you can help your readers to understand that these ideas would have given the poor hope but were also promises that were never delivered.” Other written feedback on student work included encouragement to use figurative language, guidance on how to develop an effective conclusion by revisiting the theme, making connections between the text and something outside of the text, and pointing out redundancy.

- Students in a film class took turns doing presentations on their favorite film. Using an oral presentation rubric, the teacher focused his feedback on viewpoint and evidence. To assess one student’s understanding of these criteria from the rubric, he asked, “What do you think the Dutch angle is supposed to mean?” In a math class, the teacher asked a number of follow up questions to comments made by students such as, “Can you elaborate on that?” and “Could you discuss further?” She continued to push questioning as needed until students evidenced the level of understanding needed to continue the lesson. In a humanities class, students were engaged in a Socratic seminar, while the teacher stood taking copious notes. When the student discussion veered away from stated expectations, the teacher would interject with guidance such as “confer with your partner,” and “use evidence” to ensure that the debate progressed effectively. Though in a few classes checks for understanding were teacher centered, they did reflect a commitment on the part of teachers across classrooms to assess student work and effort, and support learning needs in a responsive manner.
Findings
Teachers engage in training to support the school community’s efforts toward teaching students through the integration of the Habits of Mind into every aspect of teaching and learning. School staff systematically communicates the importance of real world experience, community outreach, and college readiness and provides supports for all students, including high need subgroups.

Impact
Professional goal setting, learning, and collaboration evidence a culture of mutual accountability for implementation of the Habits of Mind. Students own some aspects of their learning experience and receive effective feedback, guidance and opportunities that prepare them for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- Training for the ongoing implementation of the Habits of Mind occurs during teacher team meetings resulting in the habits being embedded in PBATs and lesson plans. This commitment to shared and ongoing learning maintains a professional culture of mutual accountability.

- Teachers were asked to identify an essential question that would inform their professional focus and growth for the year. The questions were either directly or indirectly connected to Habits of Mind. A number were working to address, “How are our Habits of Mind reflected in my classroom and professional work this year?” Another popular question related to the habit relevance, was “If education is a new civil rights movement, how am I contributing to it?”

- All students have access to an online platform that houses information on credit accumulation as well as performance in classes. However, most agreed that the primary source for information pertaining to their status and progress is their advisor, who dedicates time during advisory over the course of a term to check-in with students or schedule additional conferencing time as needed. Teachers mentioned that at times they structure circle conversations so that students can hear from their peers and learn from each other regarding topics such as PBAT completion and the college application process.

- The Student Success Center is a resource for college and career planning. Seniors said that with the support of the Success Center, they have either started or completed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and the Common Application that may be used to apply to approximately 700 member colleges and universities. One student commented that he had learned the difference between a scholarship and a grant, and that he planned on applying for a Pell Grant. A student with an IEP stated that as a result of the college counseling she has received, she knows that the best fit for her is a small liberal arts college where she is more likely to build personal connections with professors.

- A significant component to the school’s commitment to preparing students for life after graduation is Extended Learning Opportunities (ELOs). Through partnerships with organizations and businesses, all students are exposed to real world work experience. One student who participated in the partnership with Madison Square Garden (MSG) Classroom spoke of her experience learning about the behind the scenes aspects of television broadcasting and the importance of team work. In addition, Division 1 students can choose amongst a list of credit bearing Community Outreach options. Entries include a brief description of the partnering organization, insights into how to determine whether or not the opportunity is a good fit, the 21st Century Skills Foci, and availability.
Findings
The majority of teachers engage in weekly structured inquiry-based mixed subject area teacher teams. Structures are in place for teacher voice.

Impact
The work of teacher teams promotes the quality of instruction as well as student achievement on PBATs. Teachers are empowered to make various decisions that impact learning for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- The Division 1 math/science team focused on the quality of feedback provided to students by their teachers. While following a protocol, they made low inference observations of a student’s work samples and provided feedback to the student based on the rubric that informed the task. They then analyzed the feedback originally suggested by the teacher. In one instance, the original teacher wrote, “This is good but hard to visualize.” The teacher participating in the protocol recommended that his colleague should have the student verbally explain the math process first, allowing the student to be more clear on what he hoped to describe in writing. It was noted at the end that during the following week’s meeting, they would return with the student’s work to see if the additional feedback had a positive impact.

- Minutes from a humanities department meeting showed evidence of similar discussions focused on the quality of student work as well as feedback practices. One of the agreed upon next steps was to focus feedback in one or two of the sections of the rubric at a time. Such ongoing analysis supports improved pedagogy while increasing student performance on PBATs as well as other tasks aligned to the various subject area performance based rubrics.

- Teachers spoke of having autonomy over the curriculum. Across grade and content area, teachers use performance-based rubrics to create courses. However, Division 2 teachers have even more discretion as they can develop courses based on interest, such as Russian Literature and Film. Teachers also spoke of using this discretion to allow issues relevant to students to drive instruction and lesson planning when appropriate. They all agreed to address student concerns regarding the presidential election process and outcome by designing research projects and debates that gave students insight into perspectives other than their own. Teachers’ abilities to be creative and responsive in their instructional designs are emblematic of their roles in making decisions that affect all student learning.

- Teachers lobbied for additional house meeting time, which they now use to engage in personalization projects that focus on kid talk and ensure that individual students are provided with the academic and social-emotional supports they need to be successful.