Quality Review Report

2017-2018

The James Baldwin School:
A School for Expeditionary Learning

High School 02M313

351 West 18 Street
Manhattan
NY 10011

Principal: Brady Smith

Dates of Review:
May 1, 2018 - May 2, 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


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>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>
</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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
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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</td>
<td>Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>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>
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<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>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>
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<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>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>
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</table>
Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to staff and students and offer support through clear, focused, and effective feedback. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning.

Impact

Communication through teacher teams and professional development (PD) around high expectations results in a culture of mutual accountability. Students are prepared for the next level and own their educational experience.

Supporting Evidence

- 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. Teachers have committed to be accountable to update the online grading platform, JumpRope, every three weeks to ensure timely student performance information is shared with colleagues so that they can rely on all classes’ data being current to inform conferencing with students. One teacher reported, and all teachers agreed, they are all checking for the mutual accountability of updated grades. A PD calendar makes clear that school leaders support teachers in their understanding of expectations in addressing topics such as effective co-planning, participation in the school’s intervisitation inquiry cycle, and instructional moves that elicit student thinking.

- Content-area and grade-level teacher leaders create mutual accountability among teams by leading meetings with specific goals focused on increased student achievement and next-steps assigned to each participant that will be carried out and reported on during the next meeting. Teachers across the school are involved in an intervisitation inquiry cycle resulting in accountability as they visit each other’s classes with the focus on improving student thinking around text and number analysis. Together, teachers defined a goal for the intervisitation process, ensured an equity focus, selected students to follow during the classroom visits, and scheduled specific classroom visitations to observe and gather information for analysis across various disciplines back in the intervisitation team.

- The school’s culture for learning consistently communicates high expectations that help prepare students for their next level of education. A student reported about how students are provided with guidance supports, “JumpRope, and when you’re in crew you get your transcript, also your PEP (Personal Education Plan) which includes the credits you have, the credits you need, the credits you’re currently taking and how long that will take until PBATs (performance-based assessment tests) and Regents are completed.” Another student reported, “Seniors just had an event two weeks ago and had a panel of alumni and people from other organizations, programs after high school, gap year programs, etc., and the alumni were talking about the paths they took after JBS (James Baldwin School).” Students reported that they are prepared for the next level, “When I go on college tours and look up college requirements they help me plan out next semester and what I need to take for the colleges I’m interested in.” Another student reported, “I came from homeschooling for ninth- and tenth-grades so I had no experience with Regents, but the PBATs seemed to go well for me. I was able to get a really good score on my first one. Then when I started to slack off I didn’t pass my social studies one, it got me thinking how much more detail-oriented you have to be to do a PBAT.”
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

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

Impact

Actionable feedback is provided to students and teachers regarding student achievement. Although the results of common assessments are used to adjust curricula and instruction, all students do not demonstrate increased mastery.

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 from a Math in Motion assignment includes, “This might be clearer if you also presented this information in a chart.” Another example from a Sleep to be Fit task reads, “Tell us in 1-2 sentences what this chart is about.” Another example from an Everyone is Entitled essay is, “Awkward transition. This is a key spot for a strong transition, revise.” A student reported during the student meeting how they get feedback, electronically, in Google Docs, “When I do the essay he gives us before the due date he goes in for a full day and comments on everything for what I need to do.” While actionable feedback is apparent across classrooms, student work brought to the meeting with students did not contain actionable feedback on some of the work products illustrating that this practice was not yet in place across a vast majority of classrooms.

- 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. New York Performance Standards Consortium Performance Assessment rubrics are used for skill-building courses across content areas. Evidence of students’ use of these tools is posted on student work examples and reported by the students themselves. A student shared, “We have separate rubrics for each individual value so it’s not just 4-3-2-1. Everything is very specific, with overall core values: Did I not use electronics? Did I volunteer? Did I respect the class? Was I prepared? and including overall academic mastery.”

- The school uses common learning targets as assessments across disciplines and courses. Common learning targets across each department are used as formative assessments to measure student progress and to adjust instruction. Evidence of common learning targets appeared in concept maps, Main Idea, Evidence, Analysis, Transition (MEATy) paragraphs, and in looking for argument essays linked to learning targets. The school also develops and revises PBATs that are aligned to the Regents exams in core academic subject areas. PBATs are aligned to New York Performance Standards Consortium subject-area rubrics. Students present PBATs to panels of teachers and community members who evaluate their work using the Consortium rubrics. While common learning targets and PBATs are in place across the school, all students do not currently demonstrate increased mastery.
Findings

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

Impact

Curricula promote college and career readiness for all students and is accessible by a variety of learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Review of curricular documents revealed alignment to the Common Core and New York State (NYS) content standards where applicable, as well as integration of the instructional shifts across grades and content areas. The school engages students in developing, revising, and presenting PBATs that meet Regents exam expectations in core academic subject areas. PBATs are aligned to Consortium subject-area rubrics, which are aligned to state and national standards. All core academic courses either culminate in PBATs or offer skill-building aligned to the Common Core to prepare students for successful completion of the PBAT in that content area. Courses use learning targets aligned to the Consortium rubrics and Common Core.

- Curricula documents across grades and content areas evidence consistent alignment with the Common Core and the integration of the math instructional shifts. For example, in a geometry lesson plan, students are demonstrating their understanding by selecting appropriate and efficient strategies to solve non-routine problems and mathematically analyze a given diagram. Curricula documents also included assignments evidencing integration of the English Language Arts (ELA) instructional shifts. For example, a twelfth-grade ELA lesson plan details that students are to analyze and deconstruct evidence from *Frankenstein* to support their thesis about the novel. An eleventh-grade lesson plan shows that students are tasked with citing textual evidence from *Native Son* and making connections to other pieces of text they have read earlier in the year and to their personal experience.

- Lesson plans and curriculum maps consistently challenge students to utilize rigorous habits during instruction. Learning-objective statements in unit plans include, “I can analyze, deconstruct and tie back my evidence to my thesis.” and “I can integrate information from diverse primary and secondary sources into a coherent understanding of an idea or event.” Additionally, students are to consistently write and connect their writing to evidence from the text. Lesson plans consistently detailed high-level questions. Examples of higher-order questions found in curricular documents are, “What errors do you think are occurring and which one is having the biggest impact on your data?”, “What aspects of the analysis are you struggling with?”, “So what? Explain why this is important and/or how this supports a bigger theme, central idea, or theory.”
Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best through instruction that makes learning relevant to students.

Impact

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

Supporting Evidence

- During a social studies origin of racial slavery in America lesson, students worked with primary sources. The lesson included students’ self-assessment of their knowledge about the MEAT strategy along with opportunities to ask clarifying questions. Each group had white envelopes with parts of the paragraph for students to organize into different sections of MEAT. During a science U.S. agriculture lesson, students worked individually on general plant-life cycle projects connected to food genetics. The teacher worked with a group of five students in a small group. During an English Frankenstein class, students worked individually on their writing piece as they worked on evidence and textual analysis. During a social studies borders class, students worked on laptops on their prep for a MEATy writing structure on U.S. policy towards unauthorized immigration. Students worked individually and tried to help each other.

- In an English I Write, Therefore, I am: Memoirs, Identity, and Society class, a student shared out her memoir of playing on a basketball team at her previous school and what that meant to her. Some students offered feedback and suggestions. The student sitting next to her was finishing her story while the first student was sharing out and some classmates offered feedback. During a math TriGeometry class, the lesson started with students rewriting key terms included in the learning target into their own words. Students in groups were working on rewriting parts of the math assessment rubric into their own words. Most students were engaged in conversations with peers during tasks as they used post-it notes and wrote their thoughts on poster paper. Some students were not necessarily engaged in conversations with peers. Students seemed somewhat dependent on the teacher for guidance of steps and ideas, such as the vocabulary rings that not all students were clear about how to use.

- During a math Beat the Test lesson, there was a problem-solving discussion about what students see in the sample problem from a math exam that they might have on an upcoming exam. The lesson included random grouping, as students worked on problem solving together. During an English Power and Intersectionality class, differentiated groupings happened outside of the classroom with identified students meeting with teachers. They transitioned to a circle inside the classroom for a discussion of Native Son. Some students spoke during discussion, as prompted by the teacher leading the discussion. The teacher read part of Native Son and students listened. During a social studies Genocide class, students worked individually on their assignments. The lesson ended during closure with an opportunity for students to share out their pluses, minuses, and questions they included on their exit slips.
Findings

School leaders and teacher peers support the development of teachers, including those new to the profession, with the strategic use of observation cycles and accurately capture effective feedback and next steps using the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Impact

Feedback articulates clear expectations for teacher practice, supports teacher development, and aligns with professional goals for teachers to elevate schoolwide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection.

Supporting Evidence

- Strategic use of frequent cycles of classroom observations are tracked, where every teachers’ observation cycle is documented, and each round of observations includes data around how school leaders allocate their time and focus their efforts to support teachers by providing feedback utilizing the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Each rated item on observation reports includes specific language from the rubric, evidence from the classroom observation that supports the rating, as well as actionable next steps. For example, feedback from one observation included, “The lesson was well-planned and facilitated. The protocol and facilitation prompted all participants to speak. One downside to the rounds is that dialogue between and among students is reduced. A suggestion for next steps would be to build to a seminar that ends with very open prompts that require evidence and allow for discussion between and among students.” Mentoring-meeting minutes also document teacher peers supporting the development of teachers. Teachers also participate in intervisitations as a form of peer support. Review of the debrief notes from an intervisitation showed feedback shared with the visited teacher included, “BEEF was not explicitly modeled during that day. Problem trees haven’t been assessed yet. Kids need more prompting… more student centered action balanced with discussion.”

- The professional goals outlined by teachers at the beginning of the year during the initial planning conferences (IPC) are used to guide feedback from school leaders during the cycles of observations, including within the detailed feedback of every official and unofficial classroom observation. Included in the teacher observation report is a section about the pre-observation conference which includes specific reference to the teacher’s IPC goals set earlier in the year. For example, one teacher’s observation report includes two professional goals of, “I can design assignments for students to analyze complex text and use text-based evidence to support writing or speaking,” and a second goal focusing on the Danielson domain focused on using questioning and discussion techniques. Observation notes are included about an observed Socratic seminar that includes students comparing two pieces of text about food. Areas for consideration include feedback connected to the teacher’s professional goals, such as, “We also discussed ways to make their actual text connections and analysis (and text-based evidence) more central to the Socratic seminar discussion.” Feedback alignment with professional goals for teachers was evident across teacher observation reports.

- Evidence that feedback supports teacher development was reported by a teacher during the question and answer meeting, “We do teacher-led conferences (TLCs) here. We have the option to do that as part of the observation process and I’m doing mine in the spring. The same way we ask our students to showcase their work this semester, this is an opportunity to showcase how we’ve been tackling our area of growth, mine is questioning and discussion techniques.”
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 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 has typically resulted in improved teacher practice and progress toward PBAT goals for students.

Supporting Evidence

- An observed science-department meeting looked at a data-driven instructional shift. The teachers of four science courses looked at Generate, Sort, Connect, Elaborate (G.S.C.E.) concept maps. Teachers reviewed the idea behind their respective course’s concept maps. For the Biofuels class, concept mapping is related to the carbon cycle. For the Exercise Physiology class, the concept map is focused on sleep cycles and exercise. Students were to create a concept map in the Soils class during a unit on sedimentology. Teachers reviewed data-informed instruction spreadsheets, including whether students understand and can describe relevant background concepts and the significance of topics. Teachers shared out in rounds, first by discussing what the data reveals about how students are collectively and individually making sense of ideas, putting information together, and organizing thoughts. Teachers noted that students’ important strength is connecting fermentation with carbon, and taking multiple concepts and linking them together in one idea. Implications for the department were to categorize and prioritize concept mapping. Action steps included the use of concept maps to write background sections focusing on transition sentences, bias and error analyses, GSCE errors, concept-map-aligned rubrics, and focus on students at different points.

- Teachers have strengthened their instructional capacity through team collaborations. A teacher reported, “Tremendous amount of work that’s come out of the departments over the years such as generating the common learning target banks, many of those have commonly generated rubrics. We have identified specific practices that we want to be doing more consistently, have a practice of bringing student work to department meetings and examining it together.” Another teacher shared, “What we discuss at team meetings easily informs 70-80 percent of what I do. The impact on our students’ papers and PBAT papers from this practice is that I now know my colleagues are using concept maps to help students organize or transition for the background parts of their paper.”

- Progress towards goals for groups of students is evidenced by increases in students passing their PBAT exams in January 2018 compared to June 2017. All content areas, except social studies, showed an increase in January 2018 PBAT pass rates. This increase in student performance corresponds with the work of teacher teams to build student capacity regarding PBATs.