Quality Review Report

2018-2019

Gotham Professional Arts Academy
High school 13K594
561 Grand Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11238

Principal: Robert Michelin

Dates of Review:
March 13, 2019 - March 14, 2019

Lead Reviewer: Robin Posner
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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</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>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>Well Developed</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### School Culture

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
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</tbody>
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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 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
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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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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</table>

**Findings**

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, strategically integrate the instructional shifts, and emphasize rigorous habits in curricula and tasks in a coherent way across subjects.

**Impact**

All students, including English Language Learners (ELLs), students with disabilities, and higher achieving learners, are consistently exposed to higher level tasks across grades and content areas and are required to demonstrate their thinking leading to college and career readiness.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School leaders and staff ensure that curricula is aligned to both the Common Core and the New York (NY) Performance Assessment Consortium standards. The school uses templates for lesson plans and unit plans that guide them in this work. Departments work vertically and horizontally to plan syllabi, lessons, and maps to ensure coherence across grades and subject areas. Special education staff works closely with classroom teachers to create and build scaffolds and supports not only for special education students and ELLs, but also to support high and low performers as needed so that all students can equitably work towards demonstrating mastery. Lesson plans and academic tasks include the integration of the instructional shifts across subject areas. Students in all levels of English Language Arts (ELA) are asked to use text-based evidence to support their responses and unit plans evidence writing from sources and deep understanding of concepts.

- The school’s curricula include higher order thinking skills and instructional shifts across grades and subjects. All students complete Performance-Based Assessment Tasks (PBATs) in all core subject areas and the arts. For example, a task assigned in Social Studies class required students to use documents to find text-based evidence to defend a position and formulate an argument drawing upon the arguments of the authors and support their own point of view. Students will have to argue their point in a seminar setting, in a debate and then in a research paper. English unit plans include close reading, text-based writing, questioning, and discussion. The module also includes performance-based and summative assessments, a culminating performance-based assessment, a student checklist, as well as scaffolds, adjustments, extensions, and resources for vocabulary, text-dependent questions, and literature circles.

- The school has also created a lesson plan template, used by the vast majority of teachers that asks them to identify targeted Common Core Learning Standards, content and language objectives, key vocabulary, and connections to real-world applications. Lesson plans across all content areas revealed that in-class tasks consistently emphasize higher order thinking skills such as developing claims and citing evidence, developing logical arguments, analyzing information from multiple sources and applying concepts in real-world situations. For example, in an algebra lesson plan, students were required to write and graph equations for the cost of three video rental services. In a Living Environment unit plan, students were required to use evidence from different sources to determine why certain diseases are prevalent in our community while others have disappeared. These higher order skills have resulted in students’ academic skills being strengthened. Specifically, data revealed that more students are completing their PBAT requirements within four years. This has led to the four-year graduation rate for students heading to a two-year or four-year college increasing to 96 percent in the 2017-18 school year.
Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 1.2 Pedagogy | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings

Teaching strategies align to schoolwide goals and provide entry points through the use of scaffolds for all learners to participate in academic tasks and discussion; however, the implementation of practices varies across the classrooms.

Impact

Although instructional practices reflect a common set of beliefs and teachers provide multiple supports to engage all learners, they are not always strategically provided. Thus, some students do not have the benefit of high-quality supports and extensions so that they have access to challenging and rigorous tasks and are fully engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, instructional practices are aligned to the schools’ articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best. One of the overarching schoolwide beliefs is that the pedagogy must engage students in purposeful work that connects to student lives and helps students develop autonomy within every lesson in order to strengthen the capacity for all students to exhibit high levels of learning. The school leaders and teachers identified the utilization of PBATs as the best way to align instructional practices to the schoolwide goal and ensure that students are engaged in rigorous academic tasks in all grades. PBAT prep and the use of an aligned pre-PBAT rubric was observed being utilized by some, but not all of the teachers. Additionally, when utilized, the link to the PBAT rubric was not always noted.

- Across a number of classrooms observed, lessons followed an inquiry model, providing students with opportunities for observation and formatting questions, in-depth inquiry, opportunities for peer and self-assessment, student choice and a culminating activity. Though lessons were aligned with the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts, instructional practices varied in classrooms visited. In an ELA class, students were presenting posters and skits from a novel they had just finished reading and receiving written feedback from peers. The rubric was aligned to the PBAT rubric and the connections were discussed prior to starting the task. However, in a history class where students were asked to self-assess by pointing to different parts of the room to indicate their level of current understanding, no connection to a rubric was made and not all students participated.

- Across classrooms, teachers provided multiple entry points for all learners, including ELLs, and students with disabilities. For example, in an art history class, the teacher provided guided practice with the rubric to support student understanding and learning. In a history class, students were asked to annotate source documents using a primary source strategy. Students were paired by level and given appropriately modified texts to annotate. However, to extend thinking beyond tasks, students were not provided with additional extensions to support them in making deeper connections between the concepts and real-world application.
### Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school’s curricula and offer a clear portrait of student mastery. In addition, teachers’ assessment practices, including turn and talks, questioning and conferencing, consistently reflect the varied use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

### Impact

High-quality assessment practices from teachers and peers provide actionable and meaningful feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. Teachers’ assessment practices result in effective instructional adjustments to meet all students’ needs and articulate what the next learning steps should be.

### Supporting Evidence

- Across the vast majority of classrooms teachers create assignments and rubrics that are aligned with the curricula. Samples of student work products showed teacher and student-written actionable and meaningful feedback directing students to the steps they should take to strengthen their work. Some examples of that feedback were: “Good integration of evidence to create key points on the slide. You could have expanded by giving more examples of similar communicable diseases,” or, “your analysis is clear and easy to follow. There are some insightful moments here and you maintain a clear structure. But sometimes your prose is wordy and undercuts your point,” or “This gets a little dismissive. Think of addressing some of the valid concerns regarding having immediate access and issues with social media instead.” Students were able to explain feedback in their own words and explain how they have put it into practice to edit and revise work for that class and support their work and learning across core content areas.

- Across the school, students use rubrics as tools of self-assessment. For example, during an Art Criticism class, the lesson involved students doing a quick self-assessment on observational skills versus interpretative skills, followed by peer assessment, edits, and revisions. The lesson and assessment are based on New York State Standards for the Arts, the Performance Assessment Consortium standards and Common Core Learning Standards for writing and literacy. Students used a rubric that assessed the following performance indicators: visual analysis, interpretation and presentation. After feedback from their peers, the teacher then asked the student, “What are your next steps?” as she was to articulate through reflecting on her own learning following the group peer feedback.

- Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers check for understanding throughout daily lessons, to make adjustments or redesign student groups. In a history class, students were peer reviewing work on a project, as the teachers circled around they noted students having difficulty writing down their observations and provided a checklist to support use of the rubric. In a science class students were grouped based on a previous day’s exit ticket aligned to the learning target. As students rotated stations, the teacher uncovered a few student misconceptions, so the teacher stopped and clarified for all. A student was also directed towards a question prompt chart when the teacher noticed him struggling to participate in the conversation with peers. In an algebra class, students were partnered based on data resulting from an entry task. The teacher immediately reviews the task and made adjustments to student groupings based upon the analysis of student responses.
## Additional Finding

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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### Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff through a variety of forums. Teachers and staff systematically communicate and support expectations, especially through the use of PBATs which prepares students for a path to college and career readiness.

### Impact

A culture of mutual accountability for high expectations exists at this school and students are supported in reaching goals. The school’s culture for learning ensures that all students are prepared for the next level.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school leaders have created high levels of expectations around things like increased student notifications for grades in progress, updating the online grading system every two weeks, and submitting unit plans for review every four to six weeks. These expectations are communicated to staff via an orientation week, workshops, a newly created staff handbook, and during grade team meetings. In addition, systems of peer-visitations and observations, including feedback and next steps create a culture where accountability is reciprocal between all stakeholders. Frequent formal and informal observations hold staff accountable for meeting expectations for pedagogical practice.

- The school leader maintains and promotes an open door policy. Everyone models caring and respect. The school leaders believe that collaboration among all stakeholders sets the stage for attaining the school’s focus on creating students who are autonomous. Through this collaboration, teachers added additional supports and scaffolds providing skills the students needed as indicated by the analyzed data. Teachers engage in professional development which includes the teaching of actual lessons to colleagues, after which critical feedback is given. “We are encouraged to participate in professional learning experiences that will push our thinking, such as workshops and courses at the Borough Support Office, colleges and universities, museums and other community-based partnerships.

- Teachers and other staff have articulated high expectations during student meetings and advisories, sharing information with students, leading to student progress towards mastery of Common Core Learning Standards and college and career readiness as evidenced by PBAT data that shows an increase in the number of completed PBATs. In March 2018 there were 18 completed PBATs compared to 39 in March 2019. Students are aware of the skills needed to advance to the next level and teachers share insights into college and careers. For example, the college guidance counselor works with all students on all aspects of getting ready for college including trips to colleges, in-school presentations by college representatives and alumni, internships, and workshops on financial aid and the college application process. During the student interview, students shared that they feel that the school and the level of the work they are expected to complete for PBATs, is preparing them for college. Student participation in the College Now programs increased from 10 percent to 18 percent since 2017. A student shared, “teachers in this school treat us like colleagues, peers, or team members. Once they share what we need to do, there is an expectation that we will get it done and we do.”
Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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Findings

The school leader strategically uses frequent observations and opportunities for peer intervisitations, with a focus on new teachers, to support teacher development. Feedback to teachers accurately captures strengths, challenges, and next steps.

Impact

The feedback to teachers articulates clear expectations, is connected to the school community’s shared progressive beliefs and includes supports that promote professional growth and reflection.

Supporting Evidence

- As a part of the New York City Department of Education Progressive Redesign Opportunity Schools for Excellence program, the school approaches teacher support and supervision through frequent cycles of observation and analysis of student work and data by the school leader and teacher peers. The school does not use the Advance system, although observations are conducted often for each teacher by the school leader; or a teacher peer. At the time of the review, all teachers were observed at least twice, many three times, by the school leader and teacher peer reviews were set to begin. At a question and answer session, teachers overwhelmingly agreed that their observations are helpful. One teacher shared that she has frequent opportunities to be observed and receive feedback. The teacher shared that these methods of observation are aligned with her goals, and are helping her to better understand pedagogical strategies and adolescent development.

- After observations are conducted, a conversation occurs around low inference observation notes and student work from the class. The observer also comes prepared with thoughts and questions around intent and connection to the school and individual goals. Together, they decide on next steps. One teacher shared that next steps are always clear and concrete, whether provided by the school leader or a peer. Another teacher observed by the school leader shared that feedback included strengths, acknowledged ongoing challenges, questions for the teacher to ponder, and next steps connected to the teacher and the expectations for behavior, as well as suggested professional learning to support the teacher in meeting the next steps. Questions given to the teacher were, “Are there other ways to empower student independence? How else can we leverage student thinking? We want them to take on the facilitator role as much as possible.” Teachers shared that the school leader or a peer observer often take the time to plan next steps alongside the teacher after an observation.

- School records and conversations with teachers demonstrate that observations often connect to teachers’ professional goals. The post-observation template includes their goals that for one teacher included a focus on making questions and systems more explicit. Thus the feedback provided highlighted ways that the teacher could make questioning more effective, clear next steps aligned with the school’s expectations for creating student choice and independence, and engaging students in conversation with one another. This feedback demonstrated alignment with the teacher’s pre-established goals.
Additional Finding

**Quality Indicator:** 4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development

**Rating:** Well Developed

Findings

All teachers are engaged in professional collaborations aligned to school goals. Opportunities are embedded to empower teachers to assume leadership roles that directly impact key decisions across the school.

Impact

The work of teacher teams has resulted in school-wide instructional coherence, improved pedagogy, student work, and progress. Shared leadership structures result in teachers effectively being involved in building capacity to improve student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Horizontal and vertical teacher teams meet and work collaboratively to ensure that the four-year scope and sequence continues to address the Common Core Learning Standards, NY Performance Assessment Consortium standards and the instructional shifts, resulting in schoolwide instructional coherence. Teams also analyze student work, establish small group plans, and revise units and assessments. Professional learning opportunities focusing on analyzing student work, assessment data, rigorous questioning, and student engagement are provided for teachers. Teachers meet in grade teams and vertical teams to examine both quantitative and qualitative data, examine student work, and share best practices. One example of a vertical team collaboration is the analysis of student work by ELA and special education teachers from collaboratively created writing performance tasks. The team developed a performance task and rubric, which was administered to students in the targeted group. They then normed the student work, analyzed trends and patterns and created a plan of action to address student need. This data was also used to inform the planning of the ELA PBAT for all students. This has resulted in increased achievement for all students on ELA as evidenced by on-demand writing pieces and the successful completion of the ELA PBAT.

- These varied and effective teacher teams allow for distributive leadership. They exemplify the collaboration that takes place between administration and staff. The School Leadership Team (SLT), grade level teams, department Teams, Crisis Intervention Team, and Attendance Committee are active and impact learning for all students. For example, grade level and department teams meet weekly and focus on the work of curriculum alignment. As an ad hoc, some teachers also serve as coaches for individual teachers. The SLT comprised of subject and grade team leaders, along with parents and students meet together with the administrative team weekly to create and set goals. Teachers affirmed that they play an integral role in key decisions and stated that their perceptions and findings are taken into consideration. Teachers have created a proposal process for staff to use for changes to curricula and policy that is in the process of being implemented.

- Teachers stated that communication is continually taking place as a result of the teacher team learning culture. They enjoy working together and sharing information. They shared that one of the most effective forms of professional development is visiting classrooms to look at environments and to observe colleagues. One teacher stated, “I can learn from my colleagues during team meetings and intervisitations.” Another teacher stated, “We have learned so much about reading and writing through sharing information and strategies across grades.”