Quality Review Report

2017-2018

Theatre Arts Production Company School
Secondary School 10X225
2225 Webster Avenue
Bronx
NY 10457

Principal: Ron Link

Dates of Review:
March 13, 2018 - March 14, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Phyllis Siwiec
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

Theatre Arts Production Company School serves students in grade 6 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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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></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>Additional Finding</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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</table>
### School Culture

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
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### 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</td>
<td>Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>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>
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<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>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>
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<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>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>
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Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.3 Leveraging Resources</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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</table>

Findings
The use of resources and other organizational decisions, such as the integration of the arts program and the school’s instructional focus, align well to and support the school's instructional goals and action plans. Teacher teams have regular meetings that are deliberately structured so that teachers’ professional responsibilities align with the school’s instructional goals.

Impact
The use of resources and other organizational decisions result in improved instruction that engages all students in challenging academic tasks as evident in meaningful student work products.

Supporting Evidence

- The use of resources and other organizational decisions are well aligned to and support the school’s instructional goals and long-range planning, in particular the development of the arts integration with facility improvement, partnerships and program development. Long-term funding procured for a rooftop garden and performance soundstage supports the new arts curriculum in vocal and instrumental music, theatre, and dance as career connections and integration with the arts community of New York City. The impact of these partnerships is the creation of a ten-credit scope and sequence has been developed in dance, drama, visual studies, vocal music and instrumental music so that students will have the support to explore these career options in the creative arts field of study. In addition, the school also has a new music studio for instrumental and vocal recording, a renovated dance studio with new dance mirrors and ballet barres, percussion instruments, choral posture chairs, and new wood and shop tools.

- In addition to the fine and performing arts-related partnerships, the school has relationships with several organizations that support and develop opportunities for students in the Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math (STEAM) program. There is also a scientist-in-residence to augment the science explorations and programs offered. Clubs for students include a Garden Club and a Tech Club about which students spoke enthusiastically. In addition, the school has a medical clinic on-site in partnership with the Morris Heights Clinic that offers additional crisis and health counselors and their existing Astor Place services. Students reported that their relationships with the clinic offers a place “where you can learn from adults who can help you channel your anger and keep you focused.”

- Teacher teams meet weekly and focus on instructional work that results in improved instruction and engaging challenging academic tasks. Common Planning Time is co-planning time with colleagues. There are also funds available to provide stipends for curriculum development. There is also time allocated on Tuesdays for grade six through twelve department meetings. As a result, teachers have an opportunity for more say in programming and student groupings. There has also been improvement in instruction as revealed by an increase in the Advance score of 44 percentage points of teachers increased between the first and second rounds of observations in at least one of the Domain 3 components (Assessment in Instruction, Student Engagement and Questioning and Discussion).
Area of Focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.1 Goals and Action Plans</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

School leaders and faculty have a clear set of instructional goals aligned with the learning needs of students and staff as apparent in the annual Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) goals for instructional improvement, improved student achievement and social and emotional growth with action plans informed by ongoing data-driven needs assessments.

Impact

Although the school has developed annual CEP goals, school leadership has yet to develop long-range goals with plans to track and leverage change that explicitly links to accelerated student learning and social and emotional growth in order to close the achievement gap.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders, faculty, and staff have a collaborative process that results in the development of overarching goals to support student progress and social-emotional growth. The planning process is conducted via cabinet meetings, instructional leader meetings, grade- and department-level sessions, and school leadership teams. School leaders review student performance trends, successes, and brainstorm ideas for meeting student needs in the following year and how they relate to program decisions. Further work is conducted to refine the goals and action plans based on State assessment results, a school survey, and Measures of Teacher Practice (MOTP) data as well as qualitative feedback received during the school year. Although the goals reflect planning by the instructional team, the needs assessment and action plan sections are based on annual goals and not long-range goals or action plans that address the needs of specific sub-groups such as English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities and lead to accelerated learning for these students over time with sustainability.

- A review of the CEP goals, subject and grade-level action plans reflect that the school leaders consistently track for progress towards goals. Schoolwide assessments administered three times a year emulate the New York State standardized assessments. During teacher team meetings, teachers analyze the results of these assessments and use them to make adjustments in curriculum maps, unit plans, performance-based assessments, and lesson plans to meet the school's goals. All members of the staff have access to this information via Google Docs. Although teachers have been refining curricula and have shown improvement in teaching practice, these are yet to be reflected in significant improvements in students achieving mastery on the New York State standardized assessments.

- Goals are developed for individual teachers with their input and their classes, with student input and administrators as well as goals that are schoolwide. Instructional leaders analyze a number of data source including student assessment data, teacher surveys administered at the beginning of the school year, Advance ratings from last year, and data from walkthroughs and intervisitation reflections and feedback to plan professional development for the staff. An expressed need was for more support for data analysis and ways to update teachers’ action plans. District Public, the data analysis partner, designed professional development for each department to support teachers' analysis of the June Regents scores and their in-class baselines. Another area of need in the beginning of the year was training in classroom management and assessment that resulted in differentiated professional development (PD) based on Advance levels and teacher self-assessment on the survey.
### 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**

Teachers incorporate into curricula the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shift of writing from sources, real-world application in math, and instructional focus on writing across content areas. Curricula and academic tasks support rigorous habits across content areas.

**Impact**

Curricula and academic tasks provide access for all learners by emphasizing higher-order thinking skills. School leaders and faculty build coherence and promote college and career readiness.

**Supporting Evidence**

- A review of curricular documents revealed alignment to the Common Core and content standards, as well as integration of the instructional shifts across grades and content areas. The school uses Hochman Writing methods for writing across all grades and content areas. In middle school math, teachers use a number of resources including Connected Math Project (CMP3), Algebra for All, IXL Math, an interactive web-based program, and LearnZillion, a web-based video math instruction program. In high school math, teachers use the Carnegie math program, EngageNY and Algebra for All. Science and social studies curricula are both based on the NYC scope and sequence and EngageNY. Since writing is one of the main instructional foci, Hochman Writing has infused all content areas and grades with a unified approach to writing. In a grade seven social studies class, the Hochman Writing guide of "Because, but, so" was used as an exit ticket. A lesson plan from a high school class in Living Environments includes the Hochman Writing connection to the exit slip focusing on notetaking and shorthand use. A special education teacher wrote in a reflection about Hochman, “I have some experience using the Hochman Writing Method in the math and science high school curriculum. I have often used the strategies with my co-teachers to incorporate them into our daily ‘do nows’ and classwork assignments. Students are very familiar with the use of sentence scramblers and ‘Because, but and so’ to formulate thoughts about a given topic.” Another teacher stated, “I have emphasized ‘Because, But, and So’ to develop stronger arguments.”

- Academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order thinking skills. A grade-seven math class task required students to predict the ratio of the best orange juice combination out of five possible combinations and record their findings based on student observations and evidence. The steps used are ones found in the CMP3 format of “Launch, Explore, and Share.” Their exit slip based on the ability to interchange fractions with ratios and percentages has this problem: “Which recipe would you choose? Recipe A: 2 cups of concentrate to 3 cups of water or Recipe B: 3 cups of concentrate to 5 cups of water.” The teacher noted a regrouping of students for today’s lesson was based on the results of the previous day’s exit slips. Students who needed additional support worked in separate groups with the teacher to revisit concepts. The rest of the class worked independently on an extension activity or a computer-based program that focuses on ratios.

- A lesson plan documents preparing for Socratic Seminar in a high school Living Environment class on the topic of evolution. Differentiation for this example of rigorous curriculum is found in graphic organizers that have various formatting possibilities designed by the teachers, levels of articles to be read differ in complexity and readability and reference resources are also available at differing reading levels. A teacher stated that tasks should be “…challenging but achievable.”
**Additional Finding**

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

Multiple entry points into the curricula that support student thinking and participation culminate in meaningful discussions and work products.

**Impact**

Diverse learners have access to challenging and higher-order tasks. Student thinking is made visible through high levels of student participation.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula. For example, in a Living Environment Integrated Co-teaching (ICT) class, the lesson’s objective stated, “Students will be able to explain the process of evolution by analyzing whale fossils.” Organized student groups based on similar learning styles and abilities were formed. Each group received a packet of drawings of whale fossils labeled with scientific names. Students were to discuss and complete differentiated Whale Fossil Lab templates that had them list similarities and differences with examples given in some of the templates, but not in others. Through a discussion, the students were to order the fossil pictures from oldest to newest and record their choices. Then each wrote about the order and evidence from fossil cards that supported their claim for the question, “How did whales evolve? Land animals to sea or fish to mammalian traits?” In a middle school social studies class, students supported each other in research projects that focused on China. Working in small groups, they took turns presenting their material to date in fifteen-minute presentations to their peers, who asked clarifying questions and provided feedback and support.

- Question prompts, discussions and students supporting each other were methods that teachers used to help students successfully engage with complex materials. In a grade-seven social studies class, students, grouped heterogeneously using levels scored on ELA test, helped each other respond to an analysis of the American Revolution's aftermath. Each group created a chart upon which three observations, two conclusions and one prediction were recorded in response to the questions: “How was population affected during the Revolution? What conclusions can be made about casualties? How would these numbers be different if the war had different outcomes?” The posters were displayed around the classroom where students visited each one and wrote comments and feedback to each group and whether there was agreement or disagreement with their responses. Their exit slip prompted them to use the Hochman “because, but so…” strategy to respond to “Effects of the American Revolution would be different in the British won because, but or so…”

- Discussions successfully engaged all students in a Socratic Seminar on the topic, Evidence of Evolution in a high school Learning Environments class. Questions to start the conversation included, “What is evolution?” “What is the (best) evidence for evolution?” “Can you use natural selection to explain how a bird evolved wings?” “Are other animals better adapted than we are?” Divided into two groups, one presented their arguments with evidence while the other group evaluated them. At the mid-point, the evaluators coached those who were verbally presenting their arguments and asking each other questions. After the mid-point check-in, the discussion continued. At the end of this session, students gave each other feedback. On the next day, the two groups switched roles.
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

The school uses common assessments to determine student progress. Across classrooms, teachers’ assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

Common assessment results are used to update teacher action plans. Teachers use checks for understandings to make effective adjustments to meet all students’ learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers adjust pedagogy and curricula based on data from common assessments in the beginning of the year, revisited with midterm exam results, and results from final exams. All teachers collect data on the progress of their students at each benchmark and create action plans to address gaps. For example, AP for All Interim assessments in both AP U.S. History and AP English showed improvement between benchmarks in October and February. Both AP interim assessment predictive scores showed an increase of 15 percent and 20 percent, respectively, of students who were predicted to receive passing AP scores. The impact results in progress documented in student writing based on implementation of the Hochman Method. Results of the mid-year assessment for ninth-grade ELA show a 17-percentage point rise, from 30 to 47 in students achieving Level 3 (Proficient) with a corresponding drop in Level 2 to 44 percent. As the school did last year, all grade-ten students enrolled in Global History took the January Global Regents Exam in order to have them better understand the format and challenges of the test, as well as to give teachers authentic data on students in their classes to create an action plan based directly on the January Regents data.

- Lesson plans reflect ongoing checks for understanding, which were present in most observed instruction. Teachers in the classrooms constantly assess using a variety of assessment criteria shared and readily understood by all students. Students and teachers stated that there are a number of ways used in classrooms referred to as “catch and release” methods to “check the temperature” ranging from red-yellow-green cards, thumbs-up/thumbs-down, “fist to five,” and pluckers (electronic check-in system). Release refers to the follow-up or next steps that teachers indicate in a fist to five, for example, students who share a three or less are grouped and misunderstandings clarified, or steps made clear. This work resulted in 40 percent of teachers receiving higher ratings this year on the Danielson component that covers assessment in instruction. Ongoing checks for understanding ensure that teachers always have a “pulse” of their class and knowledge of each student’s progress.

- Students spoke about self- and peer-assessment as helpful in learning to respect another’s point of view, reassuring to check-in with another who respects the work and having that support actually “helped lift the essay and move it to another level.” Samples of student work included a section called “Self-Editing Reflection Question” with the prompt, “What changes would you make to revise your summary writing?” One student wrote, “What I can add is evidence for each reason how the world wonders are being harmed.” Then in a follow-up section the peer editor scores the writing piece and responds to this prompt, “How would you improve her writing based on your peer editor feedback?” The peer editor responds with “She should write a little neater so people understand better.”
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

Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work and distributed leadership structures are in place.

Impact

As a result, improved teacher practice is documented and progress toward goals for groups of students is evident. Teachers have built leadership capacity and have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- An observed English teacher team met to discuss insights into the Hochman writing program through an analysis of student writing. Using a protocol to look at student work, the presenting teacher shared examples of work by several students. Colleagues then read the pieces and shared noticing and clarifying questions. The presenting teacher took notes and answered clarifying questions, and then responded to the team. Over the course of the meeting, several trends appeared in the students’ work as strengths in developing central ideas through setting descriptions. While the first sentence starts at a high point however, students don’t keep up with the arc of the story line. Areas of concern teachers noted included: as the writing becomes informal and conversational with lots of summarizing in the beginning. Disorganization is apparent. Not enough analysis is present with a full understanding of text lacking. Suggestions included helping students take a more formal stance, understanding central ideas with those that are not and why or why not. Exploring different points of view as writers. The commitments that were made included: giving students a list of choices for central ideas to select from and then helping them focus on developing that idea. Teachers reported that having a shared teamwork with the writing program across all subjects has helped everyone develop confidence to continue while developing a shared language to discuss student writing.

- The review of agendas and accompanying meeting minutes show that teacher teams are using protocols in their analysis of student work and data in order to build coherence around promoting the school’s instructional goals. Teacher teams use specific systems and protocols to analyze student formative data, summative data and student work in order to adjust curricula based on gaps that were found through the data analysis. School leaders attend and participate in the weekly Professional Development Team meetings, Learning Partners Team meetings, and visit departmental and content area meetings.

- Distributed leadership involves teachers in the school community in the development of internal solutions to challenges. Its mechanisms ensure teacher voice in key decisions: Learning Partner Plan (LPP) Model Teacher, PD Team, intervisitation cycles; collaboratively-developed core professional development topics, and weekly differentiated LPP teacher-led team meetings to extend ideas to other teacher leaders. Teachers lead in co-constructing norms for team meetings, specifying goals to complete and next steps with deadlines. LPP Model Teachers share examples of best practices that have been gleaned from the intervisitations with the LPP partner schools. In addition, this year the school has a dedicated Peer Collaborative Teacher (PCT) who leads professional learning activities, acts as liaison for the Writing Revolution and supports the work of AP for All in the school.