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>
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<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>Proficient</td>
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<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>
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<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>
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</tbody>
</table>
### School Culture

**To what extent does the school...** | **Area** | **Rating**
--- | --- | ---
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults | Additional Finding | Proficient

### Systems for Improvement

**To what extent does the school...** | **Area** | **Rating**
--- | --- | ---
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 | Additional Finding | Proficient

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 | Additional Finding | Proficient

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 | Additional Finding | Proficient

4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning | Area of Focus | Proficient

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 | Additional Finding | Proficient
Area of Celebration

| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff through ongoing feedback and a faculty handbook. School leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations that are connected to college and career readiness with both families and students.

Impact

School leaders provide ongoing professional development and cycles of observations to support staff’s understanding and implementation of schoolwide expectations. School leaders and staff provide ongoing and detailed feedback to families to help them understand student progress and to students to support and prepare for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- Review of the faculty handbook reveals the sharing of high expectations around instructional design and delivery, grading policies, as well as professional responsibilities. Examples of items covered in the resource include different content-area specific grading policies, lesson planning, and guiding questions for developing teachers’ understanding of the Danielson Framework for Teaching domains that address lesson planning, questioning, student engagement, and assessment. School leaders also share a monthly newsletter with upcoming events and due dates. In addition, weekly professional development opportunities support teachers’ implementation of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Review of both the schoolwide professional development plan and online professional learning opportunities reveals sessions on increasing student discussion and engagement and curriculum development and assessment. Therefore, school leaders provide ongoing training to support teachers’ implementation of expectations. Communicated expectations and support are followed up by evaluative and non-evaluative observations to determine implementation.

- Expectations connected to college and career readiness are shared with families through a parent connection newsletter. The newsletter includes information about the events and opportunities made available to students and families. Additionally, the newsletter includes how families can support their child at each grade level. For example, in one newsletter parents of freshman students are encouraged to set goals with their child as one strategy to stay on track for the school year. Parents have access to an online grade book that allows them to stay informed about their child’s progress. Additionally, parent workshops are offered throughout the school on various topics, including the college application process and the financial aid process. One parent stated that as a result of these workshops she could support her child through this process. Parents came to a quick consensus that school leaders and staff consistently provide feedback and support regarding their children’s progress.

- Students receive ongoing support that guides them toward college and career readiness. One student stated, and all present agreed that the expectation is that every student goes to college. The school has a designated tutoring center that students frequently visit to receive additional support from teachers and peer tutors. Students agreed that the tutoring center has a positive impact on their learning and preparedness for college. Additionally, beginning in the sophomore year, guidance counselors begin to meet with students regarding the college application process and expectations. The school offers afterschool classes and a Saturday program that focuses on Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) preparation. Additionally, approximately three hundred students take college-credit courses, and the average student leaves with five to nine college credits.
Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations. Distributed leadership structures such as assigning teacher leaders for each department, are in place.

Impact

While teacher collaborations have resulted in strengthening the instructional capacity of teachers connected to curriculum development and instructional strategies, they have not yet resulted in increased student achievement for all learners. Although teachers have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning, teacher leadership has yet to play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning across all departments.

Supporting Evidence

- As a result of the work of teacher teams, the instructional capacity of teachers is strengthened. The grade-nine Algebra team met to review the effectiveness of a new strategy all teachers implemented. In a previous meeting, teachers agreed to implement a protocol for students to evaluate each other’s work. One teacher shared that students had to identify the strategy used and provide an explanation for the score given to their partners. Students were able to solve the problems and evaluate their peers but struggled with explaining their responses. Other teachers agreed that they had a similar issue regarding the explanation portion of the protocol. The team identified their next step as assessing students during the share-out.

- Review of team meeting minutes across grades and content areas reveals a consistent practice of sharing strategies and curriculum development to support student learning. One teacher reported that during a grade-nine English Language Arts (ELA) meeting a teacher suggested developing a common text analysis protocol. While reviewing assessment data, the team identified text-analysis as an area of growth for students. One teacher suggested they implement a common text-analysis protocol that is currently in use across classrooms. One teacher shared that as a result of using gallery walks to explain error analysis in word problems, she has noticed an increase in students using math vocabulary. The teacher shared that gallery walks were a new practice for her. Additionally, the ELA team has focused on using Socratic seminar as a strategy to increase student discussion. As a result of this teamwork, Socratic seminar is visible across English classrooms. While there is evidence that the work of professional collaborations has strengthened teachers’ instructional capacity, it has not yet led to increased student achievement for all learners.

- Teacher leaders have been identified in each department. Teacher leaders are responsible for facilitating weekly teacher team meetings and act as a liaison between teachers and school leaders. While teacher leaders frequently meet with their respective assistant principal to discuss concerns and suggestions, this practice has not yet lead to teachers consistently playing an integral role in key decisions. For example, teacher leaders recommended several new courses such as statistics, drumming, and computer class; however, this practice is not evident across all departments. Additionally, teachers turnkey professional development that allows staff to learn from and support each other. One teacher shared that she presented a new text-analysis protocol for struggling learners that one of her colleagues decided to implement. She continues to support teachers with this protocol. School leaders also identify teacher leaders based on strong practices and encourage others to visit those classrooms.
Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core State Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills.

Impact

Curricula decisions such as the development of common tasks build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students. Additionally, curricula emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills such as evaluating peer responses and analyzing complex texts, across grades and subjects for all students, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- Review of unit and lesson plans across departments reveals common tasks that all students will complete. For example, in several ELA lesson plans, across grades and courses, students use textual evidence to support their arguments in both essays and discussions. Socratic seminar is a common approach used to discuss text before writing argumentative and literary essays. Additionally, across math curricular documents, it was evident that students engage in an error analysis task to deepen their understanding of key math concepts.

- Multiple lesson and unit plans evidence a balance between informational and literary texts along with the requirement that students use text-based answers during discussions. In a grade-ten ELA lesson plan, students engage in a Socratic seminar around a central text in which they will cite textual evidence to support their responses to different questions. Additionally, a Global History lesson plan includes a task that requires students to read a text on Genghis Khan and then evaluate him as a leader. Students are required to support their responses with evidence from the text.

- In a grade-nine Algebra lesson plan, students are to demonstrate a deep understanding of the concept of solving nonlinear equations through solving word problems and evaluating a peer’s solution to the problem. In a trigonometry lesson plan, students must demonstrate deep understanding by making an argument for which mathematical law can be used to find a missing angle.

- Curricular documents provide evidence of an emphasis on rigorous habits and higher-order skills for all students, including students with disabilities and ELLs. An English unit plan for classes that include a high number of ELLs includes all students reading the central text, *Night* and engaging in Socratic seminars, journal responses, and writing a literary essay. One journal response requires students to give specific examples to support three different themes and explain which theme resonates most with them. Requirements of the literary essay include identifying the central idea and analyzing how the author’s use of one literary element develops the central idea. ELLs are supported with additional prompts, sentence frames, and vocabulary supports. Examples of additional rigorous tasks include debating key issues from the Great Depression using primary source documents and developing a story using the reproductive system as a metaphor. Additionally, unit and lesson plans include possible supports for students with disabilities such as strategic partnerships, graphic organizers, and one-on-one conferences to ensure all students complete the same tasks.
Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect the articulated belief that students learn best when provided opportunities to work collaboratively and engage in discussions.

Impact

All students produce meaningful work products and engage in discussions that reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- The articulated belief that students learn best in student-centered classrooms with an emphasis on collaboration and discussions was evident across classrooms. During a Living Environment class, students collaborated with peers to write a story using the reproductive system as a metaphor. During a grade-twelve English class, students worked in small groups to formulate questions for different themes in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*. A student explained to his group that his question relates to the main character’s attempt to gain power. Additionally, evidence of structures and protocols to support discussion were visible across classrooms. For example, desks were arranged in a horseshoe shape to support Socratic seminars that were observed in several classrooms.

- Across classrooms, student work products and discussions reflect high levels of thinking. In a grade-nine Global History class, students used different sources to construct an argument on whether or not the Roman Empire fell. The culminating task was for students to write an essay defending their position. Additionally, in a Global History and Geography two class, students collaborated to answer their assigned questions connected to conditions of power and qualities of leaders. Students then presented their written responses to the class. Additionally, across math classrooms, students engage in using an error-analysis protocol to identify an error and explain why it is incorrect.

- Student discussions, across classrooms, demonstrate high levels of thinking and participation. In a grade-ten English classroom all students, including ELLs, engaged in a Socratic seminar around the class novel, *Night*. One student facilitated the discussion and asked, “What other words, phrases, metaphors, and image show he is changing?” Students used accountable talk stems to build off each other’s answers and text evidence to support their answers. In an English class for ELLs, students engaged in a silent discussion in which they annotated a poem and responded to each other in writing. One student responded to another student’s question by writing, “His life is sealed into one long night, but what does that mean?” His partner responded with, “It means that he might die that night.” Additionally, in a grade-nine Algebra class, students worked in groups to solve a problem using one of three different strategies. After each group completed their problem, another group evaluated their work and defended the score using mathematical language.
**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 use rubrics and provide students with written feedback. Common assessments are developed, such as an English literary terms assessment, and used to determine student progress toward goals.

**Impact**

Students utilize teachers’ actionable feedback and rubrics to increase their performance and achievement. Departmental teams analyze common assessments to inform adjustments to curricula and instruction.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Across classrooms, samples of student work products showed teacher-written actionable feedback. Examples of student feedback in English include: “This is a clear, strong argument. Next time, develop your refutation paragraph.”; “Your argument and phrasing are sophisticated. Be careful not to slip into analysis mode when the goal is to argue your point.”; “Excellent job using relevant textual evidence. Next time, vary your transitional phases.” Additionally, students receive feedback on their participation in Socratic seminar through a common rubric. For example, a student was commended for her participation throughout the seminar, and next steps included elaborating on her responses. Feedback in math classes includes reminding students to address the whole question, use inverse operations to solve the equation, and to use the order of operations when solving equations.

- Students receive actionable feedback that helps improve their work. One student stated, and all agreed that they receive feedback regularly. One student said, “I receive a lot of feedback on first drafts. The teacher expects you to implement the feedback for the final draft.” Another student explained that on an Advance Placement History essay the feedback she received was to be more concise with her writing. She said, “I use this feedback every time I write an essay now. I get to the point right away so the reader will understand the purpose of my essay.”

- Common assessments are developed by grade-level departmental teams and used to make adjustments to curricula and instruction. For example, the English department developed a literary terms assessment. Teachers analyzed the assessment and noticed students knew very few literary terms. Therefore, teachers adjusted the curricula to include warm-up activities to teach these terms. Additionally, after analyzing a common assessment in Algebra, the team identified the need for students to spend more time on building foundational skills and annotating word problems. In response to this, the sequence of topics and skills was revised and do-now questions were modified to include more word problems.

- In addition to team-developed common assessments, Regents results and other assessments such as the Gates-MacGinitie reading assessment are utilized to determine student progress and make curricular adjustments. For example, all grade-nine students take the reading assessment, and those results are used to identify class novels and possible supports that will be needed for various skills such as vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension. Students are reassessed at the end of the year to track progress. Additionally, the Living Environment item-analysis was used to adjust the sequence and duration of topics taught.
Findings
School leaders support teacher development with frequent classroom observation cycles and student data analysis. Prompt written feedback captures teachers’ strengths, challenges, and next steps using the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Impact
Evaluative and non-evaluative observations result in feedback that promotes professional growth and make clear the expectations for teacher practice and the supports available to them.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders conduct frequent classroom observations and provide feedback utilizing the Danielson Framework for Teaching. 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. Observation reports also frequently reference previous feedback provided. School leaders include student work and scholarship reports during feedback conversations, as well. Additionally, school leaders discussed a strategy of observation cycle planning that targets teachers based on individual need. This process involves conducting a round of non-evaluative observations for teachers identified as needing additional support. Also, two school leaders may observe an Integrated Co-Teaching class to norm observation practices.

- Observation reports contain feedback that captures teacher’s strengths and weaknesses and is accompanied by next steps teachers should take to improve their practice and have an impact on student success. For example, in one report, the teacher is commended for implementing previous feedback which leads to the high levels of student thinking and engagement that were observed. Next steps for this teacher included having students generate their own questions to raise the level of student discourse. In another observation report, the teacher is commended for developing a lesson that required high levels of student discourse and the use of a checklist. Next steps included having students apply the checklist to a model essay.

- In addition to evaluative observations, school leaders conduct non-evaluative observations and provide verbal feedback to teachers. Teachers often request that school leaders conduct a non-evaluative observation when they are trying a new strategy. Teachers came to a quick consensus that they receive verbal feedback and one-to-one professional development that supports their development. One teacher shared, she received verbal feedback to observe a colleague conducting a Socratic seminar to support her use of that discussion protocol.