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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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<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>
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</tbody>
</table>
### School Quality Ratings continued

#### School Culture

*To what extent does the school...*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</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>Area of Celebration</td>
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</tbody>
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#### Systems for Improvement

*To what extent does the school...*

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<thead>
<tr>
<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>
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<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>
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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>
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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>Area of Focus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings
School leaders communicate well-coordinated expectations and the importance of planning engaging lessons to teaching staff based on the principles of Key Cognitive Strategies (KCS). Teacher teams systematically and purposefully communicate high expectations to students.

Impact
Teachers receive consistent explicit communication accompanied by purposeful training and observation feedback from administration and their peers resulting in mutual accountability. Students are able to articulate what they need to do in order to graduate from high school, attend college, or enter the workforce.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and key staff members work as a team in study groups, working on lesson studies, and planning sessions to establish a culture of professionalism that results in increased success in teaching and learning across the school. Administrators and teachers communicate expectations on how to incorporate KCS into lesson planning and daily instruction. There is a staff handbook, reference tools, online management tool that is managed by both administration and teachers, which helps to support teacher understanding. During the teacher team interviews, teachers shared that they know what is expected of them at all times regarding being professionals, leading inquiry work, and delivering standards-based rigorous lessons to all students. The school's mantra is 'character, creativity, and curiosity' which helps to establish the succinct expectations for planning and preparation of activities are met. Teacher leaders commented during interviews that they work side-by-side with the administrative team to support both teachers and school leaders to ensure that teachers understand components of the Danielson Framework for Teaching that address effective instruction, rigorous curricula, and professional responsibilities. As a result, there is a culture of mutual accountability and a structured support system in place.

- Teacher leaders and staff participate in 360-degree feedback sessions with members of their teams aligned with a leadership rubric to help promote expectations for planning rigorous and engaging lessons for students. There are elevated expectations for teacher performance that is communicated verbally and in writing. There are orientations, teacher-led professional development sessions, and observation feedback that help to foster accountability, which is reciprocal between all constituents. Expectations are reinforced as seen on team meetings’ agendas, shared lesson plans, and weekly newsletters distributed to the staff.

- Students, including those in high-need subgroups receive focused, effective, and purposeful next steps on how to achieve overall long-term goals for college and career. All students complete an Envisioning Future Career worksheet, in which they are asked about their future career preferences which teachers, counselors, and administrators use in order to have a set of clear, strategic structures to promote college and career readiness standards for students. These structures include college advisory, college counseling, and roundtable presentations that are similar to college-level thesis projects. Teachers design the criteria, expectations for performance, rubric to be used and hold students accountable for formulating problems and a hypothesis, conducting research, collect evidence, interpret findings, and then make a formal presentation based on KCS. Students are provided with support to ensure their roundtable presentations are completed in a satisfactory manner. During the student meeting, one student shared, “College Now classes and my counselors support me to make sure I am successful and I have a clear understanding of what is expected of me while I am in school, at work, when I graduate, and when I enter the workforce.”
**Area of Focus**

| Quality Indicator: | 5.1 Monitoring and Revising Systems | Rating: | Proficient |

**Findings**

School leaders and faculty have a process in place to regularly evaluate the instructional core, school culture, and systems for improvement on a regular basis and work towards ensuring structures are more purposefully adjusted during trimesters.

**Impact**

Even though there are periodic adjustments made to increase coherence, school staff continues to work at making strategic adjustments aligned to success criteria correlated to the Common Core. Adjustments have helped lead to more uniformity in the effectiveness of teacher teamwork and the quality of professional learning experiences.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teacher teams meet to review curricula, lesson planning, implementation of effective pedagogical practices, and the quality of assessment practices to gauge student understanding. This work has helped teachers reflect on decisions on how to make the curricula more engaging and rigorous for a diversity of learners. Even though there is a suggested lesson-planning template being used across the school, there is a slight difference in depth of strategic planning for modifications for students with disabilities and English Language Learners. Teachers utilize the online platform to review and glean best practices from each other so that they continue to strengthen the instructional core so that there are no gaps in teaching, learning, planning, and assessment across the school. School leaders and staff make periodic adjustments to systems and structures as needed after each trimester and are working to make more calculated changes when needed on a shorter frequency. For example, there remains pockets of best practice in the use of roundtable presentations being used in the English Language Arts department compared to other departments. Staff members and school leaders articulated next steps to try to provide systematic and meaningful feedback aligned to the Common Core so that more students can internalize feedback.

- There is a process in place to informally survey students and parents about their experiences in the school related to initiatives and programs available at the school. There are also semester check-ins with stakeholders and the feedback is used to suggest changes to afterschool program offerings, parent workshops, and other school-related events that communicate high expectations. There are surveys and informal meetings to assess the effectiveness of how teachers communicate standards for college and career readiness to students and parents based on Key Cognitive Strategies (KCS) approach. School leaders and key faculty articulated that they will develop a more purposeful written plan with identified success criteria to reevaluate the effectiveness of the school’s prioritized academic and personal behaviors which align to the KCS approach.

- Structures are in place for school leaders and faculty to assess the effectiveness of teacher teams and the use of a 360-degree feedback protocol ensuring that teams are operating effectively and demonstrating efficacy. Teachers engage in an end-of-semester review process where they provide feedback to teacher team leaders to ensure that the work of teacher teams is leading to greater coherency across departments and grades. While this structure has helped so that teams are using similar protocols and engaged in inquiry work and professional planning, it has not always resulted in more students demonstrating mastery on Regents examinations. Teams continue to work on revising roundtable presentations, practices to provide feedback to students to ensure that particular attention to the impact of their feedback is more closely Common Core-aligned. The efficacy of all teacher teams continues to be a point reflection to ensure that there is stronger coherence across all subject area and department teams.
Additional Finding

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

Common Core-aligned curricula materials and resources incorporate the instructional shifts and key focus standards. Rigorous habits are embedded within academic tasks for a diversity of learners.

Impact

Curricular decisions across grades and subjects with elements of common lesson planning documents help to build coherence. Scaffolds for supports are included in academic tasks so that English Language Learners and students with disabilities have access to challenging content.

Supporting Evidence

- Reading, math, science, and social studies lesson plans all incorporate common lesson planning elements, which include learning targets, objectives, assessment for learning, group work, and reflections. Within most plans, there are opportunities for students to cite evidence, draw inferences, create projects, and critique the reasoning of others. For example, in a teacher-created task, students are required to complete a text analysis-response extension activity on William Shakespeare’s sonnets. Questions students have to answer include, “What does the speaker want us to know about these topics in sonnet 5? What does the volta and the final couplet of the sonnet teach us? How has this sonnet demonstrated personification, simile, and metaphor?” In another English Language Arts task, students are asked to critique their reasoning and the reasoning of others. In the assignment, there are visual notes and cues on how to annotate with an open mind compared to annotating with a skeptical mind. There is space on the graphic organizer for students to write down their questions about the writer, challenge the claim, question the evidence, and identify assumptions after reading.

- The objective for a reading lesson is, “I can introduce a precise claim based on a review of a sample and my own investigations to determine the theme and strengthen my writing.” The lesson is for students to be able to construct a viable argument. The task is for students to use a rubric to evaluate a piece of writing and then justify their ratings in a discussion with a partner. In another lesson plan, students would be applying a strategy approach to solve word problems and respond to constructive response prompts while tending to precision and accuracy as they complete the multistep problems and write to explain their thinking and why they used a particular strategy. In a Global History lesson plan, the objective is for students to be able to develop a line of questioning about the theme of conflict based on the stories they read. The standards address the devastation of the world wars, nationalism, and how ideology played a significant role in periods of conflict. Most plans include this type of critical thinking and afford students access to standards-based activities.

- The lesson plan for an Algebra class emphasizes the learning standard focused on building students’ fluency and conceptual understanding as students are asked to explain and justify their answers. Essential questions are at varying complexities to meet the needs of the different learners. These questions include, “What are the causes of international conflict? How necessary is an ideology for a successful revolution? What is the impact of global war on the development of a society?” Modifications for the unit included multiple ability groupings for students to support each other, PowerPoint presentations for visual learners with key concepts presented with graphics and political cartoons, and explicit criteria for students to have a checklist on what their questions should look like.
Findings

Across most classrooms, teaching strategies reflect articulated core beliefs on how to support the needs of English Language Learners and students with disabilities while there are opportunities for most students to problem solve, conduct research, interpret data, reason, and attend to precision and accuracy.

Impact

Most student work products reflect even levels of student engagement, thinking, and participation as learners are asked to demonstrate higher-order thinking skills during lessons. However, there were a few missed opportunities for student ownership of their learning because of too many supports and scaffolds.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers alike communicated that they believe students learn best when they are provided with opportunities to research, answer, and generate complex, open-ended questions. They also believe that students should demonstrate their understanding of their learning by sharing with their peers and teachers. Most students are able to make their thinking visible through thinking routines like the see, think, and wonder protocol. In a reading class, students had to choose a word that best describes Macbeth. They provided three pieces of textual evidence to support the description, evidence that warranted a conclusion, and create a well-developed paragraph to prove their point. Students were provided with a concept map, different resources, including access to a laptop, visual cues and reading level-appropriate texts. In another class, students worked in learning stations where they had to describe the eccentricity of the Earth’s elliptical orbit by formulating a problem using the appropriate academic vocabulary and making connections to lab reports to synthesize information for different sources. While students were engaged by making their thinking visible and engaging in dialogue with one other, there were missed opportunities for student strategic extensions and supports across the vast majority of classes.

- Most classes afford students opportunities to engage with challenging material and receive support in order to complete meaningful activities. In a United States History lesson, students were required to respond to the essential question, which asked, “How have Americans grappled with the civil unrest throughout American history?” Students worked together reading different articles, analyzing pictures and cartoons related to the civil rights movement and other notable times of controversy. The activity worksheet had annotated notes to assist students by giving them tips, underlining key vocabulary terms, and highlighting important information related to the text so that they could engage in a structured conversation with their peers. In an Algebra class, students were giving each other feedback on their roundtable presentations using a rubric. However, in History class, students were reading political cartoons and were going to work in groups to complete posters showing their understanding of the historical time. Teachers mainly asked all of the questions and accepted a single path of inquiry from students. Students that needed accommodations did have visual cues, highlighters, chart papers, group members, and the teachers to support them; however, they were not directing their own learning. There were missed opportunities for shared beliefs to be demonstrated across the vast majority of classes.

- Groups of students in a class were working together to review each other’s work and provide feedback to their peers about their research essay on the Civil Rights movement. Students worked with partners using a rubric to offer actionable next steps, confer on a rating, and then write down feedback to their peers. Students were engaged, asking each other thoughtful questions about the content of their work, and providing support for each other.
**Quality Indicator:** 2.2 Assessment  
**Rating:** Proficient

**Findings**

Most teachers provide actionable feedback to students on their work. Teachers utilize common assessment tools such as mock Regents exams and teacher-created tests.

**Impact**

Feedback provided to students is actionable, contains next steps, and is aligned to standards-based rubrics. Teachers use the results from common assessments to determine student progress and adjust small student groups.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Most students are able to speak to their next steps for improvement on tasks based on feedback from teachers. Some are provided with digital feedback and can communicate freely with teachers. Comments are recorded such as, “go back and refer to the rubric to be able to substantiate your claims and provide strong and compelling evidence to support your claim.” On another narrative writing task, the student was given feedback that related to the organization and structure of the response and strengthening the conclusion. Another student received written feedback on a mock Regents exam on how to show more work when answering a constructed response task. During the small-group student meeting, most students knew their next steps for improvement for the particular assignment but did not make connections to the feedback to other similar work. There were missed opportunities for students to receive feedback that would help them understand who they were as learners.

- Most students receive rubrics prior to the beginning of a lesson or activity and receive actionable feedback aligned to standards-aligned criteria. Students shared samples of teacher feedback they received on writing projects through an ongoing online sharing system. Once students are able to make the needed revisions to their work, they resolve the comments and are able to receive credit for completing the activity. During the small-group student meeting, students shared quizzes, tests, writing tasks, lab reports, and essays that they completed and some had sticky notes with comments from the teacher with next steps. Students also shared that most teachers provide them with verbal feedback and hold conferences with them periodically about the quality and quantity of their work. Students have a rubric that they use to self-evaluate and then the teacher provides them with feedback on their work, progress, and specific things they need to improve. Most students receive feedback that is aligned to the curricula and helping improve student work products while students know their next steps.

- Teachers come together to pull sample questions from previously administered tests and create their own assessments aligned to the standards. There are quizzes and tests that contain scores based on a percentage. Many teachers, across grades and subjects, use the results from these assessments to plan for small-group instruction, differentiate tasks, and plan activities to support students’ learning needs. After an administration of a mock Regents examination, it was noted that students were simply stating evidence and not analyzing the evidence itself. As a response, teachers developed a set of key questions to help students not only find evidence but see if the evidence is the most compelling in which they had to evaluate their approach to collecting evidence. Most teachers utilize flexible grouping and use reading level and overall performance-level data to plan tasks.
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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Findings

The majority of teachers engage in structured inquiry in teams that consistently analyze student work and assessment data. Teachers help to make decisions on the types of curricular resources that are used across the school.

Impact

The work of teacher teams promotes the achievement of school goals and the instructional shifts, improves teacher practices, and helps groups of students show improvement on standardized assessments. Most teachers have a key voice in decisions that affect student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Most teacher teams meet on a regular basis using structured protocols to have professional collaborations with their colleagues. Teachers select a group of students who are performing just below proficiency and reflect different subgroups. They review current assessment data, student work samples, classwork, and suggest appropriate instructional strategies to support the students' learning. For example, the English Language Arts inquiry team used a tuning protocol to review select student work based on the roundtable tasks based on narrative playwriting. Work samples were judged based on how well students were able to identify central idea and theme with an opportunity to predict, question, summarize, and analyze the text. They discussed the explicit strategies that they had been using to determine how to increase their effectiveness. Teachers used a protocol to look at student work samples for students who fell just below proficiency. During the observation, teachers followed the protocol, shared strengths, and gaps of student learning, and strategies for further follow up and support. Teachers were able to achieve consensus on how to help students show further progress. As a result, teachers shared that groups of students have made progress towards agreed upon goals.

- Teacher teams are able to promote the integration of citing evidence in writing across subject areas through the focus of most teacher teams. Teachers revise tasks, lesson plans, and unit plans using an online sharing platform based on the results of their team meetings. Minutes and agendas reviewed during the visit from other team meetings showed teams focusing their work on students who met certain criteria. The Looking at Student Work protocol they followed had them identify what students did well, where they were challenged, and what next steps would improve their performance. There were strategies offered including annotating the text for students who had difficulty accessing grade-level content. Another strategy was to offer varied graphic organizers that students could choose from to help them with planning. As a result, teachers have strengthened their practices in reviewing lesson plans, creating tools to support diverse learners, and incorporating more opportunities for partner and group work to better meet students' learning needs.

- Teachers have a voice in decisions that affect student learning. For example, during the teacher team meetings, teachers shared that collectively they worked with administration to create a calendar of important events and citywide and school tests. Teachers also have a degree of autonomy in using various curricular tools and resources that suit the purposes of their intended lessons. One teacher stated, "The principal is very inclusive and is not top down; during instructional cabinet meetings, I am able to freely share suggestions and ideas that I feel would work best for my students." Most teachers shared that, during team meetings, they have a voice in decisions that affect student learning in cooperation with school leaders.