Quality Review Report

2017-2018

Midwood High School
High school 22K405
2839 Bedford Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11210

Principal: Michael Mcdonnell

Dates of Review:
February 14, 2018 - February 15, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Jacqueline King-Robinson
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

Midwood 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>To what extent does the school...</td>
<td></td>
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</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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</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>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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### School Quality Ratings continued

#### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<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>
<td>Proficient</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>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Systems for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<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>
<td>Proficient</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>
<td>Developing</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>
<td>Proficient</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>
<td>Proficient</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>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings
School leaders provide staff with a handbook that communicates high expectations for instruction and professionalism that is aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Students are aware of next steps needed to meet the schoolwide expectation of college and career readiness.

Impact
Teachers hold students to high behavioral expectations, enabling staff to focus on meeting instructional expectations. Students receive ongoing feedback from guidance counselors so that they are aware of next steps towards graduating.

Supporting Evidence

- The school handbook provides teachers with a refresher on school law as outlined in the Chancellor's Regulations. Additionally, the handbook provides teachers with guidelines for student safety and includes a ladder of referral for misbehavior and inappropriate actions by students. Consequently, teachers are aware of their professional responsibilities of maintaining a safe and orderly learning environment and what structures and support are available should the need arise. Maintaining a safe and orderly environment enables teachers to focus on instructional practices aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. One teacher stated, “We establish clear expectations by providing students with a contract. There is a dean on every floor if assistance is needed, which allows me to focus on teaching.”

- School leaders provide students with a handbook that articulates the requirements for graduation from each of the school's programs and guidance counselors meet with students to plan their course of study. Specifically, included in the handbook is a timetable to ensure that students are aware of the assessments and when they should be taken, college events and information sessions, summer opportunities, and college application and submission deadlines. Additionally, the school's website contains guidance on graduation requirements and the college application process. Students also have access to their transcript in PupilPath, as well as every student has access to Naviance, a college and career readiness software that provides college planning and career assessment tools. Thus, students are aware of graduation requirements and receive detailed feedback from multiple sources, including the school guidance staff, throughout their high school experience. Students agreed that the school counselors ensure that they have the required credits. One student stated, “The guidance counselor will track you down to discuss areas in need of improvement.”

- Staff offers detailed feedback and advisements to students as they progress towards graduation. School leaders require that teachers analyze the failure rate for each course taught to determine which students are currently failing, possible causes, a plan for individual success, and support needed from administration. A living environment plan included notifying students of tutoring support, scheduling reviews before every exam or quiz, and providing students with guided notes. A chemistry plan provided an opportunity for students to make up work or revise prior assignments for a higher grade, as well as increasing parental contact to discuss their children's progress. A student stated, “They don’t give up on you, teachers are constantly trying to prepare us for college.”
Findings
Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics loosely aligned to curricula. Teacher assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding.

Impact
Students receive limited actionable feedback, and checks for understanding do not always lead to effective adjustments to instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, inconsistent teacher feedback to students hinders their understanding of next steps, as posted student work was devoid of rubrics and/or meaningful feedback. During the interview, students shared their work included the questions they got correct, but lacked aligned rubrics, and only had a check or comment like “excellent work.” Yet in some classrooms, students used rubrics to guide their work and received verbal or written feedback for their next steps and they could identify a skill or rubric-measured trait they were trying to improve. Consequently, schoolwide, the feedback on student work posted on bulletin boards and on student work provided during the student meeting, and comments viewed in notebooks or portfolios was not consistently clear or actionable.

- Many of the rubrics showed criteria circled and/or highlighted, however without teacher feedback. In places where the teacher provided rubric-aligned feedback, the feedback was about spelling, grammar, or conventions and not about analysis, explanation, or connections to textual evidence. Summative assessments for economics and United States history courses did not include rubrics or any other scoring criteria. A rubric for an earth science lab report included three categories, attendance and behavior, stations, and analysis. The categories assessed if all tasks at each of the stations were complete, all questions correct, if the student remained in their seat and displayed appropriate behavior throughout. Criteria to support a student with identifying appropriate next steps or directly aligned to the curricula were not evident.

- During a living environment class, the teacher was observed using a thumbs-up protocol as a Check for Understanding (CFU). Two students displayed a sideway thumbs to signal misunderstanding, however the teacher made no adjustment and did not check-in with the two students to clarify their misconception. Furthermore, across classrooms, teachers inconsistently used CFUs, and when used, there were no adjustments to meet student learning needs.

- In many of the classrooms, teachers circulate as students work, but this practice did not always yield adjustments to lessons or mid-lesson interruptions for the teacher to address student thinking or clarify misconceptions so that learning for all would be successful. In an algebra class, the teacher used very superficial CFUs. For example, “Ladies are you okay?” Consequently, across classrooms, there were missed opportunities to make effective adjustments to enhance student learning.
Findings
School leaders and staff ensure the alignment of the curriculum to the Common Core Learning Standards and strategically embed the use of annotation and text evidence from nonfiction texts throughout the curricular documents for all content areas. Curriculum and academic tasks are routinely refined using student work and data.

Impact
Teachers’ use of approved New York State curricula aligned to the standards ensures coherence across grades and subjects. All students have access to the curricula tasks and are cognitively engaged, thus promoting college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- Results from mock Regents assessments revealed that ELLs struggled with answering questions that required an extended written response. Teachers’ lesson plans were revised to include specific strategies for the students to be cognitively engaged; including groupings and inclusion of mandated accommodations. Notes for one group read, “Students struggle with developing a cohesive response and require organizers for support with specific guiding questions to encourage elaboration.” A living environment lesson plan included providing ELLs and students with disabilities with sentence starters for questions that require a short written response, including making scientific inquiries. Thus, written curricular documents evidence planning that allows access for all students, including English Language Learners, (ELLs), and students with disabilities and embedded adjustments that promote access for all learners.

- The instructional shifts are present across content area curricular documents by asking students to read and annotate nonfiction texts, make claims, and cite textual evidence to support their claims. For example, a United States History lesson plan included alignment to the literacy Common Core Standards by requiring students to read and annotate a nonfiction primary source document to determine if it is pro-suffrage or anti-suffrage and to support their response with three pieces of evidence from the text. A twelfth grade ELA lesson plan showed evidence of the shifts by using annotated texts to engage students in collaborative discussions. Thus, students are being presented with lessons that include strategies to enhance their understanding of nonfiction texts, promoting college and career readiness.

- A review of curricular planning documents reveals that teachers are using student data to refine and adjust the curriculum and provide access for all students. Unit and lesson plans include data-based adjustments for individual and groups of students, as well as methods to differentiate instruction for ELLs and students with disabilities, such as the use of sentence strips, translated materials, and additional support from a cooperative teacher. After review of the results for the June Regents in Earth Science, teachers noticed that students struggled with questions that included academic vocabulary. Teachers adjusted the pacing of the curriculum to include daily opportunities for students to develop and utilize academic content vocabulary.
### Additional Finding

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

Teaching practices, aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, reflect the implementation of an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best through peer collaborations, use of real world scenarios, and rigorous instruction. Student discussions and participation reflect high levels of thinking.

**Impact**

Although most student work products and discussions reflect student engagement, student ownership of their own learning was not evident in most classrooms. Students are willing to share their thinking with their peers and question the reasoning of others.

**Supporting Evidence**

- In an advanced placement literature class, students were in collaborative groups sharing their annotations from primary source documents about affirmative action. One member of each group was charting the discussion for reference during the upcoming whole class discussion. Students were controlling the discussion by building off one another’s idea. For instance, one student said, “To support what you are saying the author uses repetition.” Another student made a connection to a text they had previously read to support his argument. All students exhibited high levels of participation and thinking. Additionally, in a marine science class students were presented with a real world scenario for which they had to use portrait and landscape orientations to determine the number of solar panels that could be placed on a roof. Teaching practices in both classes aligned to the school’s belief about how students learn; however, this was evident in the majority but not every classroom visited.

- Across classrooms, students were required to annotate texts as they read, to develop a claim, then support it with evidence, and analyze primary and secondary sources to understand different points of view. In a United States history class students had access to a variety of resources, including a film, *Iron Jawed Angels*, music video, *Bad Romance*, and a power point, *Gilded Age to Progressives*, in order to determine why some Americans were in support of women’s suffrage, while others opposed women’s suffrage. Students were required to answer the question, cite evidence using the documents of their choosing, and explain their reasoning. Teaching practices informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, result in high levels of thinking and participation across classrooms.

- Across classrooms visited, teachers used questions to prompt students to share and explain their thinking to their peers. In an English class, students were in groups based on whether or not their text was for or against the MeToo Movement. Groups had to consider what the opposing side might use as evidence and where their arguments were weak and develop rebuttals based on what the other group could say. Teachers provided opportunities for students to engage in whole group, partner, and small group discussions using accountable talk. Students were fully engaged in the group discussion that was student led. Teaching practices aligned to school’s philosophy of how students learn.
**Additional Finding**

<table>
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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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**Findings**

School leaders, using frequent cycles of observation, support the development of teachers with effective feedback and next steps, and identify strengths and challenges aligned to the Danielson *Framework for teaching*.

**Impact**

Frequent cycles of formal and informal feedback communicates clear expectations for improvements and promotes teacher reflection. A variety of professional development opportunities support teacher development.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School leaders have an effective system for managing observations. A shared calendar identifies the number of observations that each teacher needs, identifies who conducted the observation and how many more are need to be completed prior to the end of the year. School leaders participate in joint observations, in order to norm their observation feedback to ensure that teachers receive aligned feedback regardless of who conducts the observation. The feedback is aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and promotes teacher development. Specifically, feedback from an observation report included clearly articulated strengths and next steps such as, “Next time have students plot actual temperatures of the atmosphere on a graph. This will increase the rigor of the activity and include an important content skill which is commonly assessed on the Earth Science Regents exam.”

- School leaders and teacher leaders schedule frequent formal and informal observations, occurring during four cycles yearlong. They use the progress tracker in *Advance* to identify patterns and trends based on specific components of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* as they relate to the school’s instructional foci. As an outcome of the observations, school leaders provide teachers with effective feedback designed to promote teachers’ professional growth and increase student achievement. As a result of patterns and trends noted during the observations, questioning, discussion and assessment in instruction are the school’s instructional foci and serve as a basis to design support for teachers’ professional growth.

- Next steps for a teacher in designing coherent instruction stated, “Lesson plans are important planning tools that allow you to sculpt the lesson so that students can reach the stated goal. Please ensure that your lesson plans are appropriate for the lesson you plan to teach on that day.” Additionally, the evaluator provided a date for a follow-up observation. The feedback’s next steps focused on using assessment during instruction and encouraged the teacher to “use this practice throughout the lesson in order to uncover misconceptions. Use data to support you in modifying your practice to meet the learning needs of all students.” Thus, feedback to teachers articulates clear expectations and supports their professional growth.
Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured grade level and content area professional collaborations that promote the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work.

Impact

Teacher teams establish goals for groups of students and individual students based on assessment data, and identify teaching practices to address students’ learning gaps resulting in specifically targeted instruction that results in improved student progress.

Supporting Evidence

- After an assessment is administered, teacher team members analyze the results by sorting student work into one of four proficiency levels. Subsequently, teachers select the work of one student from each group and analyze it in depth to identify what the student can and cannot do and identify strategies they will use to move the student toward increased proficiency. One plan required the teacher to provide the student with an outline to create a well-written central idea paragraph. After reflection, an additional adjustment was made to provide the student with a checklist when writing paragraphs.

- School leaders require teacher teams to complete a failure report at the end of each marking period that calls for teachers to identify possible reasons for students’ failure and next steps to remedy the situation. A chemistry failure report identified high absenteeism, students tardy to class, and missing or incomplete homework. The team’s plan included small group peer tutoring nine times per week, increased parental communication, and opportunities for students to redo assignments with a failing grade. Students agreed that having the opportunity to redo their assignments has resulted in improved grades on their progress reports.

- Each department has a teacher team that meets two times per month after school and members continually communicate via email, as needed. Additionally, assistant principals arrange for teachers to meet two times per week during the school day. During teacher team meetings, teachers access an online professional development platform to identify strategies the team will implement to address an identified student learning need. The online platform supports their inquiry-based professional collaborations. During the teacher team meeting that was observed, teachers used a looking at student work protocol to analyze student work. They noticed that students had difficulty inferring to make a claim or identifying the central idea of a text. The team decided to adjust the pacing of the upcoming tenth grade English unit to include a reteach day for identifying the central idea and stating a claim. Teachers agreed that as a result of their teacher teamwork the curricula is more streamlined and collaboration provides them with more ideas and strategies, as well as tools they utilize to enhance instruction.