Quality Review Report

2017-2018

Herbert H. Lehman High School
High school 08X405
3000 East Tremont Avenue
Bronx
NY 10461

Principal: John Powers

Dates of Review:
April 17, 2018 - April 18, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Clarence Williams Jr.
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


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 on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### School 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>
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<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>Area of Celebration</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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Evaluate the quality of school-level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

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

Findings
School leaders support the development of teachers, including those new to the profession. Feedback to teachers accurately captures strengths, challenges, and next steps.

Impact
Observations and feedback at the school promote professional growth and reflection. Teachers are informed of instructional expectations, and strengths, weaknesses, and next steps are tied to the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Supporting Evidence

- Feedback to new teachers include glows and grows that support teacher growth. The principal sent an email to a new teacher after an observation and included, “Good use of the do now slip so that it can be collected and as an added finality to the lesson.” An additional glow was, “Good job of connecting the work back to westward expansion.” Grows included, “Continue to identify wrong answers in the classroom and address misconceptions.” The principal also discussed incorporating vocabulary into the lesson to support student comprehension. The principal followed up with the teacher with an additional observation two weeks later. Feedback to the teacher included, “You recognized that students were not engaged and attempted to adjust the lesson to re-engage them.” The principal also suggested that the teacher improve in time management in order to make sure there is a proper closing to the lesson and recommended the use of a timer for pacing. The email closed with notification that a follow-up visit would occur the next week. During a teacher interview, a new teacher stated, “I have a great deal of support from administration which helps me improve the pacing and questioning techniques of my lessons.”

- School leaders use informal observations to communicate instructional expectations and ensure that teachers are aware of next steps by pointing out strengths and weaknesses. An example was demonstrated in an informal observation from December. The assistant principal cited questioning techniques as an area of weakness, noting that while the expectation of all teachers is that students use accountable-talk stems, only two students used them during the class observation. The assistant principal identified student behavior management as effective as students were attentive and responsive to the teacher’s directives. Next steps for the teacher included a classroom visitation to a specific colleague and to follow that with a visit by the instructional coach. All teachers have had informal observations recorded and have been given feedback and next steps to support their teaching.

- The principal uses reflections to relay next steps for teachers. In a reflection to a teacher, the principal listed different areas of feedback to the teacher which included pacing or timing sections of the lesson, differentiating the lesson to meet the needs of all students, and integrating Regents-level questions into all facets of the lesson. In a separate column, the teacher provided the evidence and their next steps to improve. For example, the teacher stated that they are improving on pacing by being aware of the mini-lesson. The teacher also stated that elements of differentiation were evident in the planning and that next steps included finding more consistent methods that meet students’ specific needs across classes. The principal stated that follow-up observations will support the next steps and provide additional feedback.
Area of Focus

Quality Indicator: 1.2 Pedagogy

Rating: Developing

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are beginning to reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best. Across classrooms, student work products and discussions reflect uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact

School leaders and teachers have stated that students learn best through making their thinking visible by using the stop and jot and turn and talk protocols, although this was not evident in all classes visited. Evidence of meaningful student work products is inconsistent across classes.

Supporting Evidence

- A United States history class was observed. The teacher was talking to students about why Americans expressed discontent about the Vietnam War. After listening to a protest song from the Vietnam War era, students were asked to identify the main idea of the song. Students were observed using the stop and jot technique which allowed them to think about their answer before writing it down. One student wrote, “The main idea of this song is to show how different this war is and how boys are just going to get hurt and killed.” When asked why they pause before writing a student stated, “It allows me to put my thoughts together before I express myself.” This technique was not observed in all classes. For example, during a grade-ten math class the teacher asked students to solve an exponential word problem. Students began to immediately write down their answers and most students did not answer the question correctly. This was based on a show of hands when asked how many had the right answer. As a result of inconsistent practices, there are missed opportunities for meaningful work products.

- In classes visited, there was inconsistent evidence of student thinking and participation. An example was seen in a grade-nine Integrate Co-Teaching (ICT) English Language Arts (ELA) class. Students were involved in a Socratic seminar on Romeo and Juliet. Inner-circle students were engaged in a discussion on who was to blame for the demise of Romeo and Juliet. Students made insightful comments such as, “They were responsible for their deaths because of the decisions they made. They knew the history of their families.” Although there was discussion among members of the inner-circle, it was limited to only a few members. Also, most students in the outer-circle did not take notes on the discussion being conducted by inner-circle students, as they had been tasked with doing.

- School leaders and teachers stated that turn and talks are an effective way for students to learn. During the observation of a global history class, students were engaged in a turn and talk on “What impact did McCarthyism have on society?” Student comments included, “Because anyone could be accused of being a communist.” Another student stated, “It affected our freedom.” Although students in this class were actively engaged in the turn and talk, this same level of discussion was not evident in all visited classes. For example, students in a grade-ten math class were engaged in a turn and talk on explaining how they found the correct answer to an equation. The turn and talk lasted over three minutes and some students were not engaged in the conversation. During the turn and talk, students were raising their hands asking for clarity. Although staff members felt that turn and talks were an effective method, effective use of it was not evident in most classes visited.
Additional Finding

Quality Indicator: 1.1 Curriculum  
Rating: Proficient

Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

Unit and lesson plans promote college and career readiness by having students express their thinking on subject material. Students with disabilities and English as a Language Learners (ELLs) have access to the curricula via cognitively engaging tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- To support college readiness, students are exposed to informational texts that require them to analyze information. A review of a grade-nine United States history lesson plan demonstrated how students were required to explain their thinking on America’s involvement in the Vietnam War. Common Core Learning Standards included determining the central idea of primary and secondary sources and providing an accurate summary to support claims. The lesson plan also stated that students will be required to interpret different forms of writing which included a poem, a song, and an article on the Vietnam War. Instructional shifts were also integrated into the lesson as students are building knowledge about the world through text and writing using evidence of the text to support arguments.

- To better meet the needs of students with disabilities and ELLs and to ensure they are being cognitively challenged, teachers make adjustments to the curriculum. A living environment curriculum was adjusted based on the struggles that these two groups demonstrated in living environment classes and Regents exams. Students struggled with vocabulary and reading. The previous curriculum map provided a global view of each unit of study for the year, not including differentiation of materials or scaffolded supports for students with disabilities or ELLs. The updated unit provided strategies, pivotal questions, and activities that could be used to support these learners. Examples include the addition of guided notes, sentence starters, and word banks for students with disabilities. For ELLs, scaffolds added were vocabulary in the native language and English-labeled visuals. To ensure that students are engaged in the lesson, modified learning targets include, “Students will explore the diversity of cells by comparing and contrasting different types of cells and write their observations.” Teachers have stated that the adjustments have resulted in increased student participation and interest from all students.

- To support college and career readiness, teachers incorporate Webb’s Depth of Knowledge (DOK) questions into lesson plans. An example was seen in a grade-nine ELA class. The lesson on a Socratic seminar on Romeo and Juliet required students to analyze statements from at least two students in the inner-circle and compare them, thus calling for extended and strategic thinking. An additional task was for students to make connections through their own thoughts and the thoughts of others. For example, students were required to understand and explain the position of someone they agreed or disagreed with. An additional example was seen in a global history lesson plan in which students were required to answer questions such as, “To what extent was the United States involved in the Korean War?” and “Make an inference. How would this make it difficult to attack Korea?” Teachers have stated that rigorous questioning helps students practice higher-level skills that will serve them through college and their careers.
## Additional Finding

### Quality Indicator:

### 2.2 Assessment

| Rating: | Proficient |

## Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use student work, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school’s curricula. Teachers’ assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

## Impact

Teachers provided actionable feedback to students by using glows and grows and a plus and delta system to reflect individual achievement. Teachers use checks for understanding and student self-assessments to make adjustments to instruction.

## Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use student reflections to allow them to self-assess their work. The results are used to make adjustments to instruction. An example was seen in a student work sample of an algebra assignment. The student wrote, “I think I did pretty well overall, but I don’t think we had enough time to finish the assignment.” When asked how this would be addressed, the instructor stated that more time would be provided during the independent section of the lesson to improve student stamina. An additional example of student self-assessment was seen on a pop up/relief project self-assessment rubric in an art class assignment. The rubric allowed students to rate themselves from one to four in areas such as including thoughtful use of background settings, creativity, understanding of art principals, and neat with sturdy construction. Students rated themselves a two in showing creativity. The student’s comments included, “I need more contrast and a realistic background.” The art teacher stated that the assignment allows her to collect data and make adjustments based on the needs of the individual student.

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- To ensure that teachers provide actionable feedback to students, comments are written on rubrics to reflect student performance. An example was seen on a three-point rubric for a writing assignment rating the student below approaching or meeting the standard in two areas, connecting to the text and accuracy of the inference. The teacher rated the student a three on connecting to the text and a two for accuracy of the inference. The teacher used glows and grows for additional comments. They included, “Your use of the inferences has improved. Your connection is logical.” A sample grows was, “Use analysis to help take the next steps. Connect the document directly to the inference.” During a student interview, students stated that they are aware of their learning steps and are able to identify what level they were performing on different rubrics.

- To provide student feedback on work products, teachers use plus and delta comments. The plus represents the area the student did well on. The delta is the area for improvement. On a grade-sex student’s essay on Macbeth, the teacher provided the following plus, “Great job explaining evidence with context.” The delta comment included, “Next time, explain why describing the air as foggy and filthy creates a depressing vibe.” An additional example was seen where the student was writing about the mood in the play Macbeth. The teacher provided the following feedback for plus “Great job connecting the weather in this scene to the way that weather makes people feel sad.” The delta feedback included, “Next time make sure to discuss how specific word choice and diction affects mood.” Plus and delta comments were evident throughout the school building. Students have stated that the feedback is effective. One student stated, “I know what next steps I have to make and we are given an opportunity to make the changes based on the feedback,” thus resulting in a better understanding of the work.
Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations connected to the Danielson Framework for Teaching to the entire staff. Teachers and staff establish a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations for all students.

Impact

There is a system of accountability and support to help teachers meet expectations. Guidance counselors create graduation plans for students that provide guidance to help prepare them for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal presented a series of memorandums that show communication with staff regarding instructional expectations. In one memo reviewed, the principal discussed the expectations of common planning by writing, “Always remember the importance of maintaining teacher engagement and advancing our instructional agenda.” The principal further stated that common planning calendars should reflect student information such as assessments and feedback. An additional high expectation that was articulated was “Practice tasks and common assessments before they are given to students to ensure clarity and rigor.” These practices were evident in minutes from teacher team meetings. The principal also provides training during a three-day orientation on elements of the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

- Guidance counselors meet with students at the beginning of the year to create individual graduation plans. These plans are structured to help the school organize students’ next steps for college. For example, students are required to have State University of New York (SUNY) and City University of New York (CUNY) and the College Board usernames and passwords. The plan also provides dates for college visit appointments and a timeline for narrowing down college choices, requesting letters of recommendations from at least two teachers, and creating a summer college visit schedule. The deadline for these events is late May and early June. During a student interview a student stated, “My guidance counselor helped me with my college plan so now I know which college I want to go to.” This plan supports students in preparing them for the next level. Parents, students, and counselors sign the plan.

- The guidance department created an academic school calendar to articulate the supports that are in place for students as they prepare for college. The calendar lists events by month that are geared towards college preparation. For example, counselors would meet with students and parents in December to discuss where they are academically at the end of the marking period. In February, counselors meet with parents and students to discuss students who are identified as at risk of not graduating. In May, counselors review college surveys, grade-ten PSAT scores, grade-eleven SAT scores and college plans, and grade-twelve college transition processes. Counselors stated that as a result of this plan, over eighty percent of seniors have applied to colleges as of the second week of April.
**Additional Finding**

| Quality Indicator: | 4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development | Rating: | Proficient |

**Findings**

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations. Distributed leadership structures are in place so that teachers build leadership capacity.

**Impact**

Inquiry team meetings and common planning meetings strengthen teacher pedagogy. Grade leaders have a voice in instructional decisions that affect student learning.

**Supporting Evidence**

- An observation of a social studies inquiry team meeting demonstrated exploration of instructional strategies that teachers can take back to their classes. The objective of the meeting was, “To brainstorm and identify a strategy the teacher can implement over the next week to address the identified problem, and to plan for implementation of the strategy.” Low-inference observations from the team included that all students were not annotating text correctly. Other notes included that students struggled with making inferences. The team discussed instructional strategies that included using guided instructions that are more explicit and that tasks should include more guidance on how to retrieve specific evidence. One teacher stated, “Gradual release to students of responsibility to underline and annotate may not have been gradual enough for all students.” Another teacher stated, “Revisiting underlining may be necessary in order to drive this skill home.” Most teacher team inquiry minutes provided opportunities for teachers to improve on their instructional practices. During a teacher interview a new teacher stated, “I have a chance to interact with experienced teachers by meeting once per week to learn how to address gaps in instructional practices.”

- Lead teachers have a voice in decisions that influence instruction. The role of the lead teacher includes leading the common planning meetings that result in instructional practices that are used across the school and looking at data. An example of this is the incorporation of literacy in math. Lead teachers were able to infuse literacy in math lesson plans to support reading math problems and build math vocabulary. Lead teachers are also members of the Learning Partners Program. This is a campuswide program that provides teachers an opportunity to collaborate with the other schools with which they share the building. The lead teacher organizes intervisitations with the team to look at best practices throughout the building. This is impactful as teachers are exposed to instructional practices outside of their school. Lead teachers also create common assessments to support the literacy focus. These include common skills assessments and mid-terms. Teachers have stated that the role of the lead teacher is instrumental in acting as a voice for teachers to communicate with school leadership. They have also stated that student learning is improving as a result of disaggregating data across grades and building coherence with different departments.

- Common planning meetings support teacher development. A review of a common planning meeting on living environment demonstrated the inquiry process they used. During the meeting, teachers answered the questions, “What do we want students to know?”, “What will students do to demonstrate learning?”, and “Which literacy skills will we use?” To further support teacher learning, teachers also discussed what scaffolds would be used and how the lesson would be differentiated for different learners. The team discussed that they want students to know how energy flows through an ecosystem and be able to demonstrate their learning by creating a food web. An example of an included literacy skill was selective underlining. Teachers stated they would use different scaffolds and multimedia including pictures and video to address different levels of learners.