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

Pace 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels</td>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<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>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</td>
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</tbody>
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### Systems for Improvement

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<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<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>
<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>Well Developed</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

All teachers are engaged in teams that consistently analyze student work in cycles of inquiry that reveal targeted areas of student need and actively address them in their work toward fulfilling the school’s goals. Teachers are empowered to positively affect student learning through service as team leaders, department leads and committee chairs, as well as the open-door policy in bringing ideas for initiatives and professional development (PD) to school leaders.

Impact

Collaborations across grades and content areas strengthen teachers’ instructional capacity while data reveals increases in student achievement. Across the school, within a variety of team structures, teachers have built leadership capacity and have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers take part in content- and grade- level teams in which teachers use lesson study intervisitations to analyze lessons, co-plan instruction, and analyze student work. Teachers reported improvements they were able to make to their instructional practices as a result of these intervisitations. One teacher spoke about delving into the changes that she needed to make and reported that she is using different types of groupings and scaffolding and her students have shown improvement. Another teacher reported that teacher feedback has created a culture of collegiality that has led to a common vision across the department. Review of other team minutes and agendas substantiate that teams use a protocol to review student work and assessment data, make adjustments to their curriculum and track student success toward goals. The social studies team reviewed debate work from a group of targeted lowest-third students. Each teacher is assigned a different student to observe. Using a note taker, the group takes notes on specific questions that were later shared out. A teacher shared her reflection of the feedback and then the group brainstormed together possible next steps for these students and for the teacher. A later agenda reflects another visit to this class to observe those same students and the sharing of evidence of progress on a later debate. A review of data from the Global Studies Regents substantiates an increase in student pass rates.

- Inquiry-based teacher teams collaboratively plan and refine curriculum throughout the school year to ensure Common Core and shift alignment and support for English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities. Teams use a structured protocol in which everyone has a role. As one teacher noted about the shared protocol, “It gives us a shared language and a solid way of thinking about, and talking about the work.” Teams revise curricula by looking at student work, and the expectations on how to spiral up the skills beginning in ninth grade. For example, teachers reviewed texts that students were reading to ensure there was a broader diversity of voices represented in texts that students read across all grades and content areas.

- Distributed leadership practices and structures are deeply rooted in the school’s day-to-day operations such as teacher leaders’ work, and foster a culture in which teacher leaders provide continual input into strategic decisions that affect student achievement. In August, teacher leaders work with school leaders on the PD plan for the year and are formally part of the weekly structure of cabinet meetings and supporting department and grade leaders. Department leaders, as well as grade-level teacher leaders, are part of the principal’s cabinet and part of major school-based decisions such as the creation and implementation of a staff-derived scope and sequence for both English Language Arts (ELA) and math. Teachers cited involvement in designing and facilitating curriculum and advisory as key areas in which they have a voice in major school decisions affecting student learning.
Area of Focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use and create grading policies, including checklists and rubrics, that are aligned to the curricula. Daily learning targets are aligned to the Common Core and used to check student understanding of the lesson.

Impact

Although teachers use feedback from assessment data and student work to make adjustments to curricula and instruction and provide students with actionable feedback on their academic progress, not all feedback to students is meaningful and not all students are aware of their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- Across grades and content areas, samples of student work products showed teacher-written actionable feedback. For example, teacher feedback on an opinion writing assignment included, “You have a good start to your introduction; however, you are missing a thesis. You need to go back and take a stand to hook your readers in.” In another ELA class, teacher feedback on an argumentative writing task included, “Your essay has excellent details of the night’s event, but some details were not completely relevant for the amount of space that it takes in the essay.” A student reported, “I got feedback from my teacher about a paragraph I wrote and that I needed to work on providing more text-based evidence to support my claims. So, I rewrote some of the body of my essay to make it better.” However, another student shared a teacher-completed rubric, with areas of focus highlighted for the same writing task. However, there were no teacher written comments provided to explain next steps for the student for that piece of work and for future pieces thus, resulting in the feedback not being meaningful for that student.

- Teachers use data from assessments and student work to provide students with feedback in notes and revisions to student work. Some teachers hold one-on-one conferences with students to review their work and provide feedback. Students use feedback to implement new strategies in their work. A review of student work provided evidence that when given, most students apply teacher recommended strategies and next steps in their work.

- Teachers check for understanding throughout daily lessons, make adjustments, or redesign student groups. In a Regents Algebra class, the teacher implemented the thumbs up/down protocol, asking students to use the prescribed hand signals to indicate whether they understood the current topic or had further questions. This check for understanding revealed that a few students needed further explanation, so the teacher stopped and clarified for all. At the end of a social studies class, students were given an exit ticket aligned to the daily learning target to help the teacher determine student pairings for the rest of the week’s lessons. In another Algebra class, students were partnered based on data resulting from an exit ticket from earlier in the week. Teachers review the exit tickets and make adjustments to the next day’s lesson plans and student groupings based upon the analysis of the exit tickets. However, this practice was not evident across the vast majority of classrooms.
Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order thinking skills for English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

Impact

Purposeful curricular decisions result in coherence and promote college and career readiness via rigorous curricula and academic tasks that are accessible to all students. Students consistently demonstrate their thinking across subjects and grades including debate, literary analysis and real-world applications.

Supporting Evidence

- Both faculty and administration stated that they build coherence using the Common Core and instructional shifts to promote college and career readiness. The administrative and teaching teams determined that in order to make the progress towards student mastery, they needed to focus on the clarity of learning targets and ensuring that students know what they are learning and why. To this end, staff determined that they needed to develop a Common Core-aligned curricula and make modifications to modules/unit maps, lessons, and tasks to better address the needs of students. Specific steps across grades and content areas include creating/revising unit assessments, developing instructional objectives that target standards, and ensuring coherence between assessments, learning targets, and tasks. The scope and sequence and lesson plans are focused on the Common Core and instructional shifts. The scope and sequence demonstrate this coherence of the instructional shifts.

- Across subject areas, there are tasks that incorporate academic language, evidence-based short response and constructed response, as well as essays that include arguments, literary analysis, compare/contrast, and narrative fiction. In grade-ten ELA classes, students must write about how texts support the essential question, “How is the relationship between humans and nature reciprocal?”, using text-based evidence to support their argument. In U.S. History, students prepare written arguments for a debate around whether the colonists were justified in rebelling. Across grades in math, there are tasks that indicate real-life application, conceptual understanding, and fluency. Students in Algebra II study inverse functions and make connections to real life in things like solving puzzles, using a phone book or decoding a secret message. Additionally, students across grade levels are asked to do fluency-builder activities like math sprints and show multiple means of representation when solving problems.

- Across grades and subjects, the lesson plans include elements such as student-facing academic targets, essential questions, and key academic vocabulary, do now, mini-lessons with guided practice, checks for understanding, and homework. Most unit plans included differentiation for ELLs, students with disabilities, and independent workers based on need. Additionally, most plans include individual, paired or group tasks that provide access through tiered tasks and mixed grouping and extensions. A math lesson reviewed showed that students would work on inverse functions. Students would be divided into three different groups, with each group being given a scaffolded worksheet based on the previous day’s exit ticket. The teacher planned to work with a small group of students for further support and to challenge their thinking. All students were expected to meet the learning target at the conclusion of the lesson.
**Additional Finding**

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

Teaching strategies align with a set of beliefs about how students learn best and provide entry points through the use of scaffolds so that all learners participate in academic tasks and discussions.

**Impact**

Students are engaged in tasks that require high levels of thinking and discussion leading to the development of meaningful work products across classrooms.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The instructional priorities for all classes include a focus on student-facing learning targets, small groups, cooperative instruction, student-to-student discussion, actionable feedback, ongoing checks for understanding, and student-teacher rapport. Most of these adopted priorities were evident throughout classes. During a grade-ten ELA class, students were working on imagery. Students worked in pairs or triads to find imagery in a text they were reading. As pairs shared, they were asked to agree or disagree with other pairs and then continue with that portion of the text or move on. In a grade-nine ELA lesson, students spoke with partners about three different types of irony and then gave real-world and text-based examples.

- Across classrooms, students were arranged in pairs, triads or small groups to promote discussion and critical thinking, often strategically to support the needs of individual learners. In an Earth Science class, students were placed into groups to create a skit to explain earth’s energy. Students had to work together to write the skit using academic vocabulary, evidence from readings, as well as decide roles and perform the skit for the class. During an ELA class, students were annotating texts to identify figurative language. Student text was differentiated and multiple entry points were provided to students through the use of different tools including white boards, highlighters and computers.

- Multiple entry points enabled learner’s access to the learning targets. During a ninth-grade ELA lesson, differentiated supports such as reference sheets, vocabulary wall, and a graphic organizer were made available for each student group. During an Algebra I lesson, each group had vocabulary puzzle pieces of terms and definitions to work with, that everyone, including ELLs and students with disabilities, was to use, ensuring that all students were engaged in appropriately challenging tasks. During a Chemistry sorting activity, each group was given a bag of different items to sort into a student-created periodic table based on the properties of the objects in the bags. Each group’s bag contained different items and could be sorted and formed into a periodic table in a variety of ways.
Additional Finding

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<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 staff through several vehicles such as an instructional expectations document and weekly memos via email. Additionally, school leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations to families connected to a path to college and career readiness through venues such as student-led conferences.

Impact

Staff maintains and benefits from a culture of mutual accountability for high expectations. Effective partnerships with families support students in their progress toward college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders share high expectations through an instructional planning document that details guidelines for all aspects of instruction including the grading, homework and testing policies, indicators of a successful classroom, instructional planning, and student-work portfolios. Emails detail high expectations regarding the value and format of learning targets, lesson studies, interdisciplinary planning, teacher team responsibilities, different strategies that could be employed in the service of different students' needs, and student-to-student discussion. Teachers stated that this high level of communication helps ensure that they always know what is expected of them.

- Teachers hold each other accountable for high instructional expectations through their collaborative common planning sessions held after lesson study intervisitations. Teachers spoke about relying on each other to give constructive feedback to each other after each lesson study session. Teams also assign different tasks to a variety of team members and must subsequently fulfill their responsibilities to each other in promptly attending to those tasks and bringing the results of their work to the next planning session. Additionally, teachers hold each other accountable for their colleagues' professional learning in that all teachers have participated in the PD process by presenting best practices at whole-faculty PD sessions.

- Expectations are effectively communicated to families through student-led conferences, newsletters, at Parent Teacher Association meetings, via text and email blasts and through an online grade-book system. One parent reported that the online grade book helps her know from day to day how her child is doing and if she sees anything that is questionable, she can immediately see the teacher during Tuesday parent engagement time or speak via phone or email. All teachers report students' progress on written class assignments, group work, long-term projects, attendance, and preparedness in general via the online grade book and during Tuesday parent engagement. Parent workshops are offered each month and parent-staff coffee talks monthly as well. So far this year, parents have attended workshops on college access and financial aid with more planned throughout the year. Parents stated advisory counselors are very communicative and ensure that students and parents know if the student is on track for credit accumulation and graduation. Counselors meet with parents and students during the student-led conferences, provide workshops and help support parents with what can be done at home when a student is falling behind. A parent stated, “the advisors and the college counselor take them through the college application process step by step, ensuring that all I’s are dotted and t’s are crossed and that has been phenomenal.”
**Findings**

School leaders and teacher peers support teacher development through supervisory observation of instruction and analysis of *Advance* and student data. Accurate feedback to teachers is constructed using the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and captures strengths, challenges, and next steps.

**Impact**

School leaders and teacher peers support teacher development and elevate school-wide practices by sharing clear and actionable feedback and next steps resulting from formal observations and cycles of lesson study.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School leaders conduct frequent classroom observations that are effectively planned to ensure teachers receive actionable feedback in a timely manner. School leaders conduct pre- and post-observation conferences in person in addition to electronic or written feedback. School leaders and teachers examine data as part of the observation cycle and use it to track teacher progress towards meeting school and professional goals. Feedback to teachers often accurately captures their strengths and weaknesses and details next steps using the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, supporting the goal that teachers provide coherent instruction and engaging students in learning. For example, feedback to one teacher recommends that the teacher expands on the learning target to make it clear to students how they are expected to master the target. Another teacher was given resources to review for designing coherent instruction.

- In addition, there are examples that reinforce feedback offered in earlier observation reports. One observation report includes feedback that the teacher needs to ensure she is planning to support small groups of students with modified supports and scaffolded work. A subsequent report noted that the teacher was successfully implementing this strategy. In another observation report, a teacher is advised to identify higher-order thinking questions that align with the learning target. A follow-up observation indicated that the teacher was using this recommendation. One teacher reported growth in her ability to implement choice in the classroom based on suggestions she had received from leadership.

- School leaders shared that they review their *Advance* data from the previous year, their class data, school data, and school-wide goals to help plan for how to best support teacher practice and development. A review of *Advance* data showed that teachers needed more support in engaging students in learning. A professional development session on student engagement was provided for teachers followed up by a cycle of lesson study designed to see teachers in action using various means to ensure student engagement. Feedback in *Advance* reports such as, “students were engaged in the activity and moved seamlessly during transitions from the small-group activity to the large-group activity”, reflected this focus on engagement. Another teacher was told that “a recommendation for improvement would be to provide students with a model response for a task thus, focusing students on expectations.” The teacher was told that the school leader would be following up with another observation in a few weeks to see this strategy in action.