Quality Review Report
2018-2019

Vanguard High School
High school 02M449
317 East 67 Street
Manhattan
NY 10065

Principal: William Klann

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

Lead Reviewer: Buffie Whitfield
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

Vanguard High School serves students in grade 9 through grade 12. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm.

School Quality Ratings

### Instructional Core

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</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>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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### School Culture

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

### Systems for Improvement

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

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.4 Positive Learning Environment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings

Structures are in place for all staff members to provide personal attention to students. School leaders strategically align a range of learning supports for staff, students, and families to collaborate effectively in addressing students’ academic and social-emotional needs.

Impact

Multiple support structures, aligned to the needs of staff, students, and families, contribute to a highly-personalized learning environment that supports and coordinates social emotional learning by all students and promotes their adoption of effective academic and personal behaviors.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders personally meet with all students individually on the first day of their enrollment. In addition to personally welcoming the students, they clarify expectations to ensure that they receive the academic and personal supports necessary to graduate and be college and career ready. Students appreciate the emotional support their school community provides them and often continue to visit and meet with students and staff at the school after they have graduated. The school enhances students’ academic and social-emotional learning by coordinating events that help students navigate college application, acceptance, and matriculation requirements. Through these initiatives, students and families gain access to college fairs and tours and students participate in Scholastic Achievement Test preparation and other skill-building activities. College Now courses at John Jay, Baruch, City College, and other City University of New York (CUNY) colleges immerse students in early college learning experiences, with positive impact on college acceptance rates, as evidenced by graduation tracking data for the 2017-2018 school year, which show 100 percent of senior students applying to college gaining acceptance to colleges.

- A schoolwide advisory system enables students to have ready access to an adult who provides support for their academic and social-emotional needs. Students meet with and build supportive relationships with their advisor, who coordinates homework help and tutoring, and guides them in goal-setting for college and career readiness, positive character development, and making connections between academic habits and success in life. Guidance counselors, advisors, and school leaders work with students to create a path to success and keep them aware of their credit accumulation and attendance targets. All students meet with their guidance counselor several times during their senior year to discuss their progress towards graduation and begin outreach to post-secondary educational institutions. These activities contribute to average credit accumulation rates that now stand at 85 percent for ninth-grade students; 80 percent for tenth-grade students, 77 percent for eleventh-grade students, and a graduation rate of 79 percent as per the 2017-2018 school performance dashboard.

- Students shared that via a mandatory college information session and events at the school to support college and career, students and families receive assistance in researching college programs and completing online college applications. Additionally, through a special college office, students have access to a myriad of experiences designed to build their readiness for success in college and careers. During a student’s meeting with their guidance counselor, the counselor reviewed the student’s transcript and credit tracker form to ensure that the path toward graduation was on target. Additionally, they discussed the need to increase the communication with the desired colleges and the available financial aid options.
Findings

School leaders use the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* to support the development of teachers with feedback that captures strengths, challenges, and next steps from frequent cycles of classroom observation and analysis of student work.

Impact

Most feedback articulates clear expectations for teacher practice and promotes professional growth to elevate schoolwide instructional practices, but does not consistently align with teachers’ professional goals and provide specific pedagogical supports.

Supporting Evidence

- The observation calendar and consecutive observation reports reflected cycles of observation by school leaders. Challenges and concerns that surface during classroom walkthroughs are used as additional opportunities for school leaders to provide informal verbal feedback. A review of observation reports did not indicate clear evidence of suggested strategies for all teachers. For example, one teacher observation report read that the teacher should use Webb’s *Depth of Knowledge* questions, but did not provide any strategies on how to incorporate the questions into the lesson plan.

- Observation reports revealed feedback to teachers that identified strengths as evidence to support component ratings. For example, one teacher’s report showed that six out of eleven component ratings were effective, including the identified school foci on question and discussion, student engagement, and the use of assessment in instruction. The rationale for assessment read, “The teacher elicited evidence of student understanding through questioning.” However, the recommendation presented for next steps, “Provide opportunities for student self-assessment,” offered an additional attribute of effective practice rather than next levels of practice. No further recommendations were made regarding other components. In another instance, a teacher received three effective and eight highly effective ratings, with an effective rating for the use of questioning and discussion. Feedback for this teacher included a recommendation to use a discussion protocol that would extend student conversation and learning. An observation report for another teacher indicated, “The lesson has a clearly defined structure, and the pacing of the lesson is appropriate.” A next step for the teacher was to allow students to make their thinking visible. Absent from the feedback was any elaboration on what the teacher should do to make students’ thinking more visible, what highly effective practice would look like for this lesson, and what the teacher’s individual goal was.

- Teacher improvement plans articulate areas for improvement aligned to components of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Action steps and differentiated activities to support improvement clarify expectations for teacher practice. In two reports, however, teachers who co-taught together in an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class received observation reports that read virtually the same and had the same ratings. While this was not found in the majority of reports, this practice hinders teachers from receiving personalized feedback aligned to the teacher’s needs and professional goals.
**Additional Finding**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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**Findings**

School leaders and staff ensure that performance tasks are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts, emphasizing higher-order thinking skills.

**Impact**

Curricula are coherent and promote college and career readiness skills, which are embedded into instructional planning documents. Rigorous learning habits and higher-order critical thinking skills are evident.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Across curricular planning documents, integration of the instructional shifts in English is emphasized, specifically to engage students in reading and utilizing text-based answers. Lesson plans list the specific content and New York State standards for students to read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding. In addition, literary response and expression, critical analysis and evaluation, and social interaction are addressed. The learning objective for a social studies lesson plan centers on evaluating the effectiveness of different political systems in forming governments. Students would receive graphic organizers and supportive documents to help format their thinking and generate their written responses. Planned college and career skill activities include engaging students in reflection of their work during group discussions.

- Curricular planning documents are written in terms of what students will be able to do. An English Language Arts (ELA) document includes standards-based activities for students to develop their discussion skills by addressing the concepts of fate and free will. The seminar requires students to actively take part in a discussion based on a text in which an open-ended question is presented to all participants. Students will listen to their peers' comments, and offer insights by articulating their own thoughts. The texts are tiered to ensure that all students become active participants.

- Academic vocabulary is part of the instructional focus, along with an emphasis on higher-order thinking across grades. This was seen in all reviewed planning documents. A United States History lesson plan includes understanding key words and vocabulary through a variety of higher-order essential questions, such as, “Does absolute power corrupt absolutely?” A plan for a Spanish class addresses relevant language conjugation and challenges students to properly use verbs both in their writing and in their oral interactions.
Findings

Teacher practice across classrooms reflects unity around a set of beliefs regarding how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points that support student learning.

Impact

All students are engaged in challenging and rigorous tasks so that they demonstrate higher-order thinking skills and produce meaningful work products.

Supporting Evidence

- In a Language of Comparative Analysis class, the teacher engaged students in using art to interpret two images, Mona Lisa and Frida. Students shared their thinking aloud and answered clarifying questions based on viewing the images. A high level of student engagement was seen in this classroom, where students made connections, as was evident in most classrooms visited. However, in an algebra class, most students spent the observed time listening to the teacher explain answers to problems, with little interaction with the few peers who gave brief responses to teacher-led questions.

- In the classrooms visited, teachers provided visual supports and scaffolds for students to be highly engaged in learning. In a probability class, the teacher reviewed theoretical versus experimental probability. Students shared that theoretical probability is found using various techniques, such as area modeling. The teacher guided students in creating their own game using two six-sided dice, chips, or cards. Students made sense of the problems and persevered in solving them. Across classrooms, students engaged in reading differentiated texts. In ELA class, students read differentiated texts of their choice. In science, students read one of two articles based on word count and Lexile levels.

- The principal and teachers articulate the belief that students learn best through engagement in rigorous content, skill development, and assessment that requires them to reflect on and analyze new concepts, and demonstrate their thinking. These elements are present across classrooms to varying degrees. In an ELA class, students analyzed their text and drew conclusions about how the character developed. The teacher posed questions that centered on the purpose of using evidence that proves a claim. Students were encouraged to use the topic sentence, introduce evidence, evidence, discussion of evidence, introduce more evidence, evidence, discussion of evidence, and connect collected evidence to the topic sentence (TIEDIEDT) protocol.
Additional Finding

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

Teachers create performance-based assessment tasks (PBATs) and use rubrics aligned to the school curricula to provide students with feedback. Common assessments are used to determine student progress toward goals.

Impact

Teacher feedback is actionable so that students are aware of their next steps to improve their work. Students’ performance data are used to adjust curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Rubrics accompany PBATs and are used to ensure that expectations for student work are clearly defined, skills and progress toward proficiency are measurable, and that teachers track student growth over time. Students discussed the feedback that they received on their work and were able to articulate clear next steps for improvement, particularly as it related to comments on their graphic organizers. Students generally felt that the feedback allowed them to be more thoughtful, clear, and organized in resubmitting final drafts of their work. One student explained that as a result of the feedback she receives, her writing has become more organized. She has learned to write more clearly with evidence that directly supports her thinking.

- A uniform grading policy is in effect for all classes, with an emphasis on lesson engagement by assessing classwork and participation, which informs students of their achievement. Rubrics are used to provide feedback to students on their work. Teachers have generated several rubrics across subjects to provide students with an understanding of their competency in providing evidence, summarizing, and applying conventions. Student writing samples demonstrate increased achievement from baseline performance tasks using the suggested areas of growth from their teachers.

- The school analyzes a range of data sets and assessments to determine students’ academic progress. This includes, but is not limited to, unit assessments, PBATs, and teacher-created formative assessment tasks. Teachers continually look at the data during teacher-team meetings to make adjustments, not only to the units of study, but to also help identify effective instructional strategies that support students in developing content knowledge. Teachers spoke about various instructional and curricular adjustments made and cited their positive impact on student learning. An example is the decision to infuse literacy across the curricula to improve students’ reading, analytical, and inferential skills.
Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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</table>

Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations that meet regularly and provide opportunities for the generation of ideas that support their professional growth. Distributed leadership structures are in place.

Impact

The collaborative inquiry led by lead teachers strengthens their instructional capacity and promotes school goals. The distributed leadership opportunities provide both probationary and veteran teachers with a voice in key decisions that affect student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers meet weekly in their respective teams to work on their practice, analyze student work, and discuss specific instructional strategies to ensure collaborations improve their practice and progress toward student goals. Some teachers stated that because of their regular meetings, they have seen growth in their own planning, especially to align curricula and instruction with instructional shifts and Common Core Learning Standards, especially in the areas of differentiation. Teachers spoke about having a strong voice in making school-wide decisions. Teachers shared that they meet weekly to discuss school-wide and/or team goals to ensure coherence and consistency. There are three major teacher teams, consisting of department teams, grade teams, and professional learning communities (PLCs) that drive support for teachers and students. The department teams collaborate to write unit plans to ensure that literacy activities are consistently embedded in content courses across grades. The grade teams examine student work to identify characteristics or trends of an individual or group of students to determine where support is needed. Teachers brainstorm to make adjustments, decide actions to be taken, and execute unified team action plans. PLCs meet weekly to analyze lesson plans and student work, and to debrief intervisitations of their colleagues’ classes.

- Teams of teachers meet regularly to discuss student work and create new goals that help teachers collaborate across contents. During a teacher-team meeting, members reflected on modifications they had previously made to a graphic organizer used in a majority of classes to assist students with their writing. Teachers reviewed samples of student work to determine if their instructional changes were effective. One teacher shared that modeling practice helped her students. However, it was not clear how the teachers’ conversation would lead to increased mastery for the highest achieving learners, since much of the discussion focused on specific low-to-mid achieving students.

- Serving in a multitude of positions, staff wears a variety of hats and contributes to furthering the mission of the high school, including unique approaches to address attendance. Most recently, teachers tutor students, establish and support student clubs, and serve as advisors. Teachers lead professional development workshops for their peers and students’ families based on an area of interest or to share information from having attended an off-site professional forum. Structures to promote distributive leadership include shared responsibility in facilitating team meetings and opportunities to turn-key information to colleagues. For example, the teacher leadership team creates and implements full staff meetings to address schoolwide professional development (PD) goals and arrange for expert PD in their respective fields.