Quality Review Report

2017-2018

Cambria Heights Academy
High School 29Q326
188-04 91St Avenue
Queens
NY 11423

Principal: Melissa Menake

Dates of Review:
April 12, 2018 - April 13, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Kimberly Bradley
The Quality Review Report

The Quality Review is a two-day school visit by an experienced educator. During the review, the reviewer visits classrooms, talks with parents, students, teachers, and school leaders and uses a rubric to evaluate how well the school is organized to support student achievement.

The Quality Review Report provides a rating for all ten indicators of the Quality Review Rubric in three categories: Instructional Core, School Culture, and Systems for Improvement. One indicator is identified as the *Area of Celebration* to highlight an area in which the school does well to support student learning and achievement. One indicator is identified as the *Area of Focus* to highlight an area the school should work on to support student learning and achievement. The remaining indicators are identified as *Additional Finding*. This report presents written findings, impact, and site-specific supporting evidence for six indicators.

Information about the School


School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</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>
<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>Area of Focus</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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<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>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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<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 Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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</tbody>
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### Systems for Improvement

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

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

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations and provide training to the entire staff. Teacher teams establish a culture for learning that communicates a unified set of expectations for students.

Impact

Ongoing training is provided to staff and there is a culture of mutual accountability for the school’s expectations. Students are provided with feedback and guidance supports that prepare them for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- Frequent classroom observations and feedback from administrators based on the Danielson Framework for Teaching contain specific language from the rubric, evidence from the classroom observations that supports the rating, and actionable next steps. Teachers are held accountable to put next steps in place and this is monitored during subsequent classroom observations and weekly meetings with team leads and school leaders. Ongoing professional development is based upon teacher need evident in observations results. There is transparency regarding high expectations as teacher teams hold each other accountable through their work in inquiry teams and staff hold school leaders accountable through bi-weekly one-on-one meetings. Through frequent monitoring and feedback, teachers are held accountable and supported in meeting the school’s high expectations.

- Through a staff handbook, school leaders communicate high expectations and that the school’s goal is to develop students to be technologically savvy, literate, fair-minded, responsible, and creative citizens of the 21st century, and that the school is responsible to meet students where they are. The handbook outlines role and responsibilities for each staff member including communicating academic expectations and the consequences for cheating. Teachers are required to teach students how to pull relevant information from a source, how to paraphrase and/or put important information in their own language, how to cite sources, and how to complete a bibliography of sources. Weekly emails are also sent out by school leaders and teachers must update their online gradebook on a regular basis. Clear, consistent communication ensures all staff members understand and can articulate the school’s expectations for staff and students.

- The school staff communicates a unified set of expectation to students through a student handbook. A four-year course sequence is outlined for students that includes required classes and electives including Advanced Placement and College Now courses. The handbook also outlines a path to success for students including how to deal with conflict and how to treat others. Students are expected to adhere to the school’s “Code of Ethics: Responsibility, Respect, Integrity, and Honesty.” Students reported they participated in orientation week at the beginning of the year and must complete 55 internship hours as one of their graduation requirements. Students receive each semester a contract/syllabus for each class that outlines the objectives of the course, description of final products and assessments, and includes the school-wide grading policy with rubric and the best way to contact the teacher. Students meet weekly with their advisory teacher who leads students in community building activities, facilitates schoolwide initiatives, and provides one-on-one guidance to students. Students review grades and transcripts throughout the year to monitor their progress and participate in college field trips and workshops led by the school’s guidance counselor. As a result of the school’s high expectations and supports for students, students understand and are prepared for the next level.
Area of Focus

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

Across most classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect a set of beliefs that students learn best through the use of technology and meeting students where they are in their learning. Teaching strategies provide multiple entry points into the curricula across most classrooms.

Impact

Teaching practices reflect the school’s belief of meeting students where they are and integrating technology in meaningful ways in most classrooms. Most learners are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks as demonstrated in student work products.

Supporting Evidence

- In a tenth grade English class on Othello, students were writing a response on laptops and uploading their responses to their folders on an online document-sharing site to the following journal prompt, “Do you ever look in the mirror and not even recognize the person looking back? And then wonder how you ever let yourself get so lost? Describe how why a person may feel this way. What are the circumstances that lead to such feelings? Explain if you have gone through the same experience. How does this relate to the play? Which characters may feel this way? And why?” After students finished their written response, a student in the class facilitated a class discussion based on their responses. After several students shared their responses to the journal prompt, the teacher then introduced the aim question, “How has Othello fallen?” Students in the class then broke into groups of three to participate in a dramatic reading of the scene that illustrates Othello’s breakdown. The teachers reminded the students that as they were reading to think about how Othello’s fit reveals his mental state. In most classrooms, teaching practices reflect the school’s belief that students learn best through technology.

- In a geometry class, students were sitting in small groups, solving practice Regents questions with a focus on solving for volume. All groups worked on the same problems and were grouped by academic needs. The two teachers in the room walked around the room and monitored the progress of each group. The teacher went to review the answers with the entire class. Some students called out answers. A review of student handouts throughout the room revealed some students were waiting for the teacher or other students to give out the answer. After one of the teachers shared the answers to the practice questions, students then reviewed the specific problems they got wrong and worked with the students in their group to determine why their answer was incorrect. The grouping of students reflected that most students are provided multiple entry points into the curricula but there were missed opportunities for student ownership.

- In an earth science class, students worked in pairs to complete a lab on plate tectonics. During the lab, the teacher stopped students and asked clarifying questions including, “Is subduction occurring in this image?”, “Why is it subduction?”, “Where are the trenches in the images?”, and “What type of plate for a trench?” The majority of student responses were choral response and the teacher would periodically call on specific students. Walking around the room revealed that the majority of student pairs were engaged and on task as they used the data collected from the previous lesson to respond to the lab questions including, “Where are earthquakes most likely to occur, Where does destruction occur in the lithosphere/crust, and where is new material created in the lithosphere/crust?” Through teaching strategies such as the use of scaffolds and the identification of key vocabulary for groups of students, students were provided multiple entry points into the lesson.
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

Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher order skills across grades and subject areas. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

A diversity of learners, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, have access to the curricula and tasks and are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of lesson and unit plans demonstrates an emphasis on higher-order skills such as questioning and discussion. Some of the questions included in an English lesson plan include, “What do you notice as you examine this painting?”, “What do you wonder?”, and, using the crop protocol, “What specific section of the painting do you find interesting and why did this section stand out to you?” In a United States History lesson plan, the lesson objectives stated that students would be able to “Identify and explain the key elements of President Wilson’s War Message to Congress, summarize and explain how the United States planned to prepare for World War I at home, synthesize your understanding of the First Amendment’s Freedom of Speech with the outcome of the Schenck case, and create an argument in support of or in opposition to the limitation of freedom of speech during times of war.” The level of questioning and tasks evident across the majority of grade and content areas consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills for groups of students.

- Unit plans and pacing calendars describe the skills students will be able to demonstrate by the conclusion of the unit. For example, a living environment unit plan states that students will be able to, “Extract relevant information from reading passages related to evolution; write essays using multiple sources such as labs, articles, and assigned readings; define, explain, and use essential vocabulary related to evolution; collect, organize, and analyze data; analyze results from observations/expresed data.” A pacing calendar for English states, “Students will understand how one man’s deceitful revenge results in four deaths in the tragedy, students will understand that prejudice, jealousy, and revenge are part of any historical era, not just modern times, and students will understand how Shakespeare’s language conveys popular motifs and relations to the human condition.” In the majority of unit plans and pacing calendars, academic tasks emphasize rigorous habits and higher order thinking skills.

- A diversity of learners are supported in cognitively engaging tasks through differentiation and modifications. Some of the differentiation in a lesson plan for English on “Romeo and Juliet” included the use of visual aids and access to prior work and documents stored in the school’s online document-sharing site. Low, medium and high supports are described, such as an alternative version of the worksheet that includes textual evidence and a contemporary translation of the text embedded within the document, access to a character trait list, link to a literacy device resource, and audiobook. The staff handbook provides specific examples of how differentiation is incorporated through the content of the lesson, the process students use to access the lesson, or the product produced by students. Groups of students are provided with visual charts, graphic organizers, and writing prompts to ensure. As a result of curricula planning and refinement, a diversity of learners are supported are supported in cognitively engaging tasks.
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 or create assessments and grading policies are aligned with the school’s curricula and teacher assessment practices reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding.

Impact

Teachers provide actionable feedback to students regarding their progress and make adjustments to meet the learning needs of all students.

Supporting Evidence

- There is a schoolwide grading policy, aligned with the school's curricula. It is posted in the majority of classrooms, hallways and offices. All student work is evaluated on meeting course objectives using a five-point scale, and their process/work ethic is measured as either exemplary, satisfactory, or unsatisfactory. Progress grades throughout the year are reported to students using the rubric language. The staff also uses an online grading book that is updated weekly. There is also a schoolwide writing rubric that includes criteria for the organization of ideas, development of ideas, cohesion of ideas, style and tone, grammar, sentence structure and conventions, and spelling and punctuation. Examination of student work shows use of a five-point rubric for oral presentations. The rubric measures students’ use of eye contact, posture, volume and clarity, and their preparation, topic development, and comprehension. A science lab rubric evaluates students’ abstract, title and question, background research, claim/hypothesis, procedures, evidence/data/results, and conclusion. As result, students have a clear understanding of the school’s expectation for their work products and effort across grades and content areas.

- Performance tasks that assess multiple units of study are given in every subject in the spring and fall. An example task from a United States history course requires students to participate in a mock Supreme Court trial. In this task, students work in pairs and are responsible for deciding, arguing, developing, and supporting their arguments with evidence from the Constitution and other resources. Students wrote a position paper for their case and an opposition brief that outlines why their opponent’s argument is not supported by the Constitution. Students also make oral presentations of their arguments. A performance task from a computer science course requires students to develop an original program that has a character to introduce it to the user, and that meets criteria of having a clear purpose, incorporating a mathematical concept, and at least one higher order function, and uses the most elegant and efficient code possible. Students are also required to write a description of their program and describe the difficulties/opportunities they encountered in its development and how they resolved or incorporated them into the program. Performance tasks in addition to student work and other formative and summative assessments assist the school in measuring academic progress throughout the school year.

- Teachers provide ongoing feedback through the school’s online document-sharing site and during classroom instruction. An example of feedback includes, “Strong essay with convincing evidence and relevant outside research. Love the doubling up on the counterclaim too! What this needs is some proofreading for grammar/punctuation and also some clear transitions. Otherwise, great work!” Another example states, “If your argument is that Hamlet is feeling betrayed, would you want evidence of that or of the mother talking with him? What did he do out of reaction for feeling betrayed?” During classroom visits, there was evidence of checks for understanding; for instance, during a chemistry lab the teacher walked around the room and addressed misunderstandings about the expectations of the lab activities including how to calculate the mass of sugar in chewing gum.
Findings
School leaders support the development of teachers including those new to the profession with feedback from frequent cycles of classroom observation and analysis of student work and data. Feedback accurately captures strengths, challenges, and next steps using the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Impact
There is alignment of schoolwide instructional practices. Feedback articulates clear expectations for teacher practice, supports teacher development, and promotes professional growth for teachers.

Supporting Evidence

- Frequent cycles of classroom observation provide feedback utilizing the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Observation reports include specific language from the rubric, evidence from the classroom observation that supports the rating and next steps. For example, one observation feedback for 3b. (Using questioning and discussion techniques) included “Although your students were working independently, you were still able to engage them in a discussion and ask questions that provided appropriate cognitive challenge and required them to justify their thinking. As a next step, I suggest that you continue to conference with students and find a method to keep track of these conversations, so that you and they can track their growth. Systematizing this will only assist in the students’ ability to effectively self-reflect.” Another example of feedback includes, “You did not ask the students to apply strategic thinking or ask them to extend their thinking about the content you were providing. The students were asked to explain various terms, and after they answered, you would step in to elaborate for them (rather than following up with a probing question to have them elaborate). You did not allow for discussion in the class to be between student to student, but teacher to students. In preparing students to be college and career ready, it is important to teach the students how to elaborate on their answers, using evidence and opinions.” The feedback from school leaders communicates clear expectations for teacher practice.

- School leaders meet one-on-one with staff members every other week. A review of meeting notes provides evidence that school leaders provide coaching and feedback on how to best engage students in the learning, providing time for students to reflect on their learning, the importance of reinforcing protocols consistently, and holding students accountable. School leaders also discuss leadership and career advancement opportunities. Teachers reported that these conversations are ongoing, aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching and help to inform their practice.

- This is a PROSE school, and some teachers have selected peer evaluation as an observation option to support teacher development and professional growth. In addition, one of the teacher leaders functions as a peer collaborative educator and supports teachers through classroom visits and curriculum planning. The debrief notes from one of the observations from the peer collaborative education includes, “The lesson/unit is organized to advance student learning by strengthening their reading. Teacher tries to address the different modalities. It helps when they have a choice. Students are building questions. Have to look at the evidence from reading and using it to come up with different levels of questions- ‘interrogating the text.’ Students then had to make an inference about the characters. How do you build on this particular lesson?” Based on the supports and feedback from school leaders as well as teacher leaders and peers, the professional growth of teachers is supported.
Additional Finding

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

Findings
Grade level and department teacher teams systematically analyze key elements of teacher work including classroom practice and distributed leadership structures are embedded.

Impact
There is improvement in teacher practice and mastery of goals for students. There is affective teacher leadership and teachers are provided opportunities for professional growth as well as playing a role in key decisions such as the development and support of teachers through professional development.

Supporting Evidence

- During an observation of the social studies teacher team, members of the team followed a protocol for looking at student work with a focus on analyzing group work. Each member of the team was responsible for bringing copies of student work. Members of the team are assigned roles of facilitator, timekeeper and note-taker and these roles are rotated at each meeting. Copies of student work were rotated and reviewed by each member of the team with the team identifying patterns they noticed in the work samples. Some of the patterns noticed by the team included the use of clear roles and procedures for the students as they worked in groups, the use of citations in the assignments, the design of researched-based and document-based assignments. Questions raised by the team included, “How flexible can we make the grouping. How do you choose students for a group?” The analysis of student work and assignments has a positive impact on classroom practice and student work products.

- Teacher team leaders meet weekly with school leadership to share ideas and discuss how to support teachers and grade level teams during the school’s Professional Development time. Teachers reported that they are provided time each week to meet for department and grade-level planning and all documents are shared and updated through the school’s online document-sharing site. Several teachers are pursuing dual certification or participating in teacher leadership programs. Teachers also reported that teachers spend a week in orientation prior to the beginning of the school year that is planned and presented by teachers. When attending professional development outside of the building, teachers are expected to return and turnkey their learning with the rest of the staff. These opportunities support the growth of the staff in their professional practice.

- Teachers develop areas of focus for inquiry cycles and present during the school’s professional development time. An inquiry cycle for the tenth-grade team focused on peer mentoring and tracking the academic progress of students participating in peer-to-peer tutoring sessions as a mentor or mentee. Students who excel in particular subjects were selected and trained to tutor their peers, earning community service credit. The teacher team analyzed the data by content areas and presented their findings to the staff. They found that students who participated in peer-to-peer tutoring increased their rate of turning in assignments on time and participated more in class discussion and group work, but they were not satisfied with the attendance rate of students invited to attend mentoring sessions. The ninth-grade team focused on differentiating product and assessment through choice with a focus on differentiating content, process of instruction, and product and assessment. Based on their analysis of data and assignments that provide student choice, the team found a higher turn-in rate for assignments and higher quality work from students. This shared collaboration and inquiry support the school’s instructional focus and ensured teacher ownership in key decisions.