Quality Review Report

2017-2018

High School For Environmental Studies
High school 02M400
444 West 56 Street
Manhattan
NY 10019

Principal: Amber Najmi Shadid

Dates of Review:
January 18, 2018 - January 19, 2018

Lead Reviewer: AJ Hepworth
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

High School For Environmental Studies 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels</td>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Quality Ratings continued

### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<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>
<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>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

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

| Quality Indicator: | 5.1 Monitoring and Revising Systems | Rating: | Well Developed |
|

Findings
School leaders and faculty have an effective and transparent process to purposefully evaluate and adjust curricular and instructional practices. The use of organizational resources related to teacher teamwork and professional practices are regularly monitored and evaluated.

Impact
Coherence of policies and practices exists throughout the school improving student learning and their school experiences.

Supporting Evidence

- Curriculum and pedagogy are refined on a continuous cycle by grade, department, and subject-specific teams to ensure tasks are differentiated and meet the needs of all learners. Teacher led lesson studies monitor and evaluate the techniques used throughout the school and identify best practices across curricula. Groups of teachers develop and critique lesson plans based on research-supported strategies aligned with the Common Core Learning Standards. Results are shared during school wide meetings and with school administration to guide professional development. Furthermore, common misconceptions associated with student achievement are identified across all Regents based courses using midterm analysis results to inform next steps and strategies for implementation. The theory of action, which states teachers will develop rigorous tasks, guides the development of focused learning objectives, which all students understand. Teachers collaborate to create rigorous tasks based on the analysis of the midterms that require high levels of student effort to perform, especially the lowest third of performers.

- An observation review process evaluates the quality of observation reports. School leaders meet once during each observation round to engage in peer-to-peer assessment using a tuning protocol. Random samples of recent observation reports are presented to all evaluators along with background information, teacher goals, and class demographics. School leaders review the reports citing warm and cool feedback to guide revisions for the current and future Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) teacher observation reports. This process allows school leadership the opportunity to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school connected to systems for improvement, specifically, teacher support and supervision.

- Professional development is continuously revised based on data stemming from APPR teacher observation reports, informal assessments, and teacher surveys. Advance data results connected to the Danielson Framework for Teaching highlight the teachers who are rated the highest in creating a positive learning environment. Conversely, Advance data reports indicate the areas in need of the most improvement involve designing coherent instruction and the use of questioning and discussion techniques. All professional development related to instruction integrates teacher planning of unit and lesson plans aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. Furthermore, the theory of action identified by the school explicitly states, if teachers are developing rigorous tasks that require students to engage in productive struggle, while creating an environment where all students are expected to learn at high levels, then student cognitive engagement and achievement will increase. As a result of particular attention to what teachers need to learn in order to support student mastery of the Common Core Learning Standards, instructional shifts, and content standards, the quality of instruction and student achievement has increased.
Area of Focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings

Teachers’ assessment practices, including use of rubrics and feedback on student’s drafts, are aligned with curricula and incorporate ongoing checks for understanding during instruction.

Impact

Feedback provided to students regarding their achievement is actionable and effective, although occasionally lacks meaningful guidance for students while making them clearly aware of their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- Writing across the content area is one of the instructional goals school leaders and teachers have identified as a priority for student success. As such, all students regularly complete writing tasks in English Language Arts (ELA) and are provided rubrics aligned to the task. Once complete, the rubric document is returned to students with feedback and ratings to guide next steps, which address expository writing, emphasizing topic, detail, concluding sentence, and writing conventions. The feedback allows students to reflect and apply the suggestions to subsequent tasks. A review of assignments demonstrated growth by students. However, similar clear portraits of mastery are not provided across all content areas. For example, in science, although success criteria are provided to guide laboratory writing, the quality of response is undefined. Similarly, feedback on several U.S. document based History questions simply stated, “annotate,” with no further guidance. Students shared that although they confer with their teachers often, the feedback they receive could be given more explicitly in written format so the level of specificity can be meaningfully applied and not lost.

- An eleventh grade student noted they often review rubrics in class prior to completing work assignments so they understand the criteria for success. A group of students further explained their teachers provide detailed feedback on draft versions of their work to help them apply edits to a final version. In senior English class when drafting college essays students complete a first draft, second draft, third draft, and final draft. Each draft version contains edits in the form of notes, suggestions, and highlighted markups. Students understand how the feedback is preparing them for college writing by appropriately using graphic organizers, outlines, MLA formatting, and annotation. Although seniors acknowledge they make meaning out of the feedback and grading system when their writing is assessed, underclassman were not as clearly able to articulate deep understanding of the actionable feedback they receive on their returned work samples.

- Teachers engage their students in higher-order thinking through questions to assess understanding and take the pulse of the class. During an advanced placement (AP) government class, students were challenged to reflect on questions posed by the teacher regarding to what extent should congressional representatives be delegates or trustees of the American people? Based on the student’s replies, the teacher was able to pivot and adjust her questioning to probe deeper with the text. However, the feedback to student responses did not effectively guide students how to justify their position while using the primary textual evidence, thus limiting their ability to delve deeper with content knowledge and less opinion. Similarly, in a geometry class, the teacher checked a group of boys who appeared to be struggling with identifying the lines as being parallel with symbolism. Although the teacher showed the students how to read the diagram and state evidence to justify that the lines are parallel, students did not record the explanation for reference in subsequent learning.
**Additional Finding**

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

**Findings**

Curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and purposeful writing strategies along with the strategic integration of the instructional shifts. Additionally, curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

**Impact**

Coherence across grades and subjects results in the promotion of college and career readiness. All students have access to curricula and tasks that are cognitively engaging.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Curricular planning documents across all subject areas strategically integrate the instructional shifts through purposeful reading and writing tasks. Students are challenged to write high-quality responses with their assignments that require evidence to support their claims. In science for example, one writing task required students to apply their thinking to explain how infections spread across populations. In math, one writing task involved proving triangles in the problem were congruent with additional evidence. A written assignment in ethics involved students using an informational text to make a claim on current environmental issues and controversies. As a result, coherence of English Language Arts (ELA) instructional shifts are embedded across grades, and according to standardized rubric criteria students are producing above-grade level quality work products.

- Lesson plans include learning objectives strategically connected to the Common Core Learning Standards with explicit real world connections. For example, a grade ten-lesson plan promotes college and career skills by requiring students to synthesize and evaluate character information through visual informational representation. A lesson plan for a French class involves students composing informal notes and messages that target members of a particular culture. A grade ten-algebra lesson plan challenges students to apply their understanding of graphs using verbal descriptions while making connections to equations and transformations.

- Reflection and analysis of results from a baseline assessment led to a purposeful change in a lesson plan, which addressed how living things are similar and different from each other as well as how they compare to nonliving things. The revised lesson plan included an emphasis on implementation of the instructional shifts to address the noticed gap in vocabulary and comprehension. Additionally, an adjustment to stress academic and content vocabulary in the biochemistry unit was made to present lessons and lab activities, which were tracked for increased student comprehension. Similarly, data from prior algebra assessments guide what needs to be retaught. Additionally, it aids in targeting the online support intervention assignments for groups of students who needed more explicit basic algebra skill development. Skills recognized for the largest area in need of improvement, such as understanding word problems, are targeted for application of annotation skills to help students better understand the question.
## Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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### Findings

Teaching strategies in general education and AP classes consistently provide multiple entry points for students to further engage in their work and class discussions.

### Impact

All students engage in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in their work products that give evidence to deep thought and participation.

### Supporting Evidence

1. Across classes, teachers generate and provide students with scaffolds and tools to support their engagement with challenging tasks. In a grade nine English class, students were strategically grouped to support their completing a close reading on one of four themes connected to their reading of *Antigone*. Students read their assigned article independently and answered inference and evaluative questions with their group partners who read the same article. These skills were assigned to students based on low performance on the most recent interim assessment. Students in the lowest group were then given additional higher order questions to answer. Additionally, English Language Learners (ELLs) were provided vocabulary reference sheets. Although multiple entry points were provided to students during instruction in other classes, the level of high-quality, structured support was not as strategic. For example, students who have difficulty proving multi-step proofs are given a partial list of statements to help them order the proof, although it was unclear who was to use the support and how it was to be used.

2. An ethics teacher tasked the students to write an appositive about what a carbon footprint means. The worksheet engaged most students in challenging their thinking and showing their understanding. Additional scaffolds were provided to students with disabilities and the lowest third, including video and visual support as well as sentence stems. The students followed up with completing an online survey regarding their personal carbon footprint. In an English Language Arts (ELA) honors class, students were provided a clearly structured graphic organizer allowing them to engage in determining “How can we synthesize and evaluate character information through visual informational representations?” Overall, across the classes, scaffolds provided support to ensure student engagement in appropriate tasks.

3. Students in an AP government class defended their argument for or against congressional representatives serving as delegates or trustees of the American people based on their reading of a speech. Students challenged their peers’ thinking regarding “the very nature of our democracy” which is “to keep all the people in mind.” Some students conveyed varying viewpoints to their peers’ thinking citing alternative evidence from the text. Similarly, students in an algebra class collaborated with their group partners to group matching functions, transformations, and equations. Students discussed the differences in the reflections, a type of transformation, as having either a horizontal or vertical shift or a horizontal or vertical stretch. The discussions clearly demonstrated students’ high-level of understanding and thinking.
Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings

School leaders and staff consistently communicate high expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness with on-going feedback to families and students.

Impact

Families understand the progress of their child towards college and career while students understand the structures and culture that prepare them for the next level of their education through AP courses and college partnerships connected to a medical pathway.

Supporting Evidence

- Students understand promotional requirements of course work, minimum credits, and attendance expectations across grades. Additionally, all students who take AP college credit-bearing courses are required to take the exam at the end of the year. Furthermore, eligible students in their junior and senior year are eligible for a peer advisory leadership course. The course supports junior and senior students' understanding of how to build relationships among students across grades by mentoring groups of freshman in their transition from middle to high school.

- Across grades, students expressed support from school staff with promotional requirements, including scholarship, college essay writing, applications, and internship program placement. Internship placements include experiences at Coney Island Aquarium, Manhattan President’s Office, YMCA day care center, and Bank of America. Students stated they are made aware of internship criteria and guidance is provided to support them in making the proper choice for placement.

- Communication and feedback to parents occur regularly regarding their child's progress and achievements. Parents appreciate the conferences, conversations with the grade advisor, frequent emails, and access to the online grade book system. Additionally, parents expressed that the learning opportunities for their child “are helping them move onto the next grade.”
Additional Finding

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

Findings

Through a teacher led mentor program, effective professional development, and cycles of observation, feedback to teachers accurately captures their strengths, challenges, and identifies next steps using the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Impact

School-wide instructional practices and strategies that promote professional growth and reflection are elevated. Additionally, feedback articulates clear expectations for teacher practice, supports teacher development, and aligns with professional goals for teachers.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers overwhelmingly agree the feedback they receive from school leadership helps them improve their teaching and contributes to their professional growth. Several teachers shared they have previously received feedback from informal and formal observations identifying a need to improve their pedagogical approaches that align with the Danielson Framework for Teaching and their professional goals. The teachers further stated they discuss techniques to improve their instruction with their respective department leader and amongst themselves as a part of their inter-visitations with peers. For example, teachers who visited colleagues in other departments valued the opportunity to see students engaged in hands-on tasks and modeling done in a different manner, especially as the instruction supported the lowest third of students.

- Teacher feedback and professional support is purposefully aligned to individual pedagogical goals, which are developed at the beginning of the year based on prior APPR evaluation forms. For example, a math teacher noted it was suggested that he provide more peer assessment during instruction. Since incorporating peer assessment opportunities, he sees students across classes more engaged and able to better express their knowledge of content. Similarly, a physical education teacher set a goal to improve questioning techniques and the cycles of observation have contributed to his improvement with that goal as evident by his APPR teacher observation reports.

- Observation reports are used to inform department professional development. Areas of focus are identified to determine specific skills for pedagogical growth. For example, a teacher expressed that previously the quality of questions used by the department members was not strategic or well planned. However, following clear communication of expectations and professional development sessions, the curriculum and instruction contain built in structures that support higher-order thinking questions aligned to their learning objective.