Quality Review Report

2017-2018

Cobble Hill School Of American Studies

High School 15K519

347 Baltic Street
Brooklyn
NY 11201

Principal: Annamaria Mule

Dates of Review:
November 16, 2017 - November 17, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Kevin Bradley
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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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards</td>
<td>Area of Celebration</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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Quality Ratings continued

### School Culture

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

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

### Systems for Improvement

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</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>
</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>Area of Focus</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>
Area of Celebration

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

Findings

Curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are emphasized in academic tasks that are embedded across grades and subjects.

Impact

Curricular alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts results in coherence across grades and subject areas, promoting college and career readiness for all learners through an integration of AVID strategies. Rigorous habits and higher-order skills require that all students demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- Lesson plans consistently challenge students to utilize rigorous habits in the course of instruction. Learning objective statements in lesson plans include “Students will be able to respond to higher-order thinking questions based on primary source analysis” and from an eleventh-grade social studies unit plan, “Students will be able to use their knowledge of this unit to write a Regents thematic essay on legislation from this time period.” Additionally, students are to consistently write and connect their writing to evidence from the text across grades and subjects, including in an ecology science lesson plan where the objective is to “evaluate and formulate an opinion and argument for or against utilizing textual information and personal knowledge.” Lesson plans consistently detailed high-level questions. Examples of higher-order questions found in curricular documents include in an eleventh-grade social studies lesson plan, “Are democratic movements evolutionary or revolutionary? Why?” in a twelfth-grade social studies lesson plan, “What opportunities exist for citizens to affect political and civic change?” and in a ninth-grade English lesson plan, “How does the author use specific word choices to determine the central and tone in the text?”

- Showcases of the school’s curricula promote project-based learning and include a Law Academy, Project Lead the Way in science, and Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) strategies embedded in a coherent way across grades and subjects. An extension of AVID strategies throughout curricular documents include a central foundation on Writing, Inquiry, Collaboration, Organization, and Reading to Learn (WICOR) resulting in coherence. Courses, lesson plans, unit plans and curriculum maps reflect integration of the instructional shifts embedded in Common Core Learning Standards across content areas. For example, lesson plans in English emphasize the value of text-based evidence. The mathematics instructional shift of building fluency is included in curricular documents. AVID strategies, along with a WICOR focus, result in coherence across grades and subject areas while promoting college and career readiness.

- A review of curricular documents demonstrates academic tasks that emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills for all students. For example, students learn to cross examine witnesses during a Law Academy class. In a Forensic Science class, students process crime scenes, analyze data, and conduct scientific investigations. Lesson plans include modifications for students with Individualized Educational Programs (IEP), including graphic organizers and supports designed for specific students noted by name in the lesson plan to allow all students to demonstrate their thinking. Lesson plans involving English Language Learners (ELLs) include translation of materials into native language supports and ELL students are able to demonstrate their thinking according to the same high-level standards expected of all students.
Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings
Observation cycles, though frequent, are not yet strategic. School leaders support the development of teachers with effective feedback that accurately captures strengths, challenges, and next steps using the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Impact
Feedback articulates expectations for teacher practice and supports teacher development to elevate schoolwide instructional practices. However, in some cases feedback to teachers on observation reports lacks support or alignment with professional goals, thus missing an opportunity to support teacher growth.

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 throughout the class-specific evidence directed to specific categories of the Danielson Framework for Teaching and at the close of each observation report. In addition, school leaders’ observation cycle targets teachers based on individual need. New teachers are supported with mentor support and specific professional development sessions on teaching strategies that center around effective practices and Danielson components such as questioning and discussion techniques and student engagement. While frequent classroom observations are evident, observation cycles lack strategic feedback and there are missed opportunities to target individual goals via focused feedback within observations. Seven of seven teacher observation reports reviewed did not include any specific reference to identified individual goals.

- Observation reports contain feedback that captures teachers’ strengths and weaknesses and is accompanied by next steps teachers should take in order to improve their practice and impact student success. For example, “Some students on the outside of the seminar only superficially participated. Next time, consider asking students to pass post-it notes into the circle to be brought up for discussion or encourage students to “tap in” to get into the center.” In another report, feedback included “The lesson has a recognizable structure, but the progression of activities is uneven, with only some reasonable time allocations. Next time vary instructional groups appropriately, with some opportunity for student choice in order to avoid drag on the timing of the lesson and rigor.” While each rated item on observation reports included documentation from the classroom observation that supports the rating, the feedback across observations lacks alignment with professional goals for teachers. Teachers participated in initial planning conferences at the beginning of the school year and identified individual goals; however, observation reports later in the school year did not reference those goals consistently across reports.

- The school decided that observation data in June 2017 indicated that the majority of teachers were identified for a focus on questioning and discussion techniques, engaging students in learning, and improving assessment practices according to the Danielson Framework for Teaching rubric. An example of feedback for using questioning and discussion techniques includes, “Going forward, consider allowing students to formulate their own questions and to initiate topics.” While this feedback included a general suggestion, it lacked specific support as outlined by a teacher who reported how she has grown in her practice based on feedback she had received in her observations. She stated, “The feedback helps you try a new strategy, as the feedback includes a tool belt of strategies. When you try the strategy, the whole room blossoms. We recently did a meeting after being observed and turned feedback into actionable steps. We see changes in our students, and it’s also about how we’re growing.”
Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best with student-centered instruction. Across classrooms, student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact

Students produce meaningful work products and take part in discussions that reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- The schools articulated beliefs include that students learn best in cooperative settings where they share and build on their understandings with one another. In a participation in government class, students did a gallery walk of different types of political parties. Some students were working with their group partners on creating their assigned political party poster, some groups had already finished their poster and it was hanging in the room and still other students were walking around with an assessment sheet, writing down their assessment of completed posters. During an eleventh-grade English class, students participated in an academic vocabulary game, which was modeled for students by the class gathering around a table to watch a demo by one of the teachers. Students returned to their own group seats, and slowly caught on to the format of the game and proceeded forward working with their group members.

- In a US History class, the lesson opened with students looking at the Gettysburg Address, and selecting three words that unite and three words that divide. Students offered their ideas of words that fell into a category. The teacher showed a video, students watched and then the activity shifted to students reading a text and learning to annotate after teacher modeling. In a twelfth-grade English class, students were working with partners on poetry answering the question “How will we create poems using questions without answers?” Students looked at poems as a resource and wrote questions and then switched with their partners. Students were using AVID Cornell Notes and a rubric for assessing their discussions. Students were expected to demonstrate use of figurative language, metaphors, similes, personification. Students across the classroom were engaged in the task as they worked with their peers to create their own poems.

- In a tenth-grade English class, students were connecting text and film of Friday Night Lights to how relationships between fathers and sons contribute to a central idea. Students worked in pairs or trios together on this task. They had graphic organizers and were in discussions with their partners as they created a sheet documenting what they found in the text to illustrate relationships of Mike and Billy from the text and of Don and Charlie in the film. Students had an opportunity to share out to the whole class at the end. In a ninth-grade Living Environment class, students participated in a Socratic seminar on ecosystems based on an annotated New York Times article, “The Snake That’s Eating Florida.” The inner group with a student facilitator and six other students went through focus questions. Another group of students were sitting on the outside taking notes. The teacher was charting responses while students discussed. Groups switched roles half way through the observed lesson. Students reflected that perhaps they could have used more evidence during this discussion. Across classrooms, students showed evidence of high levels of participation and thinking.
Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics and grading policies that are aligned with the school’s curricula. School leaders use common assessments to determine student progress toward goals.

Impact

Students utilize teachers’ actionable feedback in order to increase their achievement. Staff analysis of data from common assessments informs schoolwide curricular and instructional adjustments.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, samples of student work products showed teacher-written actionable feedback directing students to the steps they should take to strengthen their work. One example includes, “Turn these sentences into one 3-point thesis.” Another example reads, “Excellent analysis here. Add a quote of Edward’s to support it. Can you connect to the influence his teachings had on the political systems of the era?” Finally, another example reads, “Your introduction was organized, but seemed rushed in the body paragraphs. I look forward to helping you include evidence from text.” A student commented on the feedback received from teachers, “When I wrote the essay, my teacher is teaching in the real world how to get more involved. I got a good grade, and in the feedback from my teacher, he wrote how my topic sentence was interesting. I think I confused my reader. The teacher showed me where I had confused my reader, and she taught me how to improve it. She is helping us for the future, she responds to questions throughout the essay, gets me to want to do better.”

- Across classrooms, rubrics and checklists are used as tools of support for student growth. Rubrics that are aligned with the curricula, along with checklists, are used across grades and content areas. A four-point Spanish department rubric for an Interrail project outlines criteria for Interrail research, vocabulary and grammar, and organization. The English department uses a six-point rubric for argument essays that includes such criteria as content and analysis; command of evidence; coherence, organization, and style; and control of conventions. A social studies writing essay rubric includes a one to four rating scale assessing definitions, main difference, pros and cons, opinion, and writing of topic sentence and conclusion. Evidence of students’ use of these tools is posted on student work examples and reported by the students themselves. A student spoke about using a rubric and the feedback provided by the teacher, “On my rubric, he left comments about what I need to work on and what I need to excel. It helped me a lot, I went back and rewrote it to get a better grade.”

- Teachers administer quarterlies in math, science, social studies, and English Language Arts (ELA) four times a year in order to assess students on key standards and conduct an item analysis. The results are analyzed and the curriculum is adjusted based on the results. Teachers also administer and assess performance-based assessments across content areas twice a semester. Teachers conduct pre- and post-assessments, look at student work on a regular basis and adjust curriculum and instruction based on the result of the gap analysis. The results are used by the inquiry teams as a basis for the articulation of an inquiry question and interventions that are the result of the work of the inquiry teams. For example, in math, data from common assessments showed students struggling with equations and expressions, and the results were the teachers back tracking to address needs by adjusting the pacing calendar.
**Additional Finding**

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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**Findings**

School leaders consistently convey high expectations to staff through ongoing feedback and professional learning aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Teacher teams establish a culture for learning that systematically communicates high expectations for all students.

**Impact**

Teachers understand expectations for teaching and learning and there is a culture of mutual accountability. Teacher teams offer ongoing and detailed feedback and students are prepared for the next level.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School leaders consistently communicate high expectations utilizing the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* as the standard for professionalism, quality instruction, and high expectations. School leaders use a rubric for bulletin boards, conduct school culture walks, and feedback comes from an email form to staff. A teacher reported about the culture of mutual accountability as it exists at the school, “There’s a group culture of learning from our colleagues that makes me think ‘let me try that.’ I feel like sharing and collaboration is part of the school’s accountability expectations. I’m creating new lessons and changing things all the time, based on my work with my team. For example, we create and deliver the same lesson in living environment every day, and we tried Socratic seminar together.” A culture of mutual accountability supports staff to meet high expectations set by school leaders.

- School leaders have established expectations for data conferences with teachers to review student performance data and progress. Teachers are expected to bring with them to the conference their grading book with attendance data, the number of homework, exams, projects given, the number of opportunities offered to make up missing work/assignments, and documentation of phone calls and/or letter of notification to parents for possible class failure. In addition, school leaders hold teachers accountable to classroom environment and bulletin board expectations with follow up meetings with teachers regarding consistent expectations across every classroom. Additionally, teachers receive professional development to meet these high expectations. Professional development (PD) aligns to the different domains of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. For example, teachers provided PD for staff on best practices in student engagement and questioning and discussion techniques, including Socratic seminar, open forum, jigsaw protocols, Costa’s Levels of Questioning, and collaborative annotations.

- The school’s culture for learning consistently communicates high expectations that help prepare students for their next level of education. The school distributes progress reports to students and parents, in addition to report cards at the end of each marking period. Students participate in parent-teacher conferences twice a year. Additionally, over a hundred students are enrolled in college level coursework in a cyber-security class that offers college credit through Syracuse University. The school’s AVID and WICOR focus across classrooms is designed to build college and career readiness skills for all populations of students, including high-need subgroups. Students from all populations reported at the student meeting that they are prepared for the next grade level, with one student sharing for the group, “We have a lot of AP classes, AP bio, AP Government, those have basically geared me up of expectations for college work. Transition to college seems like another year in high school, I feel like I will be able to adapt to work load and expectations, and independence.”
Additional Finding

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

Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations as they consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students on which they are focused.

Impact

Promotion of the achievement of school goals through the work of teacher teams typically results in improved teacher practice and progress in goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- An observed science inquiry team used the ATLAS data protocol as they looked at student work from a living environment assignment connected to food chains, an article on hurricanes, and how it’s impacting the ecosystems. Teachers reviewed the student work samples and analyzed connections to food chains, citing evidence, and the use of AVID strategies. Teachers also analyze the results of the student self-assessments connected to metacognition awareness of strengths and weaknesses. The team discussed trends and patterns in student work in order to determine next steps. Next steps included implementing a plan to support students in developing more academic content vocabulary, revisiting purposeful annotation strategies, and helping students prepare for Socratic seminar on impacts on ecosystems. The work of the teacher team is connected to the school goal of improving student performance on end of year state exams by identifying specific standards not mastered via common assessments and working together to build those skillsets in students.

- Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work as they track the work of the teacher teams in the Cobble Inquiry Tracker via the school's Google Docs. Teachers have strengthened their instructional capacity through team collaborations. A teacher reported, “In our teams, we looked at past Regents examples, all of the exams. We did vocabulary, and focused on part two of the Regents, specifically the short responses.” Another teacher reported how the work of the teacher teams has improved their instructional capacity, “From the Regents, we annotate the Regents questions in order to justify multiple choice questions. We want students not to be intimidated by the Regents exams. We want them to be able to say, ‘I can unpack the text.’ Our planning based on data with the intended outcomes in mind has benefitted my classroom practices for my students’ learning needs.”

- Progress towards goals for groups of students is evidenced by 63 percent of students passing the ELA Common Core Regents exam over the last school year and 70 percent of students passing the US History Regents exam the last school year, as well as a 10 percent point increase in the percentage of students passing the Global History Regents exam. In addition, over 69 percent of students with disabilities are graduating in four years according to recent data. In mathematics, there has been an improvement of over 50 percent of students having passed the Algebra I Regents exam during their first attempt. In a comparison of eighth grade ELA scores with NYS ELA Regents scores for students, 52 percent of students had increased their score by one level or more from 2016 to 2017. This student performance gain corresponds with teacher teams’ work that is focused on item analysis of state exams and common assessments aligned to specific standards. Teacher team work is specifically geared to support groups of students who have struggled with identified standards and their gains across the school align to the work of the teacher teams.