Quality Review Report

2017-2018

Sunset Park High School
High School 15K667
153 35th Street
Brooklyn
NY 11232

Principal: Victoria Antonini

Dates of Review:
January 10, 2018 - January 11, 2018

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

Sunset Park High School serves students in grade 9 through grade 12. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm.

School Quality Ratings

### Instructional Core

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</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>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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School 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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Systems for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3 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>Well Developed</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>
<td>Proficient</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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</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>
<td>Proficient</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings

Teacher teams systematically analyze key elements of teacher work including classroom practice, assessment data, and student work for students they share. Distributed leadership structures are embedded across the school.

Impact

Teacher engagement in systematic analysis of student data and work products results in mastery of goals for groups of students and improvements in teacher practice. Effective teacher leadership plays an integral role in key decisions that positively affect student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers in the Business 9 inquiry team use an adapted assessment conference protocol to guide their analysis of student work through the lens of the school leaders’ instructional focus on using text-based evidence to support writing. In the meeting observed, the teachers broke into three groups looking at student work examples categorized by identified performance level, including English as a New Language (ENL) students and the top-quarter performers. Teachers reviewed student work with post it notes prior to sharing out with group members. Teachers who brought in the student work samples, shared the context of the assignment as it relates back to the classroom. All three groups reconvened back to the large group and decided next steps. Next steps from one group included heterogeneous student grouping, supporting students in terms of STEM and humanities. The ENL group’s next steps included using sentence frames and sentence starters, along with teaching students annotating to address commonality of annotation strategies across classes. The top-quarter group, was focused on higher achieving students, and next steps included focusing on the quality of student work, to give them extra challenges and time to complete these challenges.

- Mastery of goals for groups of students was evident by comparing baseline power standard data from the first cycle, which focused on writing arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics of texts, using valid reasoning, and relevant and sufficient evidence. Through the work of the teacher inquiry teams, teachers focused on components of the power standard that allowed teachers to better scaffold for struggling students which led to 64 percent of all eleventh graders moving towards mastery, an increase from 56 percent in the first inquiry cycle. Teachers indicated the impact of the work with teacher teams. One teacher stated “We all look at our lesson plans together, and we’re talking about differentiating, and a common focus. We are giving each other feedback, such as an idea for a warm-up or a better turn-and-talk strategy.”

- Embedded distributed leadership was evidenced by grade team teacher-leader representation on the instructional cabinet and the school professional development committee. Cabinet members and one teacher grade team leader from each community are invited to visit another community using a specific focus. Teachers become critical friends of one another’s leadership and instructional practice and build cohesion through fostering a schoolwide perspective. Teacher inquiry team leaders work with their teacher grade team leaders, and their peer-collaborative teacher to develop inquiry cycles where teams define an inquiry question, develop an action plan and then analyze artifacts of classroom practice, student work, and assessment data to assess its impact. In addition, teacher leadership had an integral role in the creation and development of schoolwide electives (SWEL). For three periods per week, during first period on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, students are able to choose their courses across the school. Students who need Regents prep, are enrolled by community to focus on Regents exams.
### Findings

Across classrooms, student work products reflect high levels of student thinking and participation. Teaching strategies provide multiple entry points into the curricula enabling students to be engaged in appropriately challenging tasks.

### Impact

Although students demonstrate higher-order thinking skills, across some classrooms, teaching strategies, such as questioning, do not provide strategic use of multiple entry points for all learners, thus limiting student ownership of learning.

### Supporting Evidence

- In an eleventh grade US history lesson, students were sitting in groups, using primary source documents and discussing questions to fill out on graphic organizers of their assigned business and industry leaders. Students were able to articulate their learning about JP Morgan and how much he had donated and referred back to annotated texts for specific dates. Teachers rotated through the room checking for understanding and worked with specific students with multiple entry points to support specific learners. Teachers rotated students to different groups to allow them to share with peers what their findings were of the business or industry leader they had read about with their original group. While multiple entry opportunities were seen in some classrooms, they were not strategically provided and evident in the vast majority of classrooms.

- In a twelfth grade English class, students worked in pairs and discussed an analysis of *What’s a Mexican?* by Olga Loya. Students were engaged in classwide discussion of racial stereotypes involving Mexican-Americans and worked together to analyze texts from a critical race perspective. In an Algebra I lesson about functions and whether particular functions met the criteria, there were turn and talk opportunities; however, not all students engaged in discussion with their partners. In a Global 10 class, during a lesson about Gandhi and his experiences in South Africa influencing his work in India and their independence from Britain, students were seated in pairs, though overall the lesson lacked student discussion opportunities. While there were examples across classrooms of student work products and discussions reflecting high levels of student thinking and participation, this was not evident across the vast majority of classrooms as some students did not participate in discussion opportunities, thus not demonstrating their ownership of the learning during the lesson.

- In a Global ten class, a lesson about the Russian revolution had students in groups discussing and coming to consensus about its success. One group finished their discussion and waited quietly while other groups continued their discussions. During the share out, two students wanted to engage in a deeper debate; however, more teacher to student discussion continued, limiting the number of students actively engaged in the lesson. In a twelfth-grade chemistry lesson on chemical bonding through ionic compounds, students were sitting in groups working with envelopes of elements and how to combine them to create an ionic compound and chart them on their graphic organizer. In one group, a student was helping a peer catch up on what he may have missed in the previous class session. They talked through the process of using the paper manipulatives from the envelopes and charting them on the graphic organizer, using the graphic organizer as an example. However, in some groups students were simply copying down the answers from a peer’s sheet without any discussion or explanation. While some students were able to articulate their learning, other students were not able to take ownership of their learning.
Additional Finding

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

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

Impact

Decisions promote coherence across curricula as well as college and career readiness. Students have access to rigorous curricula across grades and subjects.

Supporting Evidence

- Review of curricular documents revealed alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards, New York State content standards, as well as integration of the instructional shifts across grades and content areas. Curricular documents included evidence of consistent alignment with integration of the math instructional shifts. For example, a twelfth-grade lesson plan states “Students will be able to display procedural fluency of composing two functions and evaluating composite functions.” Curricular documents included assignments evidencing integration of the English Language Arts (ELA) instructional shifts. For example, documents include consistent references across grades to the citation of textual evidence in written responses. One example reads, “According to the primary source, what is the author’s perspective? Give a specific piece of evidence to support your claim.”

- Lesson plans, unit plans, and curriculum maps consistently challenge students to utilize rigorous habits in the course of instruction. Learning goals in unit plans include, “Engage in close reading strategy using a chosen theoretical lens,” and “How can we use our understanding of quadratics to model real world problems?” Additionally, students are to consistently write. For example, in a tenth-grade lesson plan students are asked to use words and phrases to explain inferences from the text. Lesson plans consistently detailed high-level questions. Examples of higher-order questions found in curricular documents are “How can people have vastly different understandings of the basic facts of a situation?”, and “What is confirmation bias and how does it relate to our implicit biases?” and “How can we analyze texts from a critical race perspective and why is it important to do so?”

- Samples of reviewed curricular documents emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order thinking skills across the grades and subjects, while also ensuring access by English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities. For example, a U.S. History lesson plan includes details of an integrated co-teaching (ICT) teacher working with lower-level reading small groups to support notetaking and reading to build stamina, comprehension skills, and understand how to write main ideas in their own words. The algebra lesson on manipulating an equation to build a function includes specific supports for ELLs such as pre-written definitions so students can translate as well as the translation of word problems in both Chinese and Spanish. As a result, all students will be able to read about functions intercepts and create its graph.
Additional Finding

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<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 grading policies that are aligned with the school’s curricula. School leaders use power standards assessments to determine student progress toward goals.

Impact

Students utilize teachers’ actionable feedback in order to increase their achievement. Staff analysis of data from power standards 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, “This sentence shows an opportunity to analyze your evidence. How does this connect? You must explain how it connects to your thesis.” Another example reads, “Should be factoring not using the quadratic function. They did not ask for the zeros.” Another example is, “More analysis in your body paragraphs. Ask questions in the beginning and answer them as you write.” Finally, another example reads, “Dependent variable means that it depends on the independent variable, which is what you are changing in your investigation.” A student reported, “I had a project about book I read in class, and my teacher gave me feedback on my work. The feedback helps us improve our work.”

- Across classrooms, rubrics are used as tools of support for student growth. Rubrics are aligned with the curricula and are used across grades and content areas. A four-point math department rubric outlines criteria for using appropriate tools aligned to specific math Common Core Learning Standards. The social studies department uses a six-point rubric as a completion and quality rubric for daily assignments. The science department uses a four-point rubric to assess student performance during labs. The English department uses a four-point writing rubric that is tailored to specific writing assignments. Evidence of students’ use of these tools is posted on student work examples and reported by the students themselves. A student shared “We use rubrics in almost every subject, it sets a guideline of how our work should look. We have different categories, I read the five categories and check my work, to see if it meets all the standards.”

- Teachers use periodic assessments in English, math, science, and social studies that focus on identified power standards, which are three to four high-leverage standards within each content area. The results are then used by content area teams to adjust the curriculum and classroom instruction. Common assessment standards are used by teachers to track power standards. Power standards assessments are used as a common assessment process and occur once per week. Power standards assessments results in science has included modeling analyzing models and reinforced the use of more models in class, which are primary in the scientific observation process. Power standards assessment data has resulted in modeling in math also, as teachers readjusted the rubric in the second round of the inquiry cycle, realizing what was being asked of students was not clear enough to impact student performance. In addition, these practices have also impacted the performance of ELLs by resulting the reinforcement of conceptual understanding with academic vocabulary and concepts.
school leaders conduct frequent classroom observations to provide feedback utilizing the Danielson Framework for Teaching as the standard for professionalism, quality instruction, and high expectations. A culture of mutual accountability was evident through the work of teacher teams and co-teachers holding each other accountable. Grade teams are responsible for progress reports, ensuring everyone is up to date with grading, and a grade team leader is responsible for how the team can meet expectations including use of data, lesson plans, and unit plans. A teacher reported, “Our grade teams are academically accountable with each student, through academic inquiry, to see how we can implement the best high-quality instruction.” A professional development calendar makes clear that school leaders support teachers in their understanding of expectations. In addition, school leadership and grade teams conduct scholarship report meetings with teachers every marking period to review student progress and inform goal-setting focused on supporting high expectations. 

- The school’s culture for learning consistently communicates high expectations that help prepare students, including high-need subgroups, for their next level of education. Schoolwide norms for success are reinforced through town halls and student-led demonstrations of learning twice each year. Fall demonstrations of learning are by community and spring demonstrations of learning are schoolwide opportunities for students to showcase their college readiness skills. The school uses Schoology, an online student information system that keeps students informed of grades and progress. Grade level assemblies cover topics such as PSAT/SAT, credit accumulation, internships, extracurricular programs, and transcript review. Students reported that they receive clear, focused, and effective feedback that prepares them for the next level. One student stated “I use the grad tracker—it’s helpful, you see the credits you have all together, along with the scores.” Another student reported, “I feel like it’s helpful to get to reflect and focus on Regents that you should focus on. I want to be in the medical field, try to get in a college dental school, and I’m getting better and working on how you can improve on your Regents.”

- The school communicates individual student progress and expectations for college readiness with students. College readiness events include Road to College, geared to ninth and tenth grade students, and College Night which includes FAFSA overview with follow-up individual assistance. Students and families receive individualized college admissions support from the school’s Director of College Admissions. Advisors are the first point of contact for families and, in lieu of traditional Parent Teacher Conferences, the school holds student-led conferences facilitated by advisors. Advisors work with students to gather information from across coursework to anchor the conferences. The school’s early college access options include College Now through Brooklyn College, expanded Advanced Placement course offerings as part of the AP for All initiative, and three University in the High School programs through the University at Albany that are part of the Brooklyn Pipeline dual-credit program.
Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

School leaders support the development of teachers with effective feedback and next steps from frequent cycles of classroom observation. Feedback to teachers accurately captures strengths, challenges, and next steps using the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Impact

Formal and informal classroom visits grounded in the observation and analysis of student work result in written feedback for teachers that makes clear the expectations for teacher practice and promotes professional growth.

Supporting Evidence

- Frequent cycles of classroom observation provide feedback utilizing the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Each rated item on observation reports includes specific language from the rubric and evidence from the classroom observation that supports 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. For example, one observation feedback included “Next Steps: To increase critical thinking, have students work with word problems that are relevant and real-world so they can make connections. You can also have students create their own word problems which will also allow you to assess their understanding.” Another example of effective feedback reads, “Use the assessment data to organize the review groups so that students get personalized support. We agreed that using this structure would allow you and your co-teacher to provide more specific feedback and more personalized support to groups of students.”

- Teachers reported that the support and supervision they have received from school leaders contribute to their development as teachers. One teacher reported, “I received feedback on activities for AP Biology. The feedback was how to make it more student-led, in order to facilitate their own learning, with group roles to do this. I was advised to jump into level 2 or 3 questions earlier. She also helped me a lot with developing my practice by going in rounds for students to share with protocols.” Another teacher reported, “Having the Danielson Framework allows me to look at areas that make me reflect and set goals for a targeted discussion a little bit more. The feedback focuses on areas I’m interested in.”

- In addition to the reports resulting from official classroom observations, the instructional cabinet reviews observation reports together once per marking period and the principal reviews observation reports with assistant principals during weekly one on one meetings. The observation information is used to inform areas for professional learning and targeted intervisitations. Teacher instructional leads also lead their content teams in sharing artifacts of classroom practice, student work and assessment data. Both teacher instructional leads and content leads track their work in a professional learning tracker via a Google survey that feeds into a Google sheet. The tracker along with a cover sheet identifying schoolwide professional learning goals and opportunities serve as a professional learning plan which school leadership can access when conducting observations and giving feedback which is part of the school's observation process.