Quality Review Report

2018-2019

School for Classics High School

High School 19K683

370 Fountain Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11208

Principal: Nicole Tancredi

Dates of Review:
April 3, 2019 - April 4, 2019

Lead Reviewer: Adam Breier
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Developing</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>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>Developing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</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>
</tr>
<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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</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<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>
</tr>
<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>
</tr>
<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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Area of Celebration

#### Quality Indicator: 4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision

| Rating: | Proficient |

#### Findings

School leaders support teacher development with frequent classroom observation cycles and student data analyses. Prompt, written feedback captures teachers’ strengths, challenges, and next steps using the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

#### Impact

School leaders’ classroom visits result in written feedback for teachers that make the expectations clear for teacher practice and the supports available to help teachers meet them.

#### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders conduct frequent classroom observations and provide feedback utilizing the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Each rated item is supported with evidence from the observed class to support the rating and with next steps teachers should take in order to grow in practice. In addition, classroom observations are planned based on an initial round during which the principal observes math and science teachers and the assistant principal observes English Language Arts (ELA) and social studies teachers. After the initial round has been completed, the school leaders meet to plan the following round during which they observe the alternate content area teachers. They also discuss trends and areas of focus in order to prioritize the schedule of classroom visits for that round.

- Observation reports contain feedback that captures teachers’ strengths and weaknesses, accompanied by next steps teachers should take in order to improve their practice and have an impact on student success. For example, in one observation report, the teacher was praised for explicitly modeling how to find the sine, cosine, and tangent ratios of a triangle. The teacher was later advised to plan instructional activities so that diverse learners would have access to the materials. Other examples of feedback given to teachers include advice to incorporate student-centered approaches, allow students opportunities to self- and peer-assess their work, and present questions to students in order of low-to-high rigor so that they would be better equipped to tackle the higher-order thinking questions.

- There are multiple examples of feedback given to teachers from unofficial classroom walkthroughs. For example, one teacher was advised to modify the planning for student rotation through station-learning activities in order to strengthen student success during future lessons. Other examples included teachers being advised to embed practices within the class where students ask questions of peers before turning to a teacher, using Webb’s Depth of Knowledge tool to design questions of varying levels of rigor, and planning for the first activity of the lesson, called the brainshaker, that would engage students upon entering the classroom and also excite them about the lesson.
Area of Focus

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

Findings

A minority of teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations on teams. Teacher teams do not typically analyze assessment data and student work.

Impact

The work of teacher teams does not foster collaborations that result in increased student achievement. Teacher team meetings do not lead to shared improvements in teacher practice or progress for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- The humanities teacher team, comprised of ELA, English as a New Language (ENL), and social studies teachers met to discuss strategies they individually use to help students write essays. Each teacher brought a sample student essay to this meeting. While some teachers referenced these essays during their conversation, there was no protocol or structure in place that would have allowed for systematic analysis of those essays and subsequent identification of students’ common, or individual, areas of need. Additionally, no evidence was provided to show that this team has engaged in structured collaborations using an inquiry approach at any point during this school year. Materials provided by this team showed that for three specified weeks, conversation topics included the co-planning of instruction, types of information that might be kept in a developing student-work portfolio binder system, and strategies for giving actionable feedback to students.

- Submitted documents showed that the science team has met to discuss curriculum maps for Living Environment, Earth Science, and Chemistry. Lists of students that each teacher has identified as needing additional tutoring were included in the materials. However, there was no evidence that these students constituted student groups for which targeted instructional interventions were being implemented and subsequently tracked so that the success of those measures could be evaluated. A group of students had been identified as needing additional interventions. Data that showed students’ scores on pre- and post-unit assessments in Living Environment were being tracked for a targeted student group. However, this student group was not the same as any of the groups receiving tutoring, and there was no indication that an inquiry-based process was used to determine students’ areas of need as determined by assessment data.

- Evidence showed that the math teacher team met on October 15, 2018 to grade Advanced Placement (AP) Psychology exams. Notes from that meeting indicated that teachers discussed the Geometry curriculum map and a lesson plan template that would contain all of the components needed for a successful lesson. This team met again on March 1, 2019 to discuss the fact that lessons should challenge students and be rigorous, students should receive feedback from teachers, “anchor activities” should be available to students, such as exit slips, portfolios, and self-reflection check lists, and that “students should be offered choices, when applicable.” No evidence was provided that either the math, or any teacher team at the school had used an inquiry approach to analyze student work or data so that the progress of groups of students could be tracked and the exploration and implementation of interventions could be employed so that students’ academic progress could be ensured.
Additional Finding

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

While the process of aligning curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards or content standards, and integrating the instructional shifts is under way, there is a lack of coherence across subjects. Additionally, planning is beginning to reflect an effort to provide diverse learners access to the curricula and tasks.

Impact

Unit and lesson plans reflect inconsistent integration of the instructional shifts and planning that does not ensure that the diverse learners at the school have equal opportunities to engage in lessons.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of curricula shows that while lesson plans are aligned with the Common Core or content area standards, where appropriate, integration of the instructional shifts is inconsistent. For example, in an Algebra I lesson plan, students are tasked with identifying whether numeric sequences are arithmetic or geometric and explaining how they arrived at their choices. A social studies lesson plan indicates that students would search through three sources and locate evidence that would support their arguments either for or against the use of a nuclear weapon at the end of World War II (WWII). Another social studies lesson plan tasks students with analyzing a Renaissance-era painting, making a claim about its meaning, and citing evidence in support of that claim. However, there are also multiple lesson plans that do not show how the instructional shifts are purposefully integrated. For example, a grade-eleven ELA lesson plan indicates that students are to write public service announcements (PSAs), but are not required to support their arguments with evidence. A Geometry lesson plan similarly lacks integration of instructional shifts, such as the use of multiple methods, or the need for students to write or speak about their understanding.

- Some curricula reflect planning so that the school’s diverse learners would have access to cognitively engaging instruction. For example, an Earth Science lesson plan includes translated texts, an isoline map that includes a model correct answer as a scaffolded support, and a seating chart that shows purposeful seating based on student needs. An ENL lesson plan includes differentiated writing assignments based on students’ levels of English-language acquisition. Additionally, a grade-nine ELA lesson plan includes translated copies for English Language Learners (ELLs), as well as seating so that students would have English speakers within their groups who also communicate in the ELL students’ home languages.

- There are also lesson plans that show efforts toward planning differentiated instruction, but they do not ensure that learners with diverse needs would be able to access instruction. For example, forensic science and global studies lesson plans include checklists that teachers are to use to indicate methods of differentiation, such as chunking text, visual aids, and simplified text. However, there was no evidence that these strategies are employed in the lesson’s activities. An algebra lesson plan details the groups into which students would be assigned based on assessment results. Although this plan is for an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, there is no indication of any planning for modifications so that students with disabilities could have their needs met as per their Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs). A similar lack of planning that would enable diverse learners with various needs to have access to instruction was evident in additional lesson plans.
### Additional Finding

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

Teaching practices are beginning to reflect a set of beliefs that students learn best when they are engaged in instruction that is student-centered. Student discussions inconsistently reflect high levels of student participation.

**Impact**

Student progress is limited by teaching practices that are often geared toward a single learning style and due to the inconsistent facilitation of student-to-student discussion.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned with the articulated belief that students learn best when they are engaged in student-centered conversations. For example, in a grade-nine ELA class, students worked within groups while determining the reasons why people wear masks based on a variety of images projected at the front of the room. During a Global Studies class, students conducted a think-pair-share activity in order to come to consensus on analysis of a historical painting. Similarly, student-centered work drove instructional activities in a United States History lesson on WWII and an ELA class in which students worked with each other to create the presentations they would use to share their PSAs with the class.

- There were also lessons in which students worked individually without being required to work with peers. For example, during a forensic science laboratory activity, students conducted individual experiments following completion of individual worksheets, without being required to work with a partner or in small groups. All student questions about process were directed to the teacher. In an algebra class, all questions about the different numeric progressions that students needed to classify as either algebraic or geometric were directed by the teacher to individual students, who then answered directly to the teacher. Students in a Geometry class were instructed to work with partners to measure the sides of triangles. However, given the instructions, not all students in all groups had specific roles to guide their work and were thus able to opt out of active participation while other group members completed the task. Students in three other classes verified that while they are allowed to help each other, they are not required to work with their peers.

- Although students were engaged in student-to-student discussion in some classes, opportunities for students to engage in high levels of thinking and discussion were limited. For example, students in an ELA class turned and talked with their partners in preparation for reading the poem “We Wear the Mask.” Students were also assigned to define the key vocabulary words that were highlighted in the poem and then discuss their findings with their partners in order to come to consensus. Similarly, students in a social studies class discussed the results of the brainshaker, during which each student was issued an image upon entering the room and needed to find another student whose image was related to theirs. In an Earth Science class, students individually completed an activity during which they computed the air pressure, given other weather variables, and were instructed to come to consensus, and if it could not be reached, they were to approach another group and ask for its input. However, students were not provided with enough time to complete this process before groups were asked to share their findings with the class. Additionally, all questions were asked by the teacher during an algebra lesson, and the students who volunteered to answer directed their responses to the teacher. Other examples of inconsistent facilitation of student-to-student discussion were observed in multiple classes.
Additional Finding

Findings
Common assessments are in place but are inconsistently used to measure student progress. Teachers' assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact
The effectiveness of instructional adjustments based on common assessment data is not currently measurable, as documented. Teachers' abilities to consistently make effective adjustments are limited, thereby not meeting all students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- The school utilizes an online platform to administer common assessments based on content areas. Baseline assessments were administered at the beginning of the school year. School leaders and teachers discussed the results of their analysis of baseline data and found that students’ ability to analyze and use evidence when supporting claims was an area of need. They also found that academic vocabulary is an area where ELLs require support. Baseline data also revealed that students needed additional supports in graphing. The first follow-up benchmark assessment had been administered shortly before this school visit and had not yet been analyzed. Thus, no evidence was provided to show how data is tracked in such a way that would make clear how students are progressing toward goals. Additionally, neither school leaders nor teachers were able to locate math-baseline assessment data.

- Two online platforms are used to continually assess students and subsequently provide assignments that are geared toward students’ individual needs. These resources are provided to students once a week in ELA and math, as well as during Saturday program offerings. While this system is utilized across ELA and math, and thus shows how instruction is being adjusted during targeted time slots during the week and on Saturdays, no similar program is in use for social studies or science. Additionally, no data was provided to show how the use of this system is impacting student progress toward academic achievement goals.

- Although teachers circulated throughout classrooms and checked-in with individuals and student groups in various classrooms, effective adjustments to classroom instruction were inconsistent. For example, a science teacher modeled the laboratory experiment that all students would need to conduct. However, some students were unable to see because of their distance from the teacher's station or their view was blocked. The teacher did not remodel the experiment and did not convey the same information in another way in order to increase understanding by the students. Multiple students were unable to correctly complete the experiment. Additionally, in a math classroom, fewer than half of the students raised their hands in response to the teacher’s question of who understood the difference between algebraic and geometric progressions. The teacher then transitioned the lesson to the next stage without making an adjustment to address the apparent lack of understanding by students.
Additional Finding

<table>
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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

The school’s leaders and staff consistently communicate high expectations and share information with families regarding student progress toward college and career readiness. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations for all students.

Impact

Communication from school leaders and staff, through an online grade book system and other platforms, provides frequent opportunities for families to understand their children’s progress towards meeting standards. Ongoing and detailed feedback, guidance, and advisement supports by house-based teacher teams ensure that students are prepared for graduation and college.

Supporting Evidence

- Through the use of a variety of tools that includes an internet gradebook platform, emails, text messages, phone calls, a family newsletter, school website, and workshops, school leaders and teachers communicate with parents and help them understand their children’s progress. Parents shared that they are always welcome at the school and that they can always connect with their children’s teachers. They do this by attending parent-teacher conferences, and joining with teachers during Tuesday parent-engagement time. Additionally, parents praised teachers for their regular communications and that this contact enables them to keep up-to-date with their children’s progress and pending assignments.

- Various activities, presentations, and course offerings also communicate the school's high expectations around students’ preparedness for their futures. The school also launched a new course entitled Career and Finance in September. The curriculum for this course incorporates career exploration topics and activities, including presentations by partnering professionals, college visits, Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) preparation, and assistance throughout the college-application process. Students are also able to take advantage of multiple AP classes, as well as college-credit bearing classes through partnerships with both Medgar Evers and Hunter Colleges.

- All students meet weekly with a student advisory group facilitated by a teacher. Career readiness is among the topics covered during advisory sessions, during which students completed career-interest surveys. Visitors have given presentations about their careers, the steps they needed to take in order to obtain work in their field, as well as the day-to-day responsibilities that they have assumed. So far, visitors have represented the fields of law, cosmetology, nursing, the United States Armed Forces, as well as multiple uniformed New York City public servants. An annual Career Fair is also held at the school, as well as a smaller event called the Career Café, during which guests share information about their careers. Presenters have included actors, financiers, and representatives from job placement services.