Quality Review Report

2017-2018

Pelham Lab High School

High School
08X320

3000 East Tremont Avenue
Bronx
NY 10461

Principal: Jason Wagner

Dates of Review:
December 19, 2017 - December 20, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Jacqueline King-Robinson
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

Pelham Lab 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

### Instructional Core

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products</td>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use ongoing 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 Quality Ratings continued

#### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</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>Proficient</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>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Systems for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</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>
Findings
Teachers are engaged in structured; inquiry based professional collaborations where they consistently analyze data and student work. Teacher teams are working to develop schoolwide coherence.

Impact
Teachers consistently use the results of assessments to identify how students are performing in the acquisition of the specific skills required in the Common Core Learning Standards. The identification of teaching practices that address students’ learning gaps results in specifically targeted instruction and improved student performance.

Supporting Evidence

- Vertical teams consistently meet to analyze student work and assessment data. An agenda from the science team indicated they analyzed student lab reports. Teachers found that students struggled to complete these reports across grades. A decision was made to provide students with a lab template to use for completing them. Analysis of the first lab report incorporating the template revealed that students were still having difficulty developing a conclusion. Teachers subsequently decided to introduce the Claim-Evidence-Reasoning (CER) model. Team members identified modifications for English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, resulting in the improved quality of student lab reports across grades and subjects.

- Teams meet weekly to conduct cycles of inquiry. Content teams utilize a cycle of inquiry template to record their research-based plans, implementation of the plans, teacher reflection, and adjustments that made to instruction and curriculum. The inquiry focus for the math team addressed the impact of error analysis on literacy and student achievement in mathematics. Teachers planned to use different protocols to have students analyze errors. After implementation of exit and entrance slips, the results were inconclusive. The team decided that they would continue with the error analysis, but they would norm the scoring by using a rubric. Next steps included differentiating the rubric for each grade level.

- Vertical teams meet consistently to analyze students’ assessment data in order to measure students’ progress towards goals. An agenda from a vertical team meeting included teachers conducting inter-visitations and providing one another with feedback on instructional practices. One teacher developed a CER rubric to be used for eleventh grade chemistry. The team worked to modify the rubric for the grades. Teachers noted students improved the substantiation of their claims when they were provided with a rubric.
Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 1.2 Pedagogy | Rating: Developing |

Findings

The school staff believes that students learn best when they are presented content through real world situations incorporating rigorous questions. Across subjects academic tasks inconsistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills for diverse learners.

Impact

As of yet, consistent student engagement in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstration of higher order thinking skills in student work products, including the work of ELLs and students with disabilities is not in evidence.

Supporting Evidence

- In a Living Environment class students were conducting a laboratory experiment dealing with diffusion through a cell membrane. Some of the students were unclear regarding what they should be doing. They waited for the teacher to come to their group and provide them with feedback before they were able to continue. When providing the students with directions only some of the students paid attention and were engaged in an appropriately challenging task. Demonstration of higher order thinking skills was not in evidence in students’ lab reports.

- In a history class three students were working at stations to analyze the technology that was used in war. Students were provided with abridged texts and used a graphic organizer to analyze it. Neither the abridged texts nor the questions posed required the students to use higher order thinking. The teacher provided additional time for the groups that had not completed the task however, there were groups that had completed the task at their station and they waited for the other groups to finish before they could advance to the next station.

- In a science research class, there were multiple entry points provided for students. Students were allowed to explore the tool and identify ways that it might be used. The scientific method was posted and students had to identify whether or not the steps would be enough to support them in developing a conclusion. Allowing students to enter the task from individual understandings promoted student engagement. The teacher provided students with an explanation of the finished work product along with the rationale for their groupings. Students were to determine what was wrong with the scientific method that was posted. Students were asked to choose a role for their investigation. The teacher’s questions prompted students to build off each other’s responses. Students asked their peers to add to their explanations, explain the topics to avoid and for them to provide examples. However, these practices were not observed across other classrooms.
## Findings

School leaders and staff make purposeful decisions to ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate academic vocabulary. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

## Impact

Curricula documents include modifications for ELLs and students with disabilities, thus promoting access to cognitively engaging academic tasks. Curricula coherence is being developed across grades and subjects and includes skills for college and career readiness.

## Supporting Evidence

- There is a vertical team that meets weekly to ensure that the curricula across grades and subjects is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and to promote school wide coherence in curriculum and instruction. Meeting agenda items include reference to a vertical team document folder that was developed so that curricula could be shared electronically between staff and school leaders. Vertical team agendas reveal work that addresses ongoing development of coherence in the curricula across grades and subjects.

- All unit plans reviewed included the Common Core Learning Standards that will be addressed and their connection to the content standards. Curricular documents provide evidence of a focus on developing students’ academic content vocabulary. Planning documents include strategies for differentiating academic tasks so that diverse learners, including ELLs and students with disabilities have access to the curriculum. A chemistry unit plan referenced a tiered unit packet that would support building the foundational understandings needed in order for students to explain the law of conservation of matter and its connection to chemical reactions.

- The results of baseline assessments are used to adjust and modify the curricula. Performance data showed a correlation between reading comprehension and vocabulary level. The ninth grade action plan included providing students with vocabulary supports and activities during daily lessons. For example, plans included Frayer Model development activities in which students use a graphic organizer to analyze words. It is a four-square model that prompts students to think about and describe the meaning of words to support students’ vocabulary development. Additionally, students are provided with content and vocabulary glossaries for use during class.
Findings
Across classrooms teachers utilize a computer adaptive diagnostic assessment program to develop common assessments. Teachers utilize rubrics that are aligned to the school’s grading policy.

Impact
Students are provided with actionable feedback based on rubric criterion that supports them in improving their work products. Teachers utilize the results of common assessments to adjust curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use rubrics to provide students with actionable feedback. Written feedback provided to a student regarding their college essay stated “I like how you compare fairytales to Sudoku. Some suggestions, are to have a clearly defined thesis in your intro – you want to let the reader know what you will be talking about, provide more details about how this puzzle has helped you.” Teachers utilize the Introduce Contextualize and Cite Evidence (ICE) rubric to provide feedback to students. Feedback to a student’s response to literature stated, “You clearly state in the first paragraph how Silka uses characterization to make her points clear, convincing, and engaging. I would’ve liked to see more development with the evidence you provided and how it relates to the claim or any other connections you can make.” Feedback to students supports the development of skills that are transferable to future work.

- Teachers administer common assessments in English and mathematics three times per year. Data from the assessments are analyzed and appropriate adjustments are made to the curriculum. The decision to include vocabulary development to support the improvement of reading comprehension was made based on the results of the baseline assessments across the school. Data from the first two assessment cycles demonstrate increased student performance, in English and math. The tenth grade cohort has a seventy eight percent credit accumulation rate. Staff and school leaders attribute this increase to the adjustments that have been made to the curricula and instruction.

- Teachers modified the rubric that they used for math error analysis. One teacher stated, “Students will have a clearer understanding of what’s expected of them.” Teachers agreed that the rubric helped them to focus on two major factors that needed more data and analysis. One involved whether the students were able to determine the error and the second involved their ability to correct all of their mistakes. Teachers identified next steps as being the inclusion of vocabulary in the rubric and aligning the rubric to each grade.
Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to staff that is aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Teachers and staff establish a culture of high expectations for students and offer ongoing feedback via rubrics, teacher feedback, and individual teacher student conferences that prepares students for college.

Impact

School leaders’ establishment of an effective system of accountability ensures that staff members implement school wide instructional expectations. Consistent communication and detailed feedback results in students understanding their progress towards college and career.

Supporting Evidence

- Eighty percent of the staff attended professional development during the summer. The professional learning was aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching and focused on using assessment in instruction and restorative practices. Staff was provided with resources that they could utilize during their lessons, through the Bronx Borough Field Office. All teacher teamwork is focused on assessment in instruction, as evidenced in the teams’ agendas and meeting notes.

- Each year school leaders provide staff with the Pelham Lab High School Team Handbook that communicates school wide expectations for instruction, grading policy, classroom management, and restorative justice protocols. School leaders provide a weekly newsletter that informs staff of the administrative focus for the coming week, upcoming events and activities, as well as highlighting those staff members who have met or exceeded expectations. The November newsletter identified using assessment in instruction and providing students with feedback as the instructional foci for the week.

- School staff utilizes A Crew Curriculum Guide; Building Community Together to provide students with a Crew advisory program designed to support advisors with preparing students for college and career readiness. Crew advisors provide students with academic and emotional support to ensure students’ academic success. During advisory students set academic and personal goals. Advisors provide their advisees with academic support and progress monitoring.

- School leaders established a Crew advisory steering committee, which has collaborated with College Access: Research Action (CARA) Creating Post Secondary Pathways to ensure that college and career readiness occurs at all grade levels. CARA lessons are differentiated according to grade level and students’ proximity to college. In their junior year students receive the Pelham Lab High School Junior Handbook that provides students with resources that ensure their preparedness for college and career readiness, resulting in an increase in the number of students taking advanced placement courses and enrolling in College Now programs at local colleges.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

School leaders use frequent cycles of observations to support the development of teachers. Effective feedback aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* provides next steps, and identifies a teacher’s strengths, and challenges. Teachers support one another through peer inter-visitations.

Impact

The formal and informal feedback communicates clear expectations for improvements in teacher practice, promote teacher reflection, and teacher development.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers support the development of one another through inter-visitations and assess if the instructional focus addressing assessment in instruction is evident in teachers’ instructional practice. Teachers reviewed student responses to the error analysis and noticed that the students could tell you if the answer was correct or incorrect. However, they could not use math content vocabulary to explain how to solve the problem correctly. Teachers developed a rubric for students to use to self-assess their responses to ensure they had all necessary components. Over time, teachers noticed improvement in students’ ability to analyze the errors using the appropriate math content vocabulary. In one informal observation report the teacher was asked to reflect and “Look at your practices from the outside and think about how you could turnkey this to a larger audience. What are the nuts and bolts that go into creating a joyful classroom for your students? Consider this question and think about how you can communicate the best practice to your fellow teachers.” Next steps from an additional observation report included, “Provide more specific feedback to students in order to have them reflect on their work and how they can improve. Generate questions from all parts of the Depth of Knowledge wheel in order to push student thinking and allow for more wait time for students to process their thinking.” Advance ratings reflect an improvement in the ratings for using question and discussion techniques for new and veteran staff.

- School leaders conduct formal and informal observation cycles based on specific components of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* as they relate to the school’s instructional foci. Teachers are provided with feedback to support their instructional practices. In one observation report the feedback addressed providing students with the opportunity to process the new information and apply it to the task to confirm understanding prior to moving into their independent work. Students’ understanding of the success criteria resulted in improved student work products. During the small group student meeting all students agreed that knowing what is expected of them helps to improve their work.

- School leaders analyze student work alongside teachers. The analysis of the student work supports the development of the feedback teachers receive. Inquiry teams identify teacher practices in need of improvement based on the feedback that team members receive from school leaders. Teachers support one another with finding ways to improve their practice. After each observation teachers are required to provide student work during the post observation conference with school leaders. Feedback to one teacher stated, “There seems to be some excitement and engagement worth highlighting, but what does the student work say? If it does prove this engagement how could we highlight this group’s conversation and use it to turnkey it as an introduction to a Socratic Seminar?”