Quality Review Report

2017-2018

The Boerum Hill School For International Studies
Secondary School 15K497
284 Baltic Street
Brooklyn
NY 11201

Principal: Nicole Lanzillotto

Dates of Review:
January 3, 2018 - January 5, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Marion Wilson
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</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>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>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>Proficient</td>
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### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 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>Well Developed</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>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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### Systems for Improvement

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<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<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>
<td>Well Developed</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>Proficient</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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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<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>
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<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>
Area of Celebration

| Quality Indicator: | 4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision | Rating: | Well Developed |

Findings

Through strategic observation cycles, school leaders and teacher peers share in the support and development of teachers, including those who are new to the profession and those who are struggling. Feedback to teachers accurately captures their strengths, challenges, and targeted, personalized next steps.

Impact

As a result, there are well-coordinated systems to analyze teacher practice, observation data, and student work informing the analysis of teaching outcomes. Feedback from observations supports teacher development, aligns with their tailored professional goals in each written report, and is tracked for progress.

Supporting Evidence

- Supports for teachers are coordinated after a committee of administrators and teachers analyze student work samples, teacher data and work products. Professional goals and learning experiences are always structured around the expectations aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching that is helping to improve teacher practice and student progress. School leaders, coaches, and mentors developed a color-coded tool that lists each teacher, their goals, and the focus for the observation cycle which includes both formal and informal observations. This tool is an at-a-glance visual used to support the strategic observation cycle and track what supports would be given to each teacher on a bi-weekly basis. The instructional cabinet looks for trends and patterns in individual teacher practice, by subject or department area, and also aligned to the components of the Danielson Framework for Teaching that is the focus for the school. For example, a school-created colorful graphic for tracking observation data on each teacher revealed that a significant number of classroom teachers demonstrated effective practices in designing coherent instruction based on clarified learning intentions and engineering and defining the criteria for excellence with students. As a result, there is vertical and horizontal coherence with lesson planning documents across grades, and teachers are reflective about their own personal growth in lesson planning.

- Ongoing cycles of focused observations and follow-up support leads teachers to understand their strengths and challenges and implement the articulated next steps. In an October observation report, the feedback recommended that the teacher collect data on what students are wondering, learning and identify gaps to address during the lesson to make informed on-the-spot adjustments. The teacher’s goal of data tracking to differentiate instruction and check for understanding was noted in a subsequent report and evident during the day of the school visit. The overwhelming majority of feedback to teachers is accelerating their implementation of effective teaching practices.

- The principal is able to specifically name teachers in various performance categories and discuss clear trajectories for them along with supporting data, feedback history, and follow-up on their mutually agreed upon next steps. This has resulted in a significant number of teachers demonstrating improvement in targeted areas such as designing coherent instruction, questioning, and discussion strategies, so that there are more student-centered discussions, debates, and Socratic seminar. In a sample observation report, feedback from the principal stated, “Student facilitators leading a whole class discussion takes time and practice. I recommend starting with smaller, shorter group-based conversations, then using discussion protocols with student-generated questions for more structured and higher levels of engagement.” Various feedback samples referenced the revised teacher’s goal of constructing questions of high cognitive challenge that allow for meta-cognition and noted continuous improvement in practices.
Area of Focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings
There are varied examples of teacher-created assessments and standards-aligned rubrics in most subject areas. Teachers check for understanding during lessons and make on-the-spot adjustments to meet the needs of their diverse students.

Impact
While most teachers consistently check for understanding during lessons, some adjustments to lessons are not always meeting the needs of all learners, so students are not always aware of their next learning steps. There were missed opportunities for students to receive meaningful feedback across all subject areas and for teachers to gauge student achievement and have a clear portrait of student mastery.

Supporting Evidence

- Students receive written and verbal actionable feedback on their work in most subject areas. Teachers assess learning outcomes using quizzes, projects, in-class assignments, exit slips, and tests. For one assignment, the rubric was a State Regents rubric for text analysis and exposition. The teacher circled a level three on the student’s paper but did not offer additional comments as to how the student could reach a level four. Most student work contained rubrics or checklists with actionable next steps from teachers or peers for students to revise their work or commented on strengths and weaknesses. For example, on a Language and Literature written task rubric, the criterion addressed rationale, task and content, organization, language and style; the written feedback from the teacher stated that the student should try to organize his writing more effectively and coherently.

- Most students can articulate actionable next steps in terms of updating or improving specific tasks. However, a few students shared that they did not receive meaningful feedback on some assignments, which hindered their ability to internalize, articulate, and utilize these next steps to enhance the way they learn in the future. During a science class, students self-assessed using a student rubric for group work and assigned points for their contributions to the discussion, cooperation, on task/time management, and communication of ideas. The teacher circulated throughout the room to listen to student conversations about the focus inquiry and what they needed to do next to successfully complete the inquiry task on soil samples. When the teacher heard one group veering off topic, he offered feedback, asked questions to focus students toward the right direction, and then interrupted the whole class to refer them back to the rubric. However, during a math class, teachers missed the opportunity to check for student understanding and provide clarity regarding the equations they solved incorrectly. As a result, consistent and meaningful on-the-spot adjustments to help students be aware of their next learning steps were not evident in the vast majority of classes visited.

- The majority of feedback to students from teachers and peers help to target accurate and specific next steps to help them improve and revise their written products. During the small-group student meeting, some students had feedback that was student friendly and gave a model of the expectation for quality work. For example, one math problem-solving rubric with feedback contained an example of the solution to the math problem along with notes about how the student could approach solving the problem. In another task, the standards-aligned rubric contained actionable feedback on how the student could reach the next level of proficiency and what could be done to complete the project. However, assessments and results have not led to a clear portrait of student mastery in relation to student achievement.
## Additional Finding

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that all curricular documents are aligned to key content and Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate grade-level Approaches to Learning (ATLs) and appropriate metacognitive practices. Academic tasks include targeted multiple entry points and accommodations for students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs).

### Impact

Lesson planning is coherent and builds upon key learning and enduring understandings from grade to grade and promotes critical reading and experiences and behaviors that incorporate college and career readiness standards. Curricula have embedded tasks across all subject areas so that ELLs and students with disabilities must make their thinking visible.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and staff have clearly defined criteria for what it means to exit a grade level and to attain enduring understandings and key skills that ensure success in college and career. In addition, there are purposeful connections between the instructional shifts and the topics in each subject. Teachers create syllabi for the courses they teach in addition to units of study and lesson plans for each subject. The syllabus for the Middle Years Program (MYP) geometry stated the requirements and expectations for student behavior, expectations on how assignments are to be completed, materials that will be utilized, dates for projects, and the related global context and key concepts related to the topics. In a geometry unit using the preferred lesson plan template, the topic is about students using constructions to create and prove similarity. The ATL is for students to develop new skills, techniques, and strategies for learning. The standard to be addressed: verifying experimentally the properties of dilations given a center and a scale factor. Built-in supports include a word bank with descriptions, peer-to-peer assistance, and examples and models of dilations for the reteach group.

- Curricula and academic tasks require students, including ELLs and students with disabilities, to consider multiple meanings and interpretations, take and support positions, and demonstrate their thinking in new learning situations. For example, a task for writing requires students to write about cultural identity, develop a thesis claim, and provide evidence and then explain and elaborate points through the CEE (Claim Evidence and explain Elaborate) paragraph method. Supports such as graphic organizers, annotated essay checklist, sentence starters and sample topic sentences and examples are built into the task for students to demonstrate their thinking.

- There is curricular coherence across grades and subjects in the essential elements that are contained in the vast majority of lesson planning documents. These elements include the following: formative and summative assessments, inquiry focus, grouping rationale, aim of the lesson, standards to be addressed, and opportunities for students to think critically while also making connections to real-world problems. Curricular documents are stored online for vertical alignment and access by teacher teams. Curricular documents contain a focus inquiry such as: “How did Africans and Europeans view the events during African Imperialism differently?” The lesson’s objective states, “I can summarize, find evidence, formulate questions, and make connections based on a passage and my previous knowledge of Imperialism.” Each curricular mapping document across the preponderance of subjects includes an agenda for the lesson, activities students would be engaged in, materials and resources, checks for understanding, summative tasks, student grouping, and a teacher reflection component.
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

Across most classrooms, teaching practices incorporate rigorous and engaging activities for most learners based on the shared beliefs. Students are able to participate in discussions that reflect critical thinking, creativity, and scenarios involving real-life problem solving.

Impact

Most students are able to make their thinking visible and are engaged in lessons, which require their participation in small-group discussions. Teaching practices utilize effective strategies to allow meaningful questioning during lesson activities, yet there were a few missed opportunities for students’ ownership of their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- During a senior language and Advanced Placement literature class, students were assigned to groups and partnerships and the lesson target was, “How can I analyze a poem to uncover deeper meaning and determine a poet’s style?” Students had to discuss problems with different versions of poems in different languages. Students had to answer specific questions in their discussion with their partner, which included, “How can we most effectively use translation methods to understand poetry?” During a Language and Literature class, students had to close read and analyze characterization evidence and use it to make paragraphs with claims, evidence, and explanations. Students worked cooperatively with their partners to discuss their work using high-ranking evidence, which led to a debate about discrimination against different cultural identities. As a result, most students were engaged in activities that promote critical thought and meaningful dialogue, which aligns to the school’s beliefs about how students learn best.

- During a grade-six math class, students worked cooperatively to solve real-world math problems. They were required to make a table of values; write an equation to model the situation, determine which variable was independent and dependent; and then justify their thinking in writing with the use of math evidence and vocabulary. During a grade-ten United States History class, students were completing concept maps with the term laissez-faire and provided synonyms, associations, definition, picture, and sentences about the concept. The focus inquiry of the lesson was, “To what extent should our government take a laissez-faire approach to the country?” The think and answer section on the worksheet was for students to distinguish a discussion from a debate. Similarly, during a literacy class, students had to use a flash debate protocol and cite three reasons to back up their claim and locate evidence to prove reasons. Students were engaged and had claims, evidence and in-depth explanations to support their reasoning about the immigrants to the United States having to assimilate to the American culture as in the book entitled, American Born Chinese, which students were reading.

- Most students produce work and engage in activities in which they can formulate questions and make unsolicited contributions supported by evidence. For example, during a ninth-grade science class, students considered and discussed why soil was considered an ecosystem. The aim of the lesson was, “I can reflect on information learned and collaboratively formulate a question.” In this hands-on, student-centered activity, students had to compare and contrast structures and properties of sand clay and foam soils with reference to their texture diagram, including the effect on primary productivity. Students were displaying high levels of thinking and participation while taking ownership of their learning. However, during a math class visited, the teacher provided direct instruction while students were compliant and had limited time to speak to one another.
Findings

School leaders and teacher leaders consistently communicate high expectations regarding the use of Japanese Lesson Study, instructional strategies, and professionalism to the entire staff. Teacher teams and staff members establish a college-going culture that communicates a unified set of high expectations for all students.

Impact

As a result of reciprocal expectations, there is a culture of mutual accountability for teachers to meet and exceed expectations for teaching and learning across the school. The vast majority of students own their educational experiences and can articulate how they are well-prepared for the next level of their educational journey.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers synchronize their articulation of mutually agreed-upon, non-negotiable expectations based on the role that Theory of Knowledge components play in curricular planning and inquiry work in classes. Support is offered to help teachers design and teach students how to become better learners while thinking about the world around them. Teachers and administrators work cooperatively to design curricula for the Middle Year Program and hold each other accountable for meeting requirements as a part of the Diploma Program and International Baccalaureate criteria. During interviews, both teachers and administrators spoke about weekly professional development offerings, Japanese Lesson Study, and other professional collaborations that establish a culture of professionalism that is resulting in higher levels of effective teaching practices across the school. For example, inter-visitation as a result of Japanese Lesson Study enable teachers to hold each other accountable for best practices discussed in meetings.

- The school leaders communicate the belief that all students must achieve and be successful in their academic as well as social-emotional behaviors. There is consistent communication that students should be pushed to make progress, receive engaging instruction, coordinated supports and are provided challenging and culturally relevant pedagogy. Information is shared constantly through emails, online tools, memos, weekly announcements, face-to-face conversations, teacher team meetings, and professional development foci. Teacher leaders designed a lesson design template, which incorporates strategies to cultivate classroom discourse to make student thinking visible, which is utilized by the vast majority of teachers. In addition, memos include question stems based on Webb’s Depth of Knowledge verbs and ways to involve students in engaging in inquiry work. Feedback data, one-on-one meetings with teachers, logs of supports from consultants and coaches, and intra-visitation reflection forms, are evidence that all pedagogical staff members are held accountable for their practices and are provided with strategic support.

- Teachers systematically communicate high expectations for student performance to students. Students in the large-group meeting shared that teachers want them to learn to work independently and manage their time appropriately when completing assignments. One student offered, “Teachers teach us to read, listen, think, and research information from varied sources. This will help me when I get to college because I have to write thesis papers.” The school’s culture encourages all students to be able to formulate their own reasoned opinions and judgments trying to solve complete problems through innovative approaches. Students, including high needs students, were able to share their required culminating personal projects and senior dissertations based on topics such as Affirmative Action in the College Admission Process and addressing stereotypes about women. These projects tackle current societal issues and address next level readiness.
Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: | 4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings

The majority of teacher teams are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations using Japanese Lesson Study that help to promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of Common Core State Standards. There are grade-level leaders, department leads, and many opportunities for teacher leadership within the school.

Impact

Structured teacher team collaborations are strengthening the instructional capacity of teachers to design curricula and implement effective teaching strategies. Teachers have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Most teachers, coaches, mentors, instructional cabinet members are able to share how they were able to work with administration in order to help make key decisions that affect students across the school. For example, teachers take the leads on student projects and the types of activities students engage in while working in teacher teams. Teaming structures have allowed for teachers to decide on the lesson template format that is utilized across the school. Teachers also discussed the need for varied resources to use and are able to meet with administration to discuss the use of rap songs to aid in teaching poetry, vignettes used during literacy, and the incorporation of videos to support history lessons. During the teacher team meeting, most teachers shared that they help to decide on the programs that students will be engaged with before, during, and after school with support from the instructional cabinet, which includes teachers.

- Subject group leaders work to review data as part of the kid-talk protocols to inform decisions for individual students, groups of students, and subgroupings. Decisions about student groupings and the appropriate instructional interventions or extensions are determined during teacher team meetings. As a result, more teachers are reviewing their practice in relation to research-based strategies to help students access the curricula in a meaningful way and have incorporated the use of more discussion protocols for student-to-student interactions. During the teacher team observation, teachers reviewed multiple forms of assessment data for groups of students, including writing samples and the results from formative and summative assessments to pinpoint the trends and patterns for students who were not able to meet the standards and those who demonstrated a deeper understanding. Teachers discussed research-based strategies that could support students across grades and subjects.

- The work of teacher teams has led to greater school coherence in lesson planning and structured protocols for reviewing student work in relation to standards. Teacher leaders utilize the Japanese Lesson Study protocol to review student work samples across subject areas and then share key findings and strategies with their department and grade-level counterparts. Teachers have incorporated key essential components in lesson planning, visiting each other, looking at student work samples, and analyzing assessment results to make informed decisions. Teachers shared that these professional collaborations have helped them take a closer look at they are structuring challenging learning experiences for students and planning for strategic supports to help their diverse learners. While concrete teaming structures are in place for most teams, the work of teams has not resulted in school-wide instructional coherence in teaching and assessment practices and increased student achievement for students with disabilities and ELLs.