Quality Review Report

2017-2018

Humanities Preparatory Academy

High school 02M605

351 West 18 Street
Manhattan
NY 10011

Principal: Jeannie Ferrari

Dates of Review:
January 3, 2018 and January 8, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Rod Bowen
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

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

## School Quality Ratings

### Instructional Core

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</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>
</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>
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</tbody>
</table>
### 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 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>
</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>Area of Focus</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

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

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<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>Additional Finding</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>
</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>Area of Celebration</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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Evaluate the quality of school-level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
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## Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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</table>

### Findings

School leaders and teacher colleagues strategically use frequent cycles of classroom observations to provide feedback that accurately captures strengths, challenges and next steps using the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

### Impact

All teachers receive feedback that clearly outlines next steps for improvement while supporting professional growth and reflection. They also receive ongoing support in achieving their professional goals set at the beginning of the year.

### Supporting Evidence

- The principal and assistant principal observe instruction together to stay normed with each other and serve as thought partners in ensuring that staff receives high leverage feedback. They conduct non-evaluative walkthroughs in September and October, followed by an evaluative cycle before the end of the calendar year. The spring term follows that same structure. All teachers experience formative visits followed by formal observations.

- Teachers engage in peer observations over the course of the year. Guidance for these announced inter-visitations includes striving to have at least one member of each department present. Using a particular lens as a focus, the participants follow a protocol to debrief their noticing and questions, and collaboratively determine next steps. A reflection from a peer observation begins with the teacher naming her three goals: aligning the grade nine assessment to the Pre-Performance-Based Assessment Task (PBAT) rubric, increasing student facilitation of discussion, and constructing a more cohesive curriculum for an interdisciplinary course with her co-teacher. A colleague’s feedback related to the second goal included incorporating more opportunities for student voice and accountability in whole class discussion, specifically regarding student generated questions.

- Formal observation feedback from the principal and assistant principal shows alignment to teachers’ professional goals. In the written report for a teacher wanting to increase student engagement, the assistant principal quoted language from Danielson competency 3c to clarify the expectation, “100 percent of the students asked are able to articulate what they are doing, why they are doing it, and how they know they are doing it well.” He then provided an account of how some students were unable to make the distinction between completing a checklist as a marker for doing well, and the quality of completion as a marker for doing well. He then encouraged a follow up meeting along with other teachers who are versed in this area.

- An online observation tracking spreadsheet has the headings: strengths, general areas for growth, action steps, and showcase areas. One teacher’s notes acknowledged that she has great questioning skills, develops curriculum that is rooted in big questions, and is a model for integration of technology. However, she needs to increase individual purpose and accountability in group work, and should develop group checklists for roles and how to collaborate. Her showcase area is tiered differentiation. This transparent tool allows school leaders to easily identify how teachers can be partnered to support instructional growth.
Area of Focus

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

School leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations that are connected to a path to college and career readiness, with an emphasis on seniors.

Impact

Families receive ongoing feedback to help them understand student progress, but are not effectively provided with resources to fully enable them to actively support student improvement. Students receive ongoing feedback and guidance supports that prepare them for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- Five teachers are currently piloting a mastery-based online platform and the school community hopes to have all teachers using it in the near future. The platform includes information on the degrees to which students are able to master academic and content specific skills based on their work products. A student view from the platform focusing on the performance levels in an English Language Arts (ELA) writing task indicated that a student could earn a rating of three in supporting details if their work contained one to two sentence explanations of the topic sentence, a one to two sentence summary of the text, a concrete example or detail, and a general explanation that relates to or supports the topic. The other online platform, which will be phased out, reflects student learning as course and assignment grades. Although some students sometimes found the interpretation of their performance across subjects through these two different sources to be confusing, they, along with parents, agreed that both platforms are useful and teachers work to keep the information current.

- Parents stated that teachers communicate with them via emails, texts, phone, and at in person conferences. One said that during parent teacher conferences, teachers sometimes make suggestions regarding things that can be tried at home to support student performance at school. However, there was little evidence of effective communication to position parents to successfully partner with the school in supporting their children’s achievement.

- All teachers with advisories provide academic counseling for their students. A senior advisory group focuses on exploring college options, applying to colleges, planning college visits, and exploring financial aid options.

- College trips organized by the school are primarily for seniors. Last year the entire senior class visited one private and one public college. Ten high performing seniors stayed on college campus last July. A student leader said that they hope to start having school organized college trips for juniors before the end of the school year. Advisors of various grades may choose to schedule college trips for their advisories, but this is not a school-wide expectation of all advisors. In addition, students stated that if they schedule college trips on their own, the school gives them permission to go. This approach of relying on motivated advisors or students to determine who is exposed to colleges before senior year hinders a systematic communication of college readiness expectations for all students.
Additional Finding

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

School leaders ensure that there are clear expectations for the development of curricula that include the strategic use of Common Core Learning Standards, consortium rubric bands, and the school's core values.

Impact

There is curricular coherence across grades and subject areas that promotes college and career readiness and higher order thinking for all students, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- Curricula are designed to inform the instruction of skills that students will need to successfully complete PBATs. A project essentials checklist outlines how these tasks are to include knowledge and concepts derived from standards, engage student interests and initiate questioning, and be driven by questions. In addition, the tasks are to allow for student voice and choice, emphasize 21st century competencies, support the development of inquiry skills, and provide opportunities for critique and revision. All teachers are expected to select from the schools’ social political core values to inform a coherent approach to instruction. The core values are humanity, diversity, intellect, truth, peace, justice, and democracy.

- Both Global Studies and United States (U.S.) History lesson plans are informed by Common Core Learning Standards that require students to determine central ideas or information from primary and secondary sources, cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of these texts, and provide a summary and insights gained from the key details from the texts. In the global lesson plan, students would read documents regarding the First All-Russian Women’s Congress, annotate them, take notes, and then engage in whole class discussion. Students in the U.S. History class would engage in a Socratic seminar based on sources such as a documentary video on the Trail of Tears, the Declaration of Independence and Constitutional Amendments, and text on Native American reservations and the Dawes Act.

- Curricular documents from an Algebra 2/Trigonometry course and a geometry class are aligned in their use of the consortium rubric band: Reasoning and Proofs. The Algebra 2/Trigonometry task would have students working in groups to create presentations on a chosen marketing strategy using evidence from quadratics. The plan sites the core value of intellect as students would listen, ask questions, and respond to others. The learning task in the geometry lesson encourages students to collaborate on justifying their response to a scenario involving the stacking of disks on rods. The response is to be a function that describes their work in addition to a written assignment where they have to explain their approach, reasoning, and strategies. This plan also values intellect as students would work to find solutions to various problems.

- Staff acknowledged that across subject areas, their curricula emphasize close reading, the use of evidence, analysis, and the development of arguments.
Additional Finding

<table>
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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, instruction reflects the belief that students learn best when they are engaged in inquiry based work that is informed by questions. Students utilize discussion and they produce work products that reflect high levels of thinking and participation.

Impact

Although students are cognitively engaged across classrooms, their level of ownership of the content and skills they are learning does not consistently result in work products that are meaningful.

Supporting Evidence

- A Socratic seminar in a social studies class was student facilitated. A student encouraged participation when she asked her peers if they would like to answer a question that was posed, and asked if anyone had further questions. Students made comments, elaborated on points that were made, and addressed misconceptions. Those not participating tracked their peers’ use and explanation of evidence, whether they cited evidence from text, and if they respectfully disagreed when counteracting one another.

- Students in a physics class discussed why renewable energy sources should be used over non-renewable sources, as well as the advantages of certain renewable sources over others. A student spoke of the use of wave energy, and how the power generated from turbines responding to currents was a viable and sustainable energy source. A peer questioned its value, wondering how the turbines negatively affected sea life, whether people not living near oceans could benefit from it, and whether it worked in lakes and rivers. The presenting student responded, “It has to have waves”. Although it was clear that the presenting student did research to prepare to share his thoughts on wave energy, his lack of ownership of the content impeded his ability to engage in authentic discussion.

- In an English class exploring the essential question, “Can a utopian society exit successfully?” structures were in place for student voice and specifically for students to engage each other with questions posted on the board. However, there was insufficient time for students to discuss the questions with each other.

- Across a chemistry classroom, students had collected data based on experiments they had conducted. They were partnered and used peer feedback from a checklist as well as other feedback provided for them to make final edits on their papers. Students were able to articulate the scientific exploration they had completed, stating “Our experiment was what materials could be used for the best insulator?” When asked about their hypotheses, a number of students were able to answer, “Our hypothesis was that charging it longer would make the motor run faster.” However, few students could articulate meaning based on the results of their experimentation. For example, when a student determined which material was a better insulator, he was not able to share why.

- Groups of students engaged in productive struggle as they tried to solve a math puzzle with the objective of transferring an entire stack of disks from the first rod to the third rod while obeying a set of rules. The essential questions informing the task included “What logical processes do we use to arrive at factual conclusions?”, and “How do we reason abstractly and quantitatively?” Yet, when asked why they were doing the activity and what it had to do with geometry, students responded “To get us to think”, and “We’re organizing shapes”. In such instances, the level of thinking did not match the level of rigor embedded in the task.
Additional Finding

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

Across classrooms, teachers use and create rubrics that are aligned to pre-PBAT and PBAT assessments. Assessment data is used to determine student progress toward graduation PBAT requirements across subject areas.

Impact

Students and teachers receive actionable feedback to inform their next steps. Teachers use this information to adjust curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Students commented that there are numerous ways in which they receive feedback on their work, including comments written on their work and through the use of PBAT rubrics. Students articulated that they need to continue to improve by being more descriptive when writing procedures, using transition words when writing with various details, and citing the sources of quotes. Areas of strength and improvement included having a strong rationale behind using a problem solving strategy in math, and using a graph to communicate information.

- A science interim assessment rubric is used to measure student performance and progress for grades nine through twelve toward the skills needed to graduate. Organized into six levels of mastery, from the beginning pre-PBAT level to the outstanding PBAT level, the rubric outlines expectations for the six performance indicators: contextualize, critique experimental design, collect, organize and present data, analyze and interpret results, and revise original design and presentation.

- Mastery based analysis of data from a social studies assessment illustrated that the majority of students were proficient in constructing arguments, developing in their use of text as evidence, inadequate in applying concepts, and proficient in writing mechanics. The overall class performance is accompanied by individual student data. The teacher used this information to prioritize analysis and organization in her follow up teaching.

- Science assessment data was used to determine the ability of students to contextualize, critique, collect, analyze, revise, and defend their work orally. The report indicated that students were strong at collecting and analyzing data, yet needed support in contextualizing their findings and revising their work.
Additional Finding

Quality Indicator: 4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development
Rating: Well Developed

Findings
The vast majority of teachers engage in structured, inquiry-based collaborations. In addition, distributive leadership structures are embedded within the professional culture of the school.

Impact
Increased teacher capacity, instructional coherence, and student achievement have all resulted from ongoing professional collaborations. Effective teacher leadership and teacher decision-making are hallmarks of the community, impacting teaching and learning school-wide.

Supporting Evidence

- Minutes from a teacher leader meeting show that members from each academic department discussed the findings, implications, and questions related to student performance data on PBATs. As a result of sharing patterns and trends of student performance in their respective subject areas, they agreed that a unified focus on analysis/evidence, contextualization, and communication would best serve their students. Focusing on the overlapping skills that are essential in each subject area promotes instructional coherence across the school.

- Inquiry Team meeting notes show the use of a collaborative assessment conference protocol where participants described what they observed in the student work, posed questions based on those observations, and speculated about what the students worked on in class. After the presenting teacher responded, the rest of the team members discussed the considerations for their own instruction of the same writing structure in their classes. Next steps included using journaling as a pre-writing exercise before starting an essay and using rhetorical questions in the conclusion. Such collaboration strengthens the collective pedagogy of the participants and increases student achievement for all learners. Student work shows that the use of these specific writing structures across classes has improved students’ abilities to consistently include claims, evidence, analysis, and other foundational expectations in their essay writing.

- The professional community embraces a consensus decision-making model on issues relevant to teachers, including curricula, scheduling, hiring, and instructional goal setting. Teachers developed Individualized Education Program (IEP) at a Glance, a tool designed to make students’ IEP goals more accessible for all teachers. Teacher leaders facilitate best practice sharing among the teachers in their departments, as well as lead inquiry meetings. Other teacher contributions have included the development of a common data collection tool, the drive to deepen assessment practices, and a visiting author series.

- Teachers are also encouraged to design courses. Classes such as “Big History,” “Dystopian Literature,” “Proof in Mathematics,” and “Titans of Industry” were all created by teachers, and in most cases involved comprehensive research and collaboration with universities, as well as student input. Teachers noted that it feels that many of the things that happen in the school “come from us.”