Quality Review Report

2017-2018

Voyages Preparatory
High school 24Q744
45-10 94th Street
Queens
NY 11373

Principal: Nicholas Bleiberg

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

Lead Reviewer: Carlos Perez
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

Voyages Preparatory serves students in grade 9 through grade 9. 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>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</td>
</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>
</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>
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<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>
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</tbody>
</table>
### School Quality Ratings continued

#### 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>Area of Celebration</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>
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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>Area of Focus</td>
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<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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

| Quality Indicator: | 1.4 Positive Learning Environment | Rating: | Well Developed |

Findings

The school’s approach to culture building includes a theory of action and a wide array of structures, including an advisory program in place throughout the school.

Impact

There is an inclusive, accepting, and positive school culture that meaningfully involves student voice along with structures that allow staff to know all students. This culture promotes students’ positive personal and academic behaviors.

Supporting Evidence

- Staff supports the social and emotional needs of all students in a wide variety of ways. All staff members firmly believe that before any instruction can take place, the social and emotional needs of students must be addressed. This is most notably accomplished through the school’s advisory program. During advisory every student has opportunities to sit and speak with their advisor and review their academic progress. As important, they discuss any personal issues that may interfere with their academic progress. Every student that was interviewed shared the positive impact of the advisory program. All students feel it is like having “one-to-one” coaching. Many students shared that if it weren't for the support they receive from their teachers they would never be as successful. One student expressed that in her last school whenever she passed a class or test, “nothing would happen.” However, she went on to share “Here they practically throw you a party when you pass something.” Every student believes this school’s environment is the most supportive of any of the schools they have attended.

- All students are encouraged to have voice and are taught how to be heard. Teaching students self-advocacy skills is a priority for all school leaders and staff members. Staff shared how most of the students that attend Voyages Prep, were not able to communicate effectively in the past. They shared that they are taught, “to be heard” in a way that is non-confrontational and respectful; something that many of the students explained they were not able to do in the past. Students now know how to advocate for their grades, their attendance, the college application process, and other things that affect them personally. For example, during the Quality Review, students came to see the principal several times to discuss a variety of issues. It was apparent they are comfortable approaching the principal.

- Staff members know all students by name and are familiar with each student’s past history. Upon being accepted into the school, staff members meet to learn about the student’s past relating to their academic, social, and psychological profile. All staff firmly believes that students are key stakeholders and are the most important part of the school. Students shared how even teachers whom they have never had as a classroom teacher know them by name. They expressed that this gives them a great feeling. Students also shared how “it is great to be in a school where staff members care so much about you.” Students consistently receive text messages, emails, and phone calls from teachers, especially if they miss a class. Texts messages are sent at the beginning of the class when teachers do not see them, asking them where they are, and if they are going to be absent. Teachers remind absent students that the work they are missing can be found on the Google Classroom page.
Area of Focus

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

Findings
School leaders support the development of all teachers through effective cycles of classroom observations. Actionable feedback and clear next steps are provided teachers regarding their practice.

Impact
Schoolwide instructional practices are elevated and feedback articulates clear expectations and supports for teacher practice. However, in the vast majority of reports the feedback does not as yet align with teachers' professional goals.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders offer teachers feedback that accurately captures the events of the lesson, highlights the teacher’s strengths, and offers clear actionable and timely next steps. For example, teacher feedback on one observation report included commending the teacher for creating an engaging and fun lesson that included an opening question that was simple, challenging and of high interest to the students. The principal offered next steps that included incorporating peer-to-peer discussion protocols when questioning students. A second observation report conducted by the school’s assistant principal also highlighted the teacher’s strengths and provided specific steps to implement regarding strengthening student discussions; one of her professional goals. However, feedback that is aligned to teacher goals such as this, as of yet was not evidenced in the vast majority of the observation reports.

- All teachers are offered support by at least one instructional coach and or a support member from the school’s community-based organization. Teachers stressed how effective the professional development (PD) has been. According to all teachers, the school principal advocates for all teachers to attend PD and visit other transfer schools. Teachers support each other most notably through the school’s lesson study program and the peer intervisitations. Teachers take turns and volunteer to be the subject of a lesson study cycle. Teachers sit together as a team and review the teacher’s lesson plan, they offer feedback on the plan, observe the teacher as a group, and then reconvene to offer feedback on the lesson. One teacher stated, “I have learned more about teaching here in the last 5 years than I have in my entire 15 year career.”

- In addition to the support received from school leaders, teacher finds support from their colleagues. For example, teachers visit each other’s classes on a regular basis, and this has led to improved instruction throughout the school. Teachers support each other’s creativity and regularly share their innovative ideas and practices. During the Quality Review, teachers were seen visiting each other throughout the day, taking notes and then discussing the lesson during their lunch period and inquiry time. Teachers believe strongly that sharing with each other is what helps their growth and effectiveness. The school is a place conducive for learning. As a result of the teacher teamwork literacy strategies were implemented to support math instruction throughout the school.
Additional Finding

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

All staff ensure that curricula is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts, most notably writing across the curricula. In addition, academic tasks for all students emphasize rigor and high levels of thinking.

Impact

There is curricular coherence across the grades and subject areas, which promote college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- Common core alignment was visible throughout planning documents reviewed. An algebra lesson plan was aligned to math standards where students create equations and inequalities in one variable in order to use them to solve problems. In addition, students will write a function that describes a relationship between two quantities. An English Language Arts (ELA) lesson plan engaged students in being able to effectively cite text-based evidence as well as draw inferences from the text. In this lesson, students will use anchor texts to be annotate in order for students to identify key details. The lesson plan also included formative assessment methods that assured that students would share with the teacher and peers the reasons for the sections of the reading that they highlighted.

- Planning documents exhibited how all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities, would engage in rigorous activities. For example, a United States History lesson plan has students working in groups of four where they will answer essential questions on immigration that must be answered using evidence from documents. A medical insights lesson exhibited high-level questions in order for students to explain how the variety of biochemical processes that happen within the human body correlate with its ability to perform processes critical for their survival. In an algebra lesson plan students will create linear functions when given a verbal situation requiring students to be able to explain how one change in a situation can affect a graph.

- There is evidence of coherent planning across all grades and subject areas, most notably seen in the planning for student discussion. A social studies plan addressing propaganda through the ages, planned for student discussion in groups in order for students to work together and discuss the lessons’ essential question, “Should propaganda be used to defeat your enemies.” A science lesson plan on maintaining homeostasis included planning a quiz game that required students to work in teams in order to answer a variety of questions pertaining to the aim of the lesson.
**Additional Finding**

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

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the school’s belief that students learn best when the content is connected to real world situations and they engage in discourse.

**Impact**

Student work products reflect high levels of thinking and participation by all students.

**Supporting Evidence**

- One of the beliefs that is reflected across classrooms is that students learn best when given opportunities to have text-based student-to-student discussions. For example, during an algebra lesson that required students to create a linear graph when given verbal situations and functions, students worked in pairs in order to explain how one change in a situation can affect the graph. Each pair of students was assigned a particular situation and they had to create the change they would like to see in the graph. During the lesson, students could be overheard discussing the proposed changes and explaining to each other why they posed those particular changes. During a sociology lesson, students engaged in an independent reading exercise using an interview with Dalton Conley. Students took part in group-discussions and were observed citing text-based evidence and using academic vocabulary.

- Many of the student writing examples evidenced rigor and high levels of thinking. One sample of student writing addressing civic activism, was clear, articulate and cited numerous sources in order to support the point of view of the student. In a writing sample students addressed the question, “What were some of the challenges that the Irish faced as they adapted to life in the 5 points neighborhoods?” Student responses included how the Irish immigrants left a rural lifestyle because their nation lacked modern industry and faced challenges which included disease due to lack of sewage systems and clean running water. The discourse students engaged in required critical thinking skills. Students consistently used academic vocabulary and regularly cited text-based evidence in order to support their argument or claim.

- There is an additional belief that students learn best when presented with curriculum that is relevant to them personally or in some way connects with them socially or politically. During an economics class, students were engaged in a lesson that explained the car loan process. Students were tasked with selecting a vehicle that fits their budget and analyzing the correct car loan that best fits their budget. Students demonstrated how to calculate a monthly payment using a calculator, based on their down payment, projected interest rate, and loan term. During the school’s advisory period, students were engaged in conversations centered on the dangers of violence taking place when dating. During the conversations all students had opportunities to share their thoughts and discuss evidence of the warning signs of dating violence from the reading.
**Additional Finding**

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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**Findings**

All teachers use rubrics and assessments aligned to the school’s curricula and offer a clear portrait towards student mastery. A wide range of common assessments is administered to track student progress towards goals in addition to weekly conference meetings with all students every Wednesday.

**Impact**

Teachers provide students with meaningful and actionable feedback and use assessment results to adjust curriculum to ensure all students demonstrate increased mastery.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Feedback to students that is meaningful, actionable and offers a clear picture of how to achieve mastery. For example, feedback on a student's science assignment praised the student for using “specific behaviors of asteroids and comets” in order to explain what was seen in the lesson. The teacher suggested the student expand on that idea in order to help him identify the differences between a comet and an asteroid. The same assignment had a second post-it offering additional feedback on day two further laying out what was needed in order to be at or close to mastery. During the meeting with students, they shared how all teachers make the feedback “specifically about them." Students were quick to explain that teachers don’t just write things like “good job and check your spelling." The feedback is specific, and addresses what was done wrong on an assignment. One student explained, “Without my teachers' feedback, I would not be able to do better.”

- Teachers meet with students every Wednesday in order to review work, check academic progress, and offer students feedback. Students shared that these meetings have positive impact on their work. Students value these weekly meetings and believe it helps them consistently check their progress in each class. During these meetings, students are able to tell teachers what they need or are missing in a particular subject in order to be successful. A student stated, “Wednesday is not just about the teacher telling us how we are doing, we tell our teachers what we need to help us pass.” Additionally, a teacher explained that Wednesday is a time when revision takes place. Teachers work with students on specific projects and students bring their revisions in for review. Teachers work one-on-one with students to make effective revisions. Revised work is brought to the meeting the following week and reviewed once again. Recent data indicates that this practice has helped increase the number of students graduating with an advanced regent’s diploma.

- Teachers offer students feedback through the frequent conferencing and one-on-one meetings with students and student groups. During classroom visits, teachers gave an abundance of verbal feedback to students. For example, in a math lesson the teacher advised a student to make sure that his graph looked somewhat similar to the exemplar provided. During a science class, the teacher told the student “You did a good job in identifying the structure but how do you think it relates to the function?” During a United States History class, the teacher met with students and offered feedback regarding their claims, which targeted the theme of immigration. One student’s feedback related to her using her own experience in stating her argument. The teacher pushed her thinking by asking the student to answer the following question, “How would you use this when speaking to someone who believes that all immigrants should be sent back to their country?”
Additional Finding

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

The majority of teachers engage in professional, inquiry-based collaborations that examine student work and evaluate pedagogical practices. Throughout the school, there are leadership structures in place.

Impact

Teachers' instructional capacity is strengthened, and the Common Core is promoted throughout all subject areas and grades. Teachers have a voice in making decisions that positively affect student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers in the school are involved in regular professional inquiry cycles that examine student assessment, work products, and teachers' pedagogical practice. During the teacher inquiry meeting, teachers examined three identical pieces of a student's math work and utilized the Collaborative Analysis of Student Work Products protocol to guide their thinking. The meeting allowed the presenting teacher time to share the student's goals and what instructional strategies the teacher used to help the student reach those goals. During the meeting, all teachers had many opportunities to analyze the work in order to gauge the effect of the instructional strategies and why they felt the student is performing the way he is. All teachers then suggested to the presenter reasonable next short-term goals for the student and instructional strategies the teacher may want to consider in future lessons.

- According to school leaders, every teacher in the school is a leader. Teachers act as leaders by taking on tasks and projects that contribute to school improvement. For example, one of the teachers on staff volunteered to design a program that would take the place of the school's online grading system. As a result, the program was implemented and the school was able to reassign resources set aside for the original program to another budget line. Teachers take on leadership roles as members of the school's attendance team, school's leadership team, and by turn keying professional learning. Additionally, teachers have taken the lead in running and designing the school's professional recording studio, leading the school's podcast and designing the “early comers” program that rewards students who come to school on time with a pass to leave the school campus during their lunch period.

- Teachers shared that their instructional capacity has been strengthened and they believe this is directly connected to their teamwork. For example, a math teacher shared how the math department has always been a close-knit group but the creation of the lesson study groups has allowed learning to happen across subject areas. Teachers expressed that it has changed their mindset from being critical of each other to welcoming their peers into their classes and looking forward to the feedback they provide. The school’s principal stated, “I’ve never seen a group of teachers work so unbelievably well together.”