Quality Review Report

2017-2018

Rockaway Collegiate High School
High School 27Q351
100-00 Beach Channel Drive
Queens
NY 11694

Principal: Frances DeSanctis

Dates of Review:
March 6, 2018 - March 7, 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

Rockaway Collegiate 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>
<td></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>
</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>Developing</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>
</tr>
</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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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
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## Systems for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>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>Area of Celebration</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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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</table>

Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based collaborations across content areas and use student work and performance data to inform teacher practice.

Impact

The instructional and curricular capacity of teachers across the majority of content areas is strengthened and impacts the promotion of school goals.

Supporting Evidence

- All departments meet three times a week to work on lesson planning and test creation, inquiry work, analysis of student work and other data, and scoring assessments. They also participate in weekly whole-staff professional development that is developed and facilitated by a Staff Development Committee of teachers and school leaders. Based on interest, teachers also meet in teams with a specific focus, including how to support the work of first- and second-year teachers, special education, and student attendance. A review of agendas and minutes shows examples of their work. A math teacher responded during the teacher meeting that the common planning time helps teachers work as a department and gives them time to discuss co-planning. An English teacher discussed the department’s focus on vertical alignment and identifying skills across grade levels as they analyze data and trends across grades to inform their instruction. A science teacher said that they review the student performance data to determine what skills are lacking and meet with their assigned assistant principal to collaborate on how to best support their students.

- During the teacher team observation of the English department, the members of the team followed the agenda that had been determined by the members of the team. Members of the team have assigned roles including those of facilitator, recorder, and timekeeper. The facilitator reminded members of the team that during this cycle of inquiry, the team determined the need to scaffold the skill of analysis and commentary based on the Regents and Advanced Placement English Literature data. The team also reviewed the agenda and the team’s overall focus on vertical alignment and preparation for Advanced Placement and college. Using a protocol and a lesson rubric that focused on the lesson’s alignment to the standards, key shifts, instructional supports, and assessment, members of the team worked in pairs and reviewed a style analysis lesson, identifying gaps in the lesson and skills gaps students might encounter and how to best address those gaps. The pairs shared their findings with the group and the team discussed the use of supports and scaffolds and when to remove those scaffolds, as one of the biggest challenges students face is the transition from reading passages with teacher developed supports to reading passages on their own and determining for themselves which supports to use.

- At the beginning of the year, based on Measures of Student Learning (MOSL), the staff developed as their schoolwide instructional focus, “At Rockaway Collegiate High School, we are committed to actively developing students’ literacy skills through analytical research that cites evidence to supports arguments in discussions and in writing tasks.” Each department team then developing a goal around literacy for their specific content. For example, the math department is focused on students’ analysis of data in mathematical applications and incorporating writing and annotation and the English and social studies departments are focused on using a common rubric when evaluating writing. Teachers shared that through the examination of student work, midterms, and finals, they are able to monitor the progress of their students in alignment with the schoolwide instructional focus on literacy and more department specific literacy goals, positively impacting the school’s progress toward their instructional goals.
# Area of Focus

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

Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to the school’s instructional focus that is informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. However, student work products reflect uneven student participation.

## Impact

Teaching practices across classrooms do not yet fully reflect the school’s beliefs about how students learn best. Teaching practices result in uneven student engagement in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstration of higher-order thinking skills by all learners.

## Supporting Evidence

- School leaders identified the development of students’ literacy skills through standards-aligned written tasks and discussion as the school’s instructional focus. However, across grades and courses this practice is inconsistent with teacher-centered instruction in some classes. In a geometry class, questions and answers to teacher-asked questions were all directed back to the teacher. In the same class, students worked independently on a problem and were not given an opportunity to turn to a partner and discuss their work. In contrast, in a twelfth-grade English class, students worked in pairs as they revised their abstracts referring to the abstract checklist and rubric, with the teacher clarifying the difference between revising and editing their draft.

- In a Living Environment class, students were sitting in groups of three to four students reading a passage about immune systems and vaccines and completing a graphic organizer that asks students to identify who or what the passage is about, what is the most important information about the who or what, and to write a summary with the fewest number of words using complete sentences. Although students were sitting in groups, the majority of students were working independently and there was no evidence of assigned group roles for students. In a chemistry class, students were sitting in pairs and working on constructing models of polar and non-polar molecules. When the teacher brought the class together to check for understanding however, there were primarily choral responses to the teacher-directed questions and the teacher moved on to the next question after the first student responded to the question, not allowing wait time for other students to respond.

- In a Global Studies class that included English Language Learners, students were sitting in a horseshoe facing the front of the class. During the lesson, the teacher called on several students to take turns reading out loud sections of a passage about Pax Mongolica. Students were then directed to sit with a partner and respond to the questions written next to the passage. While the teachers circulated the room to monitor the progress of students, few students annotated the passage or had written their responses when the teacher brought them back together as a class to review the responses. Several students waited for the teacher to explain the answer before writing their responses down. Overall, teacher practices across classrooms demonstrate uneven student engagement in challenging tasks.
Findings

School leaders and staff ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate instructional shifts. Academic tasks emphasize higher-order skills across the majority of grade levels and content areas.

Impact

The curricula and academic tasks support college and career readiness skills and student development of rigorous habits and higher-order thinking skills.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of lesson plans across content areas revealed that in-class learning emphasizes rigorous habits and higher-order thinking skills such as the analysis of complex text. An eleventh-grade English Language Arts (ELA) lesson includes prompts for students to frame their small group written discussion such as, “A key part of an author’s style is word choice (diction). How do the different meanings of the word alien used in the third and fourth paragraphs (lines 23-42) contribute to the power of Noda’s essay? (Analyze)” “How might Noda have had one purpose writing this essay for herself and another in writing for a broader audience? (Draw Conclusion)” A geometry lesson plan mastery objective states, “by the end of the lesson, the students should be able to discover the relationship between the side length of special right triangles and apply them to right triangle problems,” and the language objective states, “by the end of the lesson, the students should be able to summarize their findings by writing a sentence about the relationship of the sides.”

- Curricular documents demonstrate evidence of alignment to the Common Core and the integration of the instructional shifts. In a unit plan for chemistry, the identified skills students are working toward include being able to differentiate between ionic bonding and covalent bonding by providing examples, explain why chemical bonds exist at all, draw Lewis dot structures for different atoms, ions, and molecules, differentiate between polar and nonpolar covalent bond by providing examples, and differentiate between hydrogen bonding and dipole-dipole attraction by providing examples. In a global studies unit focused on the theme of political powers and achievements, “students will be able to examine the location and relative size of postclassical states and empires at the height of their power including the Abbasid Caliphate, Byzantine Empire, Mongol Empire, and Song and Tang dynasties, noting relative position, power within their regions, and the areas they influenced. Students will explore the spread and evolution of technology and learning from East Asia to Western Europe via the Middle East (e.g. gunpowder, ship technology, navigation, printing, and paper).

- Curricular documents emphasize higher-order skills across grades and subjects. In a lesson plan for tenth-grade English, modifications to support access to higher-order skills include semi-heterogeneous grouping based on student progress with stronger writers grouped with more struggling writers. The lesson also describes the use of teacher modeling of text analysis and sentence stems to support students in the construction of their text-analysis response. In an integrated algebra lesson plan focused on modeling with quadratic functions, struggling students are given a copy of the step-by-step model for solving real-world problems, while advanced learners will work on high-order thinking questions, and each group will consist of advanced learners and struggling learners.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<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 assessments, rubrics and grading policies in alignment with the school’s curricula and use these assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades and content areas.

Impact

Students are supported in their academic progress through actionable feedback and the teachers’ use of assessments results in adjustments in curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- An examination of rubrics indicates alignment with the school’s instructional focus. One example of a rubric used by both English Language Arts and social studies to evaluate analytical writing focuses on the criteria of content and analysis; command of evidence; coherence, organization, and style, and control of convention. A notebook rubric used in a chemistry class outlines the expected criteria including the quality of notes taken, written reflection, and organization of work products. Consequently, students are supported in their academic towards goals across grade levels and content areas.

- Evidence of teacher feedback on student work includes glows and grows. One example states, “glows: great use of background information, you address the task precisely and accurately,” and “glows: incorporate modern day events, and make connections more relevant.” During the student interview, students shared that in most of their classrooms, they received written feedback on their assignments. One student stated about the feedback they received, “I need to include the disadvantages, the counterclaim, not just the advantages.” Students also shared they can go to peers to provide feedback and stated, “Help your peers, help the person next to you, don’t be afraid to make a mistake.” As a result of feedback from teachers and peers, students can articulate their next steps in meeting the school’s goals for student progress.

- The school handbook also provides evidence of the school’s grading policy that is communicated to staff, students, and parents. The grading policy is also accessible to students and parents on the school’s online grading system. Teachers are expected to update grades weekly and each department determines its specific grading policy within the ranges of the schoolwide policy. The four main categories within the schoolwide grade policy include summative and formative assessments, classwork, projects, and homework. The grading policy also states that students will be given, “opportunities to circumnavigate different types of text, engage in evidence-based writing using key vocabulary, and instructed on how to show conceptual understanding and fluency in problem solving.” Common teacher-developed assessments are developed and analyzed during department meetings and are used in math and ELA throughout the year including the beginning-of-year Measures of Student Learning (MOSL), midterms, and finals to measure student progress.
Findings
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the staff and provide training to support those expectations. Teacher teams have established a culture for learning that communicates high expectations for all students.

Impact
Staff are supported by a system of accountability and school supports that prepares students for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders conduct frequent classroom visits and provide feedback utilizing the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Staff members also receive a staff handbook that includes day-to-day professional responsibilities, norms and protocols for department meetings and professional development, and schoolwide instructional focus and classroom expectations that address the needs and learning styles of all students. Teachers shared that they are expected each week during their department common planning time to look at student data and upload minutes, agendas, and shared files through the school’s online drive that is reviewed by the school leadership each week.

- School leaders have established expectations for the information that needs to be included in a written unit plan, including the sequence of learning, how the learning makes a real-world connection in a culminating task, describing what learning is to be assessed, and describing how the sequence of formative assessment activities lead to the learning and performance of the culminating task. Professional learning is provided throughout the year to support the communicated expectations and developed by the staff development team with staff representation across the school.

- The school’s culture for learning consistently communicates high expectations that help prepare students for their next level of education. Students participate in parent-teacher conferences twice a year and receive progress reports and report cards throughout the year. Students are also able to check their academic progress through an online grading program. Students reported that they are prepared for the next grade level and are enrolled in Advanced Placement (AP) and College Now courses. A student stated, “It’s encouraging to see an AP course on my schedule.” Students also participate in standardized test preparation courses and attend college field trips and workshops.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<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 provide effective feedback that accurately captures strengths and next steps for teacher practice that articulates clear expectations for teacher practice through frequent cycles of classroom observations and analysis of student work/data.

**Impact**

Teachers are supported in their instructional practice and reflective growth in alignment with the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

**Supporting Evidence**

- During the teacher meeting, teachers shared that during professional development sessions there is an open forum where teachers can raise concerns. Teachers also indicated they meet with their assigned assistant principal throughout the year and receive feedback on their instructional practice and professional goals. All teachers completed a goal-setting template at the beginning of the year. This template includes looking at the observation data and identifying areas of strength and areas for growth and developing SMART goals based on the student performance data. Teachers identified a schoolwide goal to focus on, one example stating, “Designing coherent instructional practices that incorporate differentiated learning activities in order to support the diverse needs of ALL students.” In addition, teachers developed a personalized professional goal in Domain Four of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. One example states, “Continued activity with the department meetings to create a coherent English Department Curriculum and the Staff Development Committee to facilitate professional development sessions that share best practices and increase student achievement in our school.

- School leadership indicated that at the beginning of the year, a round of informal observations were conducted of all teachers, that they met with all teachers before the second round of observations and are focused on providing additional support to the new teachers on the staff. They also review student performance data and use it to inform staff development. In addition, members of the school’s administrative team have scheduled when they conduct informal and formal observations for their assigned teachers as evidenced in written observation schedules. As a result, teacher practice and student achievement is positively impacted by frequent cycles of classroom observation based on the analysis of student data and identifying areas of strengths and next steps in teacher development.

- Teacher observation reports include specific language from the Danielson Framework for Teaching rubric that supports the rating along with actionable next steps. For example, feedback in one report was, “As a next step we reflected on this particular lesson, plan for ways for all students to understand how to derive a central idea from a text, to show their understanding of important concepts, and to determine individual learning.” Another example stated, “To further push student self-assessment, it would be great to incorporate a writing checklist and an explicit writing rubric so that students can monitor where they are and what needs to be included in their writing.” Consequently, teachers are provided clear expectations and next steps for continued growth in their teaching practice.