Quality Review Report

2017-2018

Brooklyn Frontiers High School
High school 15K423
112 Schermerhorn Street
Brooklyn
NY 11201

Principal: Alona Cohen

Dates of Review:
April 17, 2018 - April 18, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Lisa Reiter
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

Brooklyn Frontiers 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>
<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>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 Quality Ratings continued

**School Culture**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Celebration</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
<td><strong>Area</strong></td>
</tr>
<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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional Finding</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
<td><strong>Area</strong></td>
</tr>
<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
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff. Teacher teams such as the student support team establish a culture for learning that systematically communicates a unified set of high expectations for all students.

Impact
Communication around high expectations and professional learning through teacher teams results in a culture of mutual accountability. All students own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders communicate high expectations to staff through a staff handbook, professional learning, and teacher team work. Each school year begins with professional learning on schoolwide norms, instructional best practices, and the principles of youth development such as strategies to build on students’ strengths, which guide their work. Teachers receive ongoing professional learning connected to key elements of the Danielson Framework for Teaching through lesson study that occurs weekly during teacher team meetings. Lesson study provides teachers with peer-peer support and collaboration around designing coherent instruction and questioning and discussions. Teachers came to a quick consensus on the support they receive because of lesson study. One teacher said, “The beauty of lesson study is that it is a collaborative project. We all support each other to support the students.” As a result of lesson study, and the facilitative leadership structures established by the principal, there is a culture in which both teachers and school leaders feel accountable to each other and all students.

- Structures are in place that provides feedback and support that ensures students own their educational experience and are prepared for future endeavors. For example, the student support team includes coaches from Good Shepard Services and teachers. Each student meets with a coach and teacher about once a month to review progress toward graduation using a graduation tracker. All students agreed that these meetings help them understand the classes they still need to take to graduate. The tracker is color-coded making it easily understood. One student shared that she knew she still needed a physical education class because it was white. During these meetings, students also receive feedback on the progress they are making in each class. Every teacher offers outcome recovery sessions several times a week that allow students to master outcomes needed to complete the course.

- Teacher teams and school leaders communicate high expectations to students through the intake process, student handbook, and regular meetings with their coaches. The student handbook includes goals for all students and makes clear the expectations of the school. Students shared that they are expected to take initiative because it is their education. Additionally, as a Learning to Work school, students can participate in internships throughout the city in various fields such as retail, medical, and education. Approximately, 30 percent of the students currently participate in the program.

- An elective course, titled post-graduate prep, is offered to students in their final years of school. This course is designed to prepare students for life after high school by exploring personal interests, career goals and opportunities available to them after graduating high school.
Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs that students learn best when cognitively engaged in tasks that encourage collaboration and discussion. While teaching practices consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula, high-quality supports and extensions vary across classrooms.

Impact

Students across classrooms produce meaningful work products, though in some cases there are missed opportunities for students to engage in student-student discussions and deepen their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- The articulated set of beliefs on how students learn best includes teachers using a workshop model approach, providing opportunities for students to collaborate, and leveraging positive teacher-student interactions to encourage students to complete more complex tasks. This was evident across classrooms and lead to meaningful student work products. For example, in an algebra class, the teacher conducted a brief mini-lesson on using inequalities to evaluate a piecewise function. Students worked collaboratively to solve and discuss problems. In an English class, students engaged in a discussion on a shared text. The teacher asked if anyone wanted to agree or disagree with a student's statement. In response, a student said, "I feel like the character was lying to himself and starting to believe the lie." Another student responded by agreeing and adding on to the statement. The teachers encouraged students to explain their thinking throughout the discussion.

- In a global studies class, students worked with a partner to analyze various pairs of historical documents. All students were actively engaged in discussions with their partners. One partnership discussed the similarities and differences of opium use in China in 1911 to opioid use in the United States. Another partnership analyzed two political cartoons that addressed foreign interference in governments. While teaching practices were aligned to the articulated beliefs, in some classrooms there were missed opportunities to incorporate small group or partner work. For example, in a chemistry class, students were encouraged to work together and ask each other questions. However, the task of using the periodic table to identify subatomic properties of elements required students' complete calculations using a formula and fill out a chart. Throughout the class, most students worked independently and asked a teacher for help when they needed assistance.

- Across classrooms, students had access to various supports such as wall charts, notes, and teacher support. For example, in a geometry class, included on student work packets was a checklist of steps to solve each problem. In both chemistry and algebra, students referenced wall charts while they completed tasks. Additionally, throughout classrooms, teachers provided one-on-one conferences for students as additional support. While in some classes, students could work ahead as an extension, strategic extensions were not yet evident.
## Findings

School leaders and faculty develop curricula and outcomes that are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are emphasized coherently.

## Impact

Curricular decisions regarding the Common Core and the skills needed to show mastery, results in coherence across grades and subject areas and promotes college and career readiness for all students.

## Supporting Evidence

- Review of curriculum maps and outcomes maps reveals evidence of coherence throughout subject areas and schoolwide. Each course contains content specific outcomes that students must demonstrate mastery to pass the course and earn credits. Additionally, there are schoolwide outcomes that connect to skills required to be in college or career ready. For example, the schoolwide outcome of “justify” requires that students support claims in all content areas. Writing outcomes and supports are aligned between English and social studies classes. For example, in English 1 and participation in government, which is the first US history course, there is an emphasis on analyzing texts, finding relevant evidence, and providing embedded questions to support students in this work. As students progress through the different courses for each subject area, there continues to be alignment between writing skills and supports. School staff also revise curriculum each trimester to ensure tasks and outcomes promote college and career readiness and align with the needs of the students.

- Lessons plans and curriculum maps reflect full integration of the instructional shifts across content areas. For example, lesson plans in English emphasize the value of text-based evidence in discussions. Included in an English 5 lesson plan, is a task that requires students to analyze and annotate a poem prior to a full class discussion. Students then identify the theme and defend their responses with evidence from the text. A review of the different algebra classes reveals evidence of the mathematical shift coherence. For example, students use skills mastered in Algebra A such as solving equations with one variable to solve systems of linear equations in the next course.

- All students, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities must demonstrate mastery in content specific outcomes at least two times before the end of the course. Examples of higher-order skills that students must master in Algebra B, include representing bivariate data using scatter plots and a line of best fit. Students use the line of best fit to make predictions and analyze the relationship between the data. Additionally, lesson plans consistently challenge students to utilize rigorous habits, during instruction. Examples include a debate in an English course, in which students defend character’s motivation, evaluating historical documents and formulating an opinion on which country has greater struggles, and argumentative essays on various topics such as climate change.
## Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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### Findings

Across classrooms, teachers and students use rubrics aligned with the school's curricula and outcomes. Teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding.

### Impact

Teachers provide actionable feedback to students both in writing and verbally. Additionally, teachers check for understanding guide students toward self-assessment during lessons, making adjustments to ensure all students’ needs are met.

### Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, samples of student work products showed teacher written actionable feedback. Some examples of that feedback directed students to add more evidence to support their arguments, use more vocabulary words to justify responses, and deepen analyses of the evidence to move to the next level. Feedback on math tasks includes pushing students to expand their answers and reminders to set up problems correctly.

- One student reported, and all present agreed, that teachers' written feedback has a positive impact on her work. This student spoke about receiving feedback in math on the importance of checking your signs when multiplying polynomials. She explained that you need to check for like terms to find the correct solution. She also said, “I like the feedback teachers give us. I want to know what I’m doing wrong so I can fix it.” Another student spoke about the rubrics used in each class and their alignment to the outcomes. The student explained that the rubrics help you understand which outcomes you have mastered or if you need to attend "outcome recovery."

- Teachers check for understanding and adjust instructions, as well as have students conduct self-assessments, and adjust when necessary. In an English class, after reviewing student annotations and analysis of a poem, the teacher determined the class should move on to written response questions rather than another activity on the poem and literary terms. In a geometry class, students completed a self-reflection on a recent exam and identified what they understood and skills they still needed to master. Additionally, students self-assess their discussion skills and participation at the end of each class. For example, in an English class, students were asked to rate their community engagement and provide a specific example of participating in the discussion by making or defending a claim.
Findings
School leaders support the development of teachers with frequent observations and provide effective feedback. Feedback accurately captures strengths, challenges, and next steps using the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Impact
As a result of effective feedback from both evaluative and non-evaluative observations, teachers’ implement strategies that promote professional growth. Feedback articulates clear expectations for teacher practice and supports teacher development.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders conduct frequent observations for teachers they are assigned to support. Each rated item is supported with specific detailed evidence from the observed class to support the rating. Next steps for teaching improvements are included at the close of each observation report. School leaders include student work and scholarship reports during feedback conversations, as well. Additionally, school leaders discussed a strategy of observation cycles planning that targets teachers based on individual need. For example, school leaders will conduct a non-evaluative observation before an evaluative observation for teachers who may need additional support.

- Observation reports contain feedback that captures teachers’ strengths and weaknesses and is accompanied by next steps teachers should take to improve their practice and impact student success. For example, in one report a teacher is commended for the positive teacher-student interactions, which is a schoolwide focus. Next steps for this teacher included integrating more formative assessments and check-ins during the lesson. In another observation report, a teacher is praised for professional contributions to the community. Next steps included integrating various structures to encourage student collaboration, such as the community engagement rubrics, and develop checklists to help students build independence. In this observation report, the school leader also references prior verbal feedback as a reminder to ensure classroom tasks are time-bound.

- In addition to evaluative observations, school leaders conduct non-evaluative observations and provide verbal feedback to teachers. School leaders often visit classrooms to provide feedback on strategies being implemented from lesson study. Teachers came to a quick consensus that school leaders observe their practice at least every two weeks and provide verbal feedback. One teacher shared that she received verbal feedback to encourage students to respond to each other rather than to her. Previously, she was encouraged to visit a colleague to observe this practice.
Findings

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations. Distributed leadership structures are embedded in effective teacher leadership.

Impact

Collaborations within teacher teams strengthen teachers’ instructional capacity resulting in schoolwide instructional coherence and student achievement. Across the school, teachers lead different teams and have an integral role in key decisions, such as course offerings, that affect student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers serve on content-based teacher teams that meet regularly. Each team follows a lesson study protocol to look at student work and develop lessons that result in new insights and perspectives on teaching and learning. During weekly meetings, teams work through the different stages of lesson study that include logistics, goal-setting for student learning, lesson design, lesson observation, and reflection. Each team also develops a year-long question to guide their lesson study. For example, the English team has focused on revising student work and thinking for logic and clarity. During an English team meeting focused on lesson design, began with teachers revisiting student progress in revising their thinking for logic and clarity. Teachers came to consensus that students need continued work in revising their work around analysis. Teachers then began the collaborative process of designing a lesson, thus increasing the instructional capacity of teachers and resulting in schoolwide coherence.

- One teacher stated, and all agreed that teacher team meetings had improved instructional practices. Teams use GoogleDocs to input real-time data and strategies to share with colleagues and inform next steps for planning and meeting the needs of their students. One teacher shared that because of lesson study he reduced the number of scaffolds provided to students and this lead to an increase in the average student scores for the Algebra Regents exam. Additionally, there is a ten percent increase in passing rates across the school for all students, including students with disabilities.

- School leaders believe in a facilitative leadership model that ensures teachers play an integral role in key decisions across the school. Each department has an identified teacher leader that facilitates weekly meetings. The teacher team structure allows teachers to make decisions for their departments. For example, the history department noticed a gap in student understanding in US history and suggested a bridge class that was added to the schedule. Additionally, teachers in the English and history departments recommended collaborating to align writing skills emphasized in their courses. As a result of this recommendation, teachers began revising curricula to include similar writing outcomes. Teachers also will choose which elective classes will be offered for their department.