Quality Review Report

2017-2018

Landmark High School
High school 02M419
351 West 18 Street
Manhattan
NY 10011

Principal: Caron Pinkus

Dates of Review:
December 19, 2017 - December 20, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Rod Bowen
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

Landmark 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### School Culture

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Celebration</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>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>Proficient</td>
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</table>

### Systems for Improvement

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

<table>
<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>Proficient</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>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>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>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>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.4 Positive Learning Environment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings

The school community promotes a culture grounded in engagement and collaboration. Professional development and student learning experiences are strategically aligned to support these effective academic and personal behaviors.

Impact

Students learn within a safe and inclusive culture that cultivates student leadership, the formation of healthy relationships with adults and each other, as well as the adoption of collaboration and engagement skills across classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- Structures are in place for students to exercise their voices as well as lead and make decisions. The student mentorship program was created by students to support entering grade nine students in their acclimation to high school. One student said that his mentor helps him out when he’s having a problem. Students initiate many of the clubs. The Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transsexual, Queer (LGBTQ) club collaborated with similar groups in the other schools on campus to plan and host a building-wide dance intended to provide a safe social space for all students regardless of their sexual orientation. The African American Culture club exposed participating students and their parents to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) during an overnight college trip.

- Students and teachers noted how advisory is integral in building relationships among students as well as between teachers and students. Community members credited circles as being a significant practice that supports the community by providing a structured space to discuss various aspects of their lives, as well as acknowledge and celebrate each other. Students in a mixed grade restorative justice advisory receive additional training and work specifically to support a sense of community in the school by facilitating discussions and activities in other advisories. Recently, they engaged their peers in discussions regarding the temporary presence of metal detectors in their school.

- Peer mediation allows for a small group of trained students to support peers in addressing issues that might otherwise result in poor choices and consequences.

- The restorative justice team, consisting of staff trained by the Office of Youth Development, as well as an organization contracted to support restorative justice practices, facilitate teacher training on conducting circles during advisory. One training resource outlined how circles pertaining to a building-wide issue should start with a community-building section, followed by discussions about what students think about the situation, feel about the situation, and are inspired to do about the situation. Such learning experiences resulted in students coordinating peaceful protests for the betterment of their school community.

- Collaboration as an academic and personal behavior is fully embedded within the learning culture of the school. It is supported by training and evident in the design of curricula across grades and subject areas.
Findings

The majority of teachers collaborate in subject area departments to engage in structured inquiry regarding the analysis of student Performance Based Assessment Tasks (PBATs).

Impact

Teacher teams focused on student work strengthen the instructional capacity of teachers, but do not yet result in schoolwide coherence or ensure mastery of select PBAT skills for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- The math team followed a looking at student work protocol that consisted of four rounds. The first round was a sharing of low inference observations focusing on what they noticed. The second, a high inference round, elicited their thoughts on the work. Round three was for the implications of what they had uncovered in their work, and the last round of discussion was for reflection on the process of the meeting itself. Over the course of these rounds, the team noted that students used the same strategy, but did not explain why. There were also no images to support their work. The student work also showed attempts at making real world connections. A teacher stated, “Our students need help with organizing their thinking in a way that would be clear to a reader.” Potential next steps included using word walls that go beyond definitions and into when, why, and where you would use them, as well as providing students with a freeform graphic organizer and having them draw in the connections before an assessment.

- Documentation from the social studies department showed the identification of key skills that students will need to master in order to successfully complete their PBATs. Such skills include writing a historical context preface, making connections between historical time periods and the present, and writing narratives from the perspectives of people in a certain place or time. Strategies developed included using a contextualization check-list, having students create annotated timelines, and collecting evidence from different points of view.

- The science department's inquiry summary sheet showed that the June PBATs revealed the need to support students in their ability to develop hypotheses that strongly relate to background research (contextualize), and communicate their understanding of the topic and it’s connection to the PBAT in their own words. Their next steps were to introduce protocols to support contextualization and strategies for paraphrasing. Based on mini-PBATs administered in November, students still struggled with contextualization, but there were some improvements in students’ abilities to paraphrase in their own words.

- Minutes from an English Language Arts (ELA) team meeting focused on English Language Learners (ELLs) also showed a commitment to a low inference analysis of selected student work, followed by a round of interpretation and their implications for instruction. Instructional strategies that resulted from their inquiry work included introducing scaffolds that have less text and more visuals, developing different sentence starter banks based on individual student's needs, and providing repeated opportunities for students to practice their use of scaffolds before an assessment. There was insufficient evidence of the impact of these strategies on student mastery.
Additional Finding

<table>
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<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 Common Core Learning Standards, instructional shifts, and the expectations found within content specific PBAT rubrics. Curricular tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher order skills for all students across grades and subject areas.

Impact

Decisions regarding curricula build coherence and promote college and career readiness for a variety of learners, including ELLs and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- ELA curriculum maps make clear the ways in which coherence is built across grades by outlining the genre, written products, types of texts, and standards of focus for each unit in grades nine through twelve. Across grades, unit four is a study of drama, with students producing literary analysis pieces and performing in response to a whole class novel. Comparable coherence was not evident across all subject areas, but the use of curriculum maps as a tool for vertical alignment is.

- All plans for instruction purposefully build student skills toward tasks that require research, analysis, development of an argument, essay writing, and an oral presentation, ensuring a consistent emphasis on rigorous habits and higher order skills across subject areas.

- The desired outcome in a math lesson plan is that students collaborate and respond to a problem by stating the correlation coefficient and interpret what it means in the given context. They will then propose a course of action. In another plan, students will write a claim-evidence-reasoning paragraph on whether stop-and-frisk is effective based on statistical data. Discussion will be used to refine their claims. These two plans show how coherence is built between grade eleven and grade twelve statistics courses in their use of correlation coefficients.

- A document from a neuroscience course outlines how students will evaluate the reliability of a secondary source related to their research topic by analyzing the information found in the text. They will then use their understanding of the information to develop a hypothesis. A chemistry lesson plan presents how students will analyze graphs and data using a figure analysis protocol and identify evidence to support their claims related to nuclear chemistry. The real-world lens that students will explore includes cost, waste, security, safety, climate change, and proliferation.

- The focus of a social studies lesson plan is for students to create annotated timelines that include at least three different time periods, with multiple events discussed within each time period. The goal of this task is for students to use these timelines to notice and discuss historical changes, why they occur, and how they impact a society.
Findings

Structures for student partnering, aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the shared belief of how students learn best, are evident across classrooms.

Impact

Collaborative student work does not reflect student ownership, or high-level discussions and student work products in all classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- Expectations for partnership were posted during an algebra lesson. The expectations included checking-in with partners before moving on, both partners supporting each other to understand and explain, and asking questions of each other to strengthen understanding. Partners were overheard discussing whether graphs presented on a worksheet represented functions. “The first one did not represent a function because it did not pass the vertical line test.” Another pair noted that a graph was a function because none of the x inputs were being repeated.

- Two students who had collaborated on a project gave a presentation in an ELA class. They took turns talking about their Marxist analysis of a text they had read. They provided evidence from the text to make their points, and cited the page numbers where it could be found. Their peers developed questions based on the material being discussed that would push the thinking of the two presenters.

- Groups of students engaged in research as they developed annotated timelines in a history class. A number of groups were not able to initiate the task as designed and needed clarification from the teacher before they could begin. This was due in part to the teacher transitioning from modeling to group work without first having the whole class guided practice portion of the workshop model. However, eventually, students began to engage their research questions and insert historical events into the categories of “Early America,” “Before and After Civil War,” “Gilded Age,” and “Today.”

- Student groups in a science class were provided with nuclear chemistry readings and data tables to analyze. Their task was to work together to understand what was being conveyed, and the author’s purpose in collecting and presenting information in a specific way. When the teacher asked why the author chose to create bar graphs on a data set, a student responded, “He wanted to show how powerful Russia and the United States were compared to other countries.” Groups then had to generate conclusions based on the information they had analyzed, which answered the question, “Should the United States sign the Non-Nuclear Proliferation Treaty?” Although students engaged in the task, the school-wide partnering protocol was not utilized, limiting the level of ownership groups exhibited during the activity.
Findings

Mini-PBATs are administered across subject areas to determine student progress toward meeting the graduation expectations; similarly, mock ELA Regents exam results are used to collect data in preparation for the formal exam. Teachers across classrooms consistently check for understanding as well as provide opportunities for students to self-assess their work.

Impact

Assessment practices enable teachers to make effective adjustments to curricula and instruction to meet all students’ learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- The schoolwide assessment overview document outlines how common assessments are used. In September, there are diagnostic assessments and teachers enter data into trackers. In November, the first interim assessments are administered and student work is analyzed to inform curriculum and instruction. During the January Regents week, resulting data from the second round of assessments are analyzed to inform curricular and instructional adjustments, as well as to track school wide goals. In April, the third and last interim assessments are given. Summative mini- and graduation PBATs take place in June. It is noted that the data from the summative assessments are used to determine students’ performance toward achieving school wide goals.

- In addition to PBATs, students sit for the ELA Regents Exam. Data from mock Regents taken in November indicate that instructional next steps include focusing on reading comprehension and organization. Formative assessment data from a math skills tracker showed that most students understood standard deviation as a concept, yet were challenged by working backwards to find the mean or standard deviation from a z-score.

- A teacher in a math class used questioning to consistently check for understanding during instruction, with a focus on student voice. When assessing student understanding of whether a graph represented a function, she asked the class, “What do you think?” A student responded and she asked if someone could add on to what was said or explain what was meant. As students answered, the teacher asked why, and if others could repeat or rephrase what was said.

- With a focus on the skill objective of the lesson to analyze the modes of persuasion, the teachers in an ELA class consistently encouraged students to articulate why ethos, pathos or logos were used by authors. As students would simply identify the strategy, the teacher would ask questions such as, “Why did Dr. King use pathos?” When a student answered that he wanted to appeal to his audience, the teacher asked why that would be important to the speaker, ensuring that students were analyzing the speeches.

- A social studies teacher repeatedly checked student understanding of the process they were engaged in as well as the expectations for successfully completing the task. After noticing that some partners were not collaborating as intended, he got everyone’s attention and said, “I want to shout out exemplary work.” He then acknowledged how two students were asking each other about historical events that were shared on their timelines.
Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

Schools leaders consistently communicate to the entire staff that they are to provide students with frequent opportunities to collaborate and partner as learners. School staff has established a culture of learning that consistently communicates high expectations for all students.

Impact

Teachers receive training and are held accountable for implementing the reading partnerships initiative. Students are provided with ongoing and detailed feedback and supports that prepare them for life after graduation.

Supporting Evidence

- A document entitled, “Expectations for Partnership Work at Landmark” provides guidance for classroom environment, student notebooks, instruction, supervisory observation, student accountability for collaboration, and recommended professional texts. Specific expectations include preparing lesson plans that indicate the kinds of groups/pairings for the day; partnering students purposefully for reading, writing, speaking, experimenting and other projects; providing opportunities for accountable talk, and using small group discussion protocols.

- The 2017-2018 professional development calendar illustrates that reading partnerships were the focus of five sessions held between September and December. Topics included differentiating with reading partnerships, partnering protocols, strengthening student discussion, and writing through partnerships. A reflection sheet completed by a teacher after one of these trainings noted that he liked the idea of giving students feedback on the quality of their collaborations and looked forward to receiving more support on what structures could be used to provide such feedback.

- Written feedback included in an observation report acknowledged that few students were actively engaged in a class discussion. The recommended next step was to prioritize having learning partners process content and/or practice skills to promote more peer to peer engagement.

- Students referenced their use of an online grading platform where they have access to updated information pertaining to their assignment completion, assessment scores, and overall academic standing. On Wednesdays, time is allocated for advisors to review the information on the platform with students so that they can stay on track for PBATs, promotion, and graduation.

- All grade ten students have to complete future portfolios, which consist of surveys, a research paper, and a presentation before a panel. This experience allows students to explore college and career paths based on an interest-based process that includes interacting with professionals from various fields, and visiting various colleges. One student stated that her decision to apply for early decision to Colgate University, where she hopes to major in psychology, was informed by her future portfolio project.