Quality Review Report

2017-2018

Beacon High School
High School 03M479
522 West 44th Street
Manhattan
NY 10036

Principal: Ruth Lacey

Dates of Review:
April 17, 2018 - April 18, 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

Beacon 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

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<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>
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<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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### School Culture

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1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults

**Additional Finding**

**Well Developed**

3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations

**Area of Celebration**

**Well Developed**

### Systems for Improvement

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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

**Additional Finding**

**Proficient**

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

**Additional Finding**

**Proficient**

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

**Additional Finding**

**Proficient**

4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning

**Additional Finding**

**Proficient**

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

**Additional Finding**

**Proficient**
Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff through timely feedback from classroom observations and the professional development plan. School leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations that are connected to a path to college and career readiness.

Impact

Written feedback and constant communication and support have increased teachers’ understanding and mutual accountability for school leaders’ expectations around teaching and learning. Communication with families provides opportunities for them to partner in students’ education.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders support teachers in understanding their instructional expectations by conducting informal classroom visits that are followed by a write-up summarizing what was seen, providing feedback, and transparently identifying the next-steps for which they will be looking for on their next visit. For example, “One thing to consider is to group students who are struggling with particular content into a group that you can support during independent work time and small-group discussion.” A professional development plan makes clear that school leaders support teachers in their understanding of expectations in addressing topics such as “Cognitive Demand of Tasks,” “Looking at Learning and Teaching Through Student Work,” and “Instructional Focus for Teacher Portfolio.” School leadership conveys high expectations to staff via email, such as specifics about the use of Google Classroom, Skedula, and regarding department meetings.

- The administration works with the Academic Standards Committee (ASC) to communicate high professional expectations for all staff during regularly scheduled professional development. The ASC has also worked to define features of the teacher portfolio, more consistent administration of mid-term, semester, and annual assessments, and they also pilot protocols for Monday meetings such as the design of Performance-Based Assessment (PBA) tasks and Looking at Student Work (LASW). Teachers hold each other accountable during department inquiry meetings as they track student performance data across content areas to improve teaching and learning.

- The school communicates high academic expectations through online resources such as Google Classroom, Skedula, and teacher class websites. Advisors meet with each student along with their parents twice a year to discuss the student’s academic, social, and emotional progress. The college office consists of four college counselors providing college transition support. Students use the Naviance program throughout the college process. Every student is assigned to a college counselor during the spring of their junior year and takes part in one-on-one junior college meetings. The school also hosts visits from college representatives throughout the fall. There are two college parent nights per year, one for junior parents in the spring, and one for senior parents in the fall. The college office emails weekly bulletins to juniors and seniors that consists of all of the mail, emails and notifications that all of the college counselors receive. The Beacon Trailblazers program offers support and guidance throughout the college process beginning junior year to first-generation students or from low-income families. One parent reported, “This school is academically demanding. They just went through a college process and academic curriculum night. It helped us in understanding that they are not just teaching facts, to get to PBAs when they are writing these huge papers, in eleventh grade.”
Area of Focus

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

Across classrooms, teaching practices reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best through high expectations. Student discussion is evident across classrooms.

Impact

Students produce meaningful work products and take part in discussions that generally reflect high levels of student thinking and participation; however, this was not seen across a vast majority of classrooms as some classrooms lacked student ownership of their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- In an English 11 class, students worked together in groups to craft a thesis statement connected to the theme in *Ceremony* and another text they had read, using six quotes from at least two different sources. During an Algebra I lesson on factoring quadratics and polynomials, not all students shared with peers during group share. The teacher asked Depth of Knowledge level 1 and 2 questions and some students participated in classwide discussion by answering questions. During a biology class, students worked in groups tracking how much time it takes for the brain to send signals for the body to react, that was included in a previously conducted ruler drop test. When the teacher asked a question about what unit of measure to include, only some hands went up. Across classrooms, the belief of high expectations for students was evident; however, a coherent set of beliefs was not evident across a vast majority of classes.

- During a geometry lesson on imagining solids in plans, elevations, and sections, instruction connected geometry with architectural design. Class started with students going up to board to discuss what they saw in an Escher drawing. Back in their groups, students had defined roles, as they worked together with manipulatives to complete their How Can I Build It? worksheet. During a music beats class, students used industry standard software to create their own pieces of music with partners on music projects and the specially designed performance space showcased student talents. The belief of high expectations was seen across classrooms.

- During an English 12 lesson on analyzing female characters' perception of sex, which was connected to societal understanding and treatment of sex in a Ted Talk video and Vice article, the teacher facilitated from the back of the room as students led the discussion from the front and engaged peers in discourse that was centered on the topic and showed evidence of their learning. In a US history class, students read texts about Malcolm X silently and discussed with partners the similarities and differences between Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. The closing activity was teacher-led as a summation, without students having an opportunity to share out what they had discussed with their partners to a whole class. As a result, some classes lacked student ownership.

- During a physics class on weight, force and energy in compression springs, student groups conducted tests of springs and weights and recorded their findings on a sheet as they graphed results on graph paper using graphing calculators. Students were able to articulate their thinking with their peers at the table. One student group participated in a lead scientist role, wearing white lab coats, met with the teacher for an additional mini lesson on force and displacement. However, they did not share the information they learned during mini lesson with their peers back in their groups. During a US History lesson on the Great Depression, while there was small-group discussion between students and some share out of ideas classwide, overall it was teacher-centered. While student discussion and participation were generally at high levels of thinking across classrooms, these outcomes were not apparent across the vast majority of visited classes.
Additional Finding

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<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 across content areas are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks and assessments consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills for all students.

Impact

Purposeful decisions build coherence across grades and promote college and career readiness for all students and is accessible for 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 tasks promote college and career readiness for all students. An English 11 course objective includes that students will be able to employ a variety of evidence in order to show depth of knowledge, explain a counter argument, and to support a thesis. A math lesson states an enduring understanding that by the end of the lesson, students will understand equivalence. A social studies tenth-grade global history PBA is an analytic essay using both primary and secondary evidence to support an argument. A science water pollution research experiment Performance Based Assessment Tasks (PBAT) objective asks students to apply principles to current environmental issues.

- Curricular documents across grades and content areas show evidence of the integration of instructional shifts. For example, in an Algebra I lesson plan, students "will be able to decompose the linear term of a quadratic expression into two terms where the product of the coefficients is the constant term." Curricular documents also included assignments evidencing integration of the English Language Arts (ELA) instructional shifts. For example, a twelfth-grade ELA lesson plan details “Learning Goal: For students to be able to guide one another in a productive discussion on a short story; to show high-level questioning content and techniques; to show not just that they can analyze literature, but they can prompt others to do so as well.” An eleventh-grade ELA curriculum map shows the time periods students are studying in American Literature and the essential questions students will consider as they build their knowledge about the world such as “What modes of expression and interpretation exist as the very beginnings of American literary history” and “How and why literary works respond to each other?”

- Lesson plans and curriculum maps consistently challenge students to utilize rigorous habits during the course of instruction. Learning objective statements in unit plans include, “The goal today is to come up with an argument based on the evidence you have complied from primary and secondary sources,” and “Compare, contrast, and explain the mechanisms responsible for the feedback mechanisms being sent through the body.” Additionally, students are to consistently write and connect their writing to provide evidence from the text. Lesson plans consistently detail high-level questions. Examples are, “What kind of economic environment facilitated the conditions necessary for the Great Depression to occur?”, “In what ways was Malcolm X’s approach to the Civil Rights different from that of Martin Luther King, Jr.? In what ways were they similar?”, and “Explain how the nervous and endocrine systems differ? How are they alike?” In an Algebra I lesson plan, differentiation strategies for students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELL) include, “The box method is used instead of double distributive property for a visual aid.”
### Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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**Findings**

Across classrooms, teachers use assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school’s curricula. The school uses common assessments such as PBAs and formative projects to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas.

**Impact**

Teachers provide actionable feedback to students regarding student achievement and the results are used to adjust curricula and instruction.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Across classrooms, samples of student work products matched with rubrics showed teacher written actionable feedback directing students to the steps they should take to strengthen their work. One example includes, “Some very good insights that needed analysis of quotations to further develop those insights. Also, read Montoya in context where he occurs in the novel, what he offers Jake, when and what the outcome is.” Another example read, “Video innovated by showing all steps leading to success. Written work beautifully laid out. A joy to read. Shows very good understanding of the concepts.” A third example is, “Work on giving brief but necessary context for each piece of text.”

- Across classrooms, rubrics are used as tools of support for student growth in all content areas. Examples that were seen during the two-day visit include writing and presentation rubrics that focus on various essay components such as thesis, organization, analysis of evidence, style and voice and writing conventions. The English department uses a rubric for literary analysis essays and the social studies department uses a rubric for measuring student knowledge of content and ability to make connections to previous learning about previous kingdoms and empires in history. Evidence of students’ use of these tools is posted on student work examples and reported by the students themselves. Students spoke about rubrics being important in guiding them during their assignments and using rubrics more in lower grades rather than upper grades.

- Common assessments include ongoing formative assessments including formative projects, PBAs, mid-term anecdotal reports and grades. Content areas assess at the end of each quarter. School leaders, teachers, and students monitor progress toward achieving skills and content knowledge necessary to pass the summative graduation portfolio of PBA grades and projects. Curricular adjustments based on assessment data has occurred. For example, the English department aligned the school’s fiction and non-fiction reading list based on themes of high cognitive value. Ninth-grade titles were arranged by “Coming of Age” and tenth-grade titles were arranged by “Dystopian” literature. The themes were then reflected in changes and updates to curricular documents.
Additional Finding

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<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

Feedback articulates clear expectations for teacher practice and supports teacher development that promotes professional growth and is documented in the PROSE (Progressive Redesign Opportunity Schools for Excellence) portfolio.

Supporting Evidence

- Frequent cycles of classroom observation provide feedback utilizing the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. For example, one observation feedback included, “Areas of Strength: You consistently ‘took the pulse’ of students’ learning by offering feedback that was specific, timely, and actionable, all essential components of effective feedback. Students also monitored their own learning and understanding, either by their own initiative or as a result of tasks and questions posed by you.” Another example of effective feedback reads, “Recommendations: The lesson’s learning tasks and activities were aligned with the instructional outcomes, but they required only minimal thinking by students and little opportunity for them to explain their thinking. To ensure deeper and broader participation by students, seek to integrate into your lessons research-based collaborative teaching and learning activities such as the fishbowl.”

- In addition to the regular observation process and teacher development, teachers are required to submit a PROSE portfolio as a means of documenting professional learning, reflecting on their own teaching and observation feedback, and demonstrating the relationship between teaching and student learning. Teachers are asked to include artifacts that best represent the culture of their own classrooms and their own reflective learning. Portfolios are to include evidence of unit design, lesson design, multiple examples of student work at different levels of achievement, feedback to students, and evidence of teacher collaboration with peers.

- Teachers reported that the support and supervision they have received from school leaders has supported their development as teachers. One teacher reported about the observation process, “I do feel it has been a lot more helpful to me to think about the decisions I make in the classroom.” Another teacher reported her experience this year with supervision and support, “This year observations have been positive because there’s meaningful conversation in the feedback process. He [her supervisor] involved himself in the lesson, when in the classroom he was seeing the lesson. He demonstrated actively paying attention the entire time. His feedback has been thoughtful and has inspired me to improve my practice.”
Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based grade-level teams that promote achievement of school goals and implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Teacher teams consistently analyze data and student work for students they share.

Impact

Collaborations within teams have strengthened teachers’ instructional capacity. Teacher team work typically results in progress toward goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- An observed special education department meeting reviewed the results of the Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI) and looked at student work from four students across content areas. A tenth-grade student, who reads at a sixth-grade level and is a former English Language Learner (ELL) who has tested out, was noted by the team as making progress on three Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) goals. Supports were identified as providing background information, pre-teaching, and graphic organizers. Modifications were identified as open-book tests, modified readings, and multiple-choice tests. Teachers reviewed students’ work samples and proceeded to discuss trends and patterns in student work in order to determine next steps. Recommendations were made to inform goals for Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS) classes and needs for content classroom teachers for each student reviewed. The team reviewed modifications students might need based on the data. The team composed notice of outcomes of the meeting to share with general education teachers with recommendations and to post online.

- Department inquiry teams meet regularly and monthly departmental meetings in each subject are held with one representative from each department participating in the Academic Standards Committee (ASC). Math teachers are focused on increasing the quality and quantity of mathematical thinking demonstrated by students during daily lessons. History teachers are working on students’ academic discourse in their classrooms. World Language teachers are implementing a standards-based grading framework and have modified mid-term and semester assessment tasks in order to design tasks for students to reach the highest performance level descriptors.

- Teachers have strengthened their instructional capacity through team collaborations. A teacher reported, “We communicate a lot. For this student, I will go straight to her general education teachers and explain these findings and discuss what can we do together to support this student. We will also support our study skills classes, directly with the student.” Another teacher shared, “Our team work helps create common language; it’s less intimidating when we create some consistency and common language pieces. It helps us be on the same page to work together to improve our practice and meet the individual needs of each student.” Student progress towards goals is evidenced by class of 2018 ELA performance score growth data indicating students with disabilities improving from an average eighth-grade State ELA score of 2.133 to an average eleventh-grade ELA Regents score of 3.625.