Quality Review Report

2017-2018

Flushing High School
High school 25Q460
35-01 Union Street
Queens
NY 11354

Principal: Ignazio Accardi

Dates of Review:
May 8, 2018 - May 9, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Jennifer Eusanio
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

Flushing 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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</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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</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>
</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 Celebration</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

## Systems for Improvement

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
<td>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>Additional Finding</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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</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

<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 consistently communicate high expectations to staff around using practices that support and increase intellectual engagement for all learners. School staff continuously establishes a culture for learning that promotes college and career readiness for students.

Impact

Staff members receive ongoing support on rigorous planning, to which they are held accountable. Support structures establish a culture where students are aware of how to prepare for their futures.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders communicate their instructional expectations, via a variety of ways, towards ensuring teachers are planning daily standards-based lessons to include rigorous tasks with appropriate scaffolds. A schoolwide instructional expectations document for the spring term contains this focus, as well as others, on fostering student engagement, student-facing learning objectives, and standards-based task planning. Similarly, a list of supervisory expectations are provided for assistant principals to ensure they are holding staff accountable for high-quality instruction. Other school-level documents provide a definition for rigor, grouping, and scaffolding to support the planning of related professional learning. Furthermore, teachers reported that school leaders communicate instructional expectations through schoolwide professional learning, which they shared was helpful towards improving their planning process. A review of the professional learning plan reflects a yearlong weekly focus on lesson planning to support teachers on an ongoing basis in developing effective aims and learning objectives, and uses the school’s definition of rigor to build tasks and increase student outcomes.

- School leaders engage in department and grade-level walkthroughs to provide teachers support and feedback to help them reach the school’s instructional expectations. One post-walkthrough feedback reminds teachers to align do now and warm activities to the Regents exam questions. Additionally, the feedback reminds teachers of the importance of planning with rigor in mind and that certain supports are included in their pedagogy, such as the use of annotation strategies to closely examine texts and using a Venn diagram to illustrate differences when completing a task. Another post-walkthrough comment reminds teachers of the need to use Regents-aligned questions to help students prepare for their upcoming exams by including rubrics, and references the use in annotation of questions and use of scaffolds as helpful tools. Furthermore, the feedback serves as a reminder of schoolwide instructional resources that can be used to improve their practices. Consequently there are strong efforts in maintaining a culture for learning across classes.

- The principal has made many concerted efforts to visit classes to emphasize college and career readiness to students and encourage them to attend Regents preparation in support of meeting these expectations. Students are provided with Are You Green? reports to help them determine what they need to graduate, which entails credit accumulation, Regents, and attendance information. Additionally, students receive support from guidance counselors and mentors to guide them in their next steps towards college readiness. Course offerings and grade-level presentations as well as college office informational sessions on financial aid and arranged college tours, are building student awareness on the post-secondary process. During an interview, students shared that the supports are helping them become further prepared for graduation.
Area of Focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rating:</td>
<td>Developing</td>
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Findings

Across classes, rubrics and grading policies have yet to fully align with the school’s curricula and instructional expectations. Although teachers check for understanding, there are inconsistent in-the-moment self-assessment practices.

Impact

Uneven assessment practices lead to limited feedback for students towards helping them improve their grades. In-class adjustments using formative assessment techniques have yet to ensure all students’ learning needs are met.

Supporting Evidence

- In some classes, student work reflects limited teacher feedback, lacking clear next steps to help in improving the grade. For one essay, the teacher focuses her feedback on how the student is choosing and articulating literary devices, specifically those connected to imagery and setting. The teacher shares that the student should be mindful of the number of devices used in the essay and advises the student to focus on a small number in order to make the writing more focused and linked to the central idea. Additionally, the teacher points to specific parts of the essay where elaboration of each device could be further developed. However, in a review of student work from other classes, feedback did not provide students next steps on how to improve their work. Furthermore, grading policies across all departments have yet to reflect alignment to college readiness standards, and at times, grades on student work do not mirror the criteria in the rubric. One text analysis exposition essay reflects two different performance levels, one aligned and the other not aligned to the assigned rubric and provides a percentage grade of 95. Although one of the performance levels indicates that the student received the highest grade in analysis, the feedback asks the student to clearly explain and elaborate on their ideas.

- Additionally, students shared that their teachers provide verbal or written feedback, yet responses were limited to focus areas and no clear next steps for using tools or strategies to enhance their grade. After reviewing her rubric and the teacher’s feedback, one student shared that in order to obtain a higher grade she added more evidence to support her counterclaim and that her teacher advised her to review her notes with that lens and add to her draft. This eventually led the student to obtain the highest grade on the rubric. Yet, another student shared that his feedback and rubric stated that he needed to include additional analysis in his work, yet was led to think that he needed to just cite evidence. Other students had similar comments reflecting needed areas of improvement yet with no clear next steps to help them obtain a stronger grade.

- Across classes, teachers were actively involved in checking student understanding yet adjustments to increase the number of students meeting the learning outcomes were uneven. In an English class, the teacher supported individual students or partnerships using questioning as a means to adjust instruction and reteach the concept referencing information previously provided during the whole class lesson. This led those specific students to rethink their writing response and revise their answers. During a math class, the teacher responded to some students by just providing the answer, a practice seen across several classes. Furthermore, in-class self-assessment practices were viewed in some classes where students used a rubric to rethink and revise their written responses. Yet, students reported this was only a practice in certain classes. A review of student work reflects the use of rubrics or checklists for self-assessment as a common practice only in English Language Arts (ELA) or social studies classes.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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Findings

Teachers are beginning to develop curricula and tasks which emphasize rigorous habits based on the school’s definition and framework for critical thinking. Planning documents are in the process of reflecting the use of data and work by multiple student subgroups.

Impact

The school’s curricula is beginning to reflect rigorous tasks with assessment-based adjustments geared to support all subgroups in critical thinking and cognitive engagement.

Supporting Evidence

- An English lesson plan contains a task where students are required to determine how advanced technology is ubiquitous. The task begins with students taking notes from a video and answering four questions aligned to skills such as recalling facts, making comparisons, and considering the advantages and disadvantages of artificial intelligence. However, the culminating activity asks students to write a five-sentence paragraph and include only inferences using the information collected from the video, which limits students’ ability to thinking critically.

- In a science lesson plan, students are required to determine the location of an epicenter. In the task, students are asked to calculate time differences and are given step-by-step directions to determine the distance on a graph. However, the plan contains no questions to ensure students are thinking beyond finding the differences of calculations. Additionally, although the lesson plan contains a section for differentiation and grouping, there is no clear indication of how data is used to form groups and how the group tasks are adjusted as a result.

- In a geometry lesson, the aim focuses on students understanding the parts of a circle to eventually lead to several performance objectives including understanding certain concepts, distinguishing between arc degrees and length and solving algebraic and numeric examples with central angles. However, questions in the lesson plan are limited to recall, application and making comparisons on the specific figures such as, “What is the relationship between a diameter and a radius?” Additionally, there is no indication of how data or student work is used to differentiate the tasks to provide access for multiple learners.

- In a Spanish lesson plan, the learning objectives reflect that students will be interpreting written and spoken language on a variety of topics to engage in conversations and exchange opinions. However, in reviewing some of the planned tasks, some of the prompts ask students to list what body parts would possibly get hurt if they were playing soccer or how an allergy would affect them or someone in their house. These prompts limit students’ ability to formulate critical ideas or conclusions related to strategic thinking and reasoning.
Additional Finding

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

Pedagogy is beginning to reflect rigorous instructional practices connected to the instructional shifts and quality student engagement. Scaffolds and strategies are beginning to provide students with entry points into the curricula.

Impact

Missed opportunities in teacher practices and the lack of use of key strategies result in uneven levels of thinking as evidenced in student work products and discussions.

Supporting Evidence

- The school’s instructional focus states: “If teachers plan standards-based daily lessons to include rigorous tasks with appropriate scaffolds, then students will produce work products that will prepare them for college and careers.” Teaching practices connected to this focus include the quality student grouping and increasing the rigor of questions in tasks to foster high-level discussion and student engagement. In a sophomore Global History class, students worked on understanding the question, “How do empires gain, consolidate, and maintain power?” In attempting to unpack the question before deciding on their responses, a small group of students led a small discussion to help others in the class distinguish between the terms gain, consolidate, and maintain, which connects to ELA shifts on developing academic vocabulary. Additionally, when defining the terms, the student leaders asked others to provide examples connected to what they are learning about the Songhai Empire. At times students debated responses. However, only some classes demonstrated similar practices in fostering student-to-student engagement.

- In a United States (US) history class, students were seated in groups where they were all provided with the same task to conduct a think-pair-share activity using a document which contained maps, a text, and a set of questions. Although students were provided with a tool sheet on target reading and annotation strategies and a structure for writing a paragraph, a review of student responses only reflected recall skills. During the final summation, when asked a higher-level question on whether the US should have gotten involved in the Vietnam War, student responses were limited to summary of cause and effect and providing facts. In an Integrated Co-Teaching Global History class, students were to complete a graphic organizer using a short text. Students were provided definitions of a set of terms with endured understandings and a set of guided notes as a reference. However, student responses were limited to using one text to answer one cause and effect question, use context clues to define terms and list an endured understanding. Although this was considered a group activity, students primarily worked on their own, and their written responses did not reflect reasoning or high-levels of thinking. In an Earth Science class, student responses were limited relative to a lab on P and S waves. During the lesson, some students supported each other in answering questions in the lab, yet others did not fully engage with the activity and were not provided with appropriately leveled discussion tools or other strategies to support them in responding.

- In some classes, teaching was mostly teacher-directed, limiting opportunities for student-to-student discussion and students fully engaging in tasks. At times, questions to engage students in rigorous thinking were not provided by the teacher. In a Spanish class, student engagement was limited to a few students and conversations were primarily led by the teacher. In a geometry class, teacher-directed questions did not allow for student-to-student sharing or discussion. Furthermore, only some students engaged in an activity to determine the description of points on a circle while others waited for the teacher to provide the response.
Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: | 4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision | Rating: Proficient |

Findings

School leaders support the development of all teachers with effective feedback connected to planning rigorous tasks and increasing student engagement, which includes commendations and recommendations with next steps based on the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*.

Impact

Feedback is used to articulate clear expectations on the instructional focus to support teachers’ growth and increase schoolwide planning and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders engage in ongoing weekly cycles of observations of staff members in their assigned departments for both new and experienced teachers. Observation feedback that is provided within two days includes a debriefing aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and references student work products and data as a way to determine student progress and provide needed support for teacher growth. One school leader noted that data is essential during observations to understand student groupings and to serve as a basis of feedback to a teacher. A review of observation reports reflects school leaders including observations of student group responses to rate discussion protocols, or focusing on cooperative learning strategies such as a round table activity to ensure students at each table contribute to the conversation. In another recommendation, the school leader advises that students bounce ideas off one another by using sentence starters or repeating their classmates’ responses, to maintain a focused conversation. Teachers reported that feedback from observation has supported their professional growth and understanding of effective instructional practices.

- Across each department, teachers receive post-observation feedback in the form of commendations and recommendations with suggestions for instruction. In the social studies department, the school leader commended a teacher’s utilization and planning using schoolwide curricula and used a variety of documents with multiple visual components. This highlighted area is connected to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* component on content and pedagogy. As a recommendation, the school leader reminded the teacher to use an annotation station to further student engagement with the documents. Additionally, the school leader reinforced the increase of higher-order thinking questions to further challenge students in the task. Similarly, feedback in other departments reflects reinforcing the use of rigorous questions and discussion protocols that connect with the school’s framework on effective planning and instruction.

- A review of post-observation reports shows that the majority of the documents remind teachers of the school’s instructional focus on planning “standards-based daily lessons to include rigorous tasks with appropriate scaffolds.” In one post-observation report, a recommendation suggests the teacher consider a more rigorous question than the one used during the lesson to help students make historical connections versus asking students recall questions about specific World War I acts. This would help students further understand the context of the time period. In another report, a school leader recommends that the teacher provides examples of possible central ideas and non-central ideas for students to use as a resource. Observation feedback that connects to the school’s focus on rigor is increasing teaching practices in planning effective instruction.
## Additional Finding

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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 consistently engaged in structured, department, and grade-level teacher teams where student work and data are analyzed for a target group of students.

**Impact**

Teacher teams promote the achievement of the school's goals connected to the instructional shifts and Common Core Learning Standards to strengthen the team’s instructional capacity, and increase the progress of targeted students towards a set of goals.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teacher teams have shifted across the year from engaging in just a Smaller Learning Community (SLC) team structure to grade-level subject-specific teams. Teams conduct Regents and strategy-based inquiry cycles reviewing mock Regents data and student performance tasks to determine areas of strength and growth. These cycles are leading to new teaching strategies which are shared among the team. Across several teams, the text analysis skill and inferring were areas in which teachers felt students needed further support. Teachers reported that the use of certain graphic organizers that emphasize paragraph analysis, and the use of certain sentence starters are strategies they are using to support students and increase their outcomes, which is connected to the school’s goals on increasing the number students in year two and three who are on track for graduation.

- During a grade nine math team, teachers conducted a review of an item analysis report for a baseline exam to identify possible misconceptions and determine which corresponding skills, including sub sets that could be used for their student tracker chart. After discussing the performance of targeted students, and reviewing the skills assessed, and reviewing the trends on the data tracker, the math teachers determined that students needed additional support in understanding inequalities. Teachers decided that they needed to work with students on interpreting inequalities and their use of graphic calculators, more specifically on the zoom function, switching table functions. One newly-created activity to support student learning is to have students engage in a scavenger hunt using the calculator and explore the different ways they can use it to identify solutions, thus an activity connected to the school’s instructional focus.

- In a ninth grade literacy team meeting, teachers brought their data analysis of a baseline exam administered during the second inquiry cycle. After reviewing the analysis of student work and data from the exam, they discussed and agreed upon a variety of ways they would support their targeted students using ELA scaffolded tasks and strategies to improve paragraph writing skills. To ensure students understand how to use analysis in their writing, which was a growth area, some of the teachers’ action steps include students restating the evidence they found by putting it into their own words, providing guided questions to support the analysis and using the author’s view as a model. A review of spring ELA data from the first cycle reveals that students are progressing in using annotation techniques and more sophisticated vocabulary in their writing.