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

I.S. 141 The Steinway serves students in grade 6 through grade 8. 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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</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>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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### School Quality Ratings continued

#### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Systems for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
<td>Area of 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>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
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff. Teacher-teams and staff establish a culture for learning that systematically communicates a unified set of high expectations for all students through college awareness lessons.

Impact
Consistent communication of high expectations promotes a culture of mutual accountability, enabling all students to own their educational experiences and prepare for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- The teacher handbook outlines the academic and operational frameworks used to inform the school's operation. A key feature of the handbook is an in-depth explanation of the curricula and instructional expectations for the current school year. The handbook clearly outlines the grading policy for the three academies that comprise the whole school community. In addition, the handbook presents the most recent English Language Arts (ELA) and math tests. Consequently, this led to a delineation of modifications to school curricula, such as merging the reading for information and reading for literature standards to streamline the ELA curricula, and ensuring a balance of both types of texts across the grades. The handbook also provides instructional supports for teachers by grade in planning lessons. For example, there is an explanation of what elements should be evident in a sixth-grade short-response paragraph. Finally, the handbook provides a clear explanation on best instructional practices that align to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, which makes clear school leadership’s expectations for teachers.

- School leadership and staff systematically communicate high expectations for all students through venues such as college awareness lessons. In the sixth-grade, students are taught the academic and personal behaviors necessary to be successful in college through a series of lessons. Lessons include explanations on the different degrees that can be earned in college, including the differences between associate and bachelor degrees. The lessons also explain how students could finance college, including lessons on demystifying the scholarship application process and explaining how to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). In addition, there are assemblies that introduce students to various careers, including those of college president and chief financial officer. Assemblies include an explanation of the requirements for getting the jobs, and having students reflect on careers and connect them to their own personal attributes. During a student meeting, all agreed that the school consistently emphasizes college and reinforces behaviors that make for a successful college student.

- School leadership and staff partner with American Airlines to prepare students for college and career readiness. Over six weeks, guest speakers from different aspects of American Airlines’ operations come to speak about their paths to their chosen careers. The partnership culminates in a trip to American Airlines’ operations at the John Fitzgerald Kennedy (JFK) airport, where students experience the careers they had studied. In addition, seventh and eighth grade students take trips to colleges throughout the school year, including to Yale and Harvard Universities. The focus on preparing for college and careers contributes to increased academic achievement, including nearly one hundred percent passing rates on the Living Environment and Algebra 1 Regents Examinations for eighth-grade students.
## Area of Focus

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

### Findings

Although school leaders support the development of teachers with effective feedback and next steps through classroom observations, the frequency of observations are not strategically planned. An effective system drives the use of teacher observation data in the design and facilitation of professional learning (PL), as well as informs decisions regarding teachers’ assignments.

### Impact

While observations are used to elevate schoolwide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, their efficacy is limited due to a lack of strategic planning of observations cycles.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leadership, consisting of the principal and four assistant principals, support teacher development through the *Advance* observation process. School leaders collaborate to identify teachers’ strengths and next steps. The number of teacher observations is based on each teacher’s preference, which is established during the Initial Planning Conference (IPC). During the IPC, school leaders and teachers collaboratively establish the teacher’s professional goals for the school year, which are referenced in their observation reports. School leaders observe teachers under their respective areas of supervision. The collaboration among school leaders ensures a consistent message when providing feedback, which builds coherence and improves teachers’ instructional practices schoolwide.

- Although school leaders provide effective feedback and next steps through the *Advance* observation process, the impact of that feedback is mitigated due to a lack of strategic planning of observation cycles. In one November observation report, a sixth-grade teacher was provided with detailed, in-depth feedback centered on her employing questioning and discussion strategies. Feedback included supports such as sending the teacher to visit a colleague’s classroom to see how gallery walks could be used to enhance discussion among students. Although the feedback effectively provided clear next steps related to the teacher’s professional goals, this was the only observation report filed for the current school year to date. A review of *Advance* summary reports shows that the observation completion rate was 57 percent by the end of April. Thus, the lack of strategic planning centered on the timely completion of observation reports leaves some teachers without consistent feedback, which lessens the impact on their instructional practices.

- School leaders review *Advance* observation data to determine the PL foci for the school year. Prior to the beginning of the school year, school leaders analyzed observation data and concluded that the areas in need of improvement centered on differentiated instruction, questioning and discussion strategies, student engagement, and designing coherent lessons. To support teachers, the school contracted with the Center for Integrated Teacher Education (CITE) to provide professional development sessions for teachers on the cited improvement areas. In addition, school leaders and teacher-leaders develop PL sessions focused on the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, with a particular focus on lesson planning. The focus on professional learning among teacher-leaders has enabled the school leaders to develop a succession plan for personnel to move into school leadership positions as needed.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

Curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate rigorous texts. Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are emphasized in curricula and academic tasks, and are embedded in a coherent way across grades and subjects.

Impact

School leaders and staff have developed a coherent curriculum that cognitively challenges students at all levels, with an emphasis on rigorous habits and higher-order skills. In addition, academic tasks are designed so that all learners must demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core and strategically integrate rigorous student texts. These texts form the foundation for academically challenging tasks that foster student engagement. In a sixth-grade ELA unit plan, students are tasked with studying the benefits and harmful consequences in using the pesticide Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT) by reading the book, *Frightful's Mountain*, as an anchor text. In a series of lessons, students engage in a variety of activities, such as identifying how text features support an argument, making connections between characters in the text, creating a cascading consequences chart, and engaging in a fishbowl discussion. In a seventh-grade ELA unit plan, students are tasked with learning about the effects of child labor by reading the book, *Lyddie*. Unit activities include analyzing book characters, using setting to promote the story, and studying the author's word choice to convey working conditions in the textile mills. The plan also calls for the use of videos on the Triangle Fire to enhance understanding of the text. Curricular documents across contents and grades emphasize rigorous texts, which challenge students and foster coherence.

- Academic tasks that are planned according to student needs embed higher-order skills so that diverse learners demonstrate their thinking. In a sixth-grade math lesson plan, students will work collaboratively to display measures of central tendency in using the answer, rationalize, misconceptions (ARM) strategy. The plan calls for students to be grouped based on analysis of a statistics and probability pre-assessment, and clearly delineates the specific academic gaps for each group. Student groups will engage in a math scavenger hunt in which they use dice to determine mean, median, mode, and range. The activity calls on the student groups to answer questions on a scavenger hunt work sheet. Scaffolds and differentiation take the form of a helpful hint folder and alternate questions for lower proficiency groups. Overall, curricular documents demonstrate academic tasks that are modified to address students’ academic needs.

- Curricular documents consistently embed rigorous habits that make the content accessible to all learners and enable them to make their thinking visible. In an eighth-grade social studies lesson plan, students are tasked with studying various World War II propaganda posters to identify symbols, audience, and purpose for each. Students are grouped homogenously based on proficiency levels. Group activities are differentiated by the number of posters analyzed, use of sentence starters, and extension activities aligned with each group’s proficiency level. Student thinking is made evident through group discussions and a share-out of group findings, facilitated by a list of guiding questions. Unit and lessons plans across contents and grades demonstrate activities that emphasize rigorous habits and that enable student thinking to be evident.
**Findings**

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect the belief that students learn best when engaged in collaborative, inquiry-based exploration with a focus on developing academic vocabulary. In addition, teaching strategies are informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, providing multiple entry points and high-quality supports and extensions into the curricula.

**Impact**

Students produce meaningful work products that demonstrate that all learners are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and engage in higher-order thinking.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The belief that students learn best when engaged in collaborative, inquiry-based exploration is evident in the “Think like a Pirate” initiative. Based on the book, *Teach Like a Pirate*, teaching practices are centered on engaging students through inquiry–based group work. In a seventh-grade Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) math lesson, student groups solved real-world math problems involving two- and three-dimensional shapes. Word problems were posted around the classroom and groups of students worked collaboratively to solve them. Group work was recorded on worksheets that were scaffolded with items such as sentence starters dependent on each group’s proficiency level. Each group was also provided with a separate error analysis word problem that measured the group’s ability to identify and rectify misconceptions, which was used by both classroom teachers to assess understanding of the material. The use of collaborative student groups to engage in inquiry-based work was evident in all visited classrooms.

- Teaching practices center on inferencing skills and the building of academic vocabulary, which was evident in the “I Make Inferences…I Build Academic Vocabulary…” (iBAV) initiative. In an eighth-grade ELA lesson, groups of students studied how specific word choices shape meaning, and the use of text evidence to make inferences in analyzing the book, *Unbroken*. The lesson incorporated a song from an online site that used academic vocabulary such as *enormous*, *thunderous*, and *shriek*. Student groups collaboratively focused on the use of figurative language, imagery, and word choice from three distinct parts of the book. Students were assigned to their groups based on reading proficiency levels. Each group recorded their findings on worksheets specific to their task. In all, these curricula-aligned practices reflect the school leadership’s focus on developing inferencing skills and academic vocabulary.

- Teaching strategies provide multiple ways for students to engage with the curricula. In a sixth-grade ELA lesson, students analyzed information presented in media to identify the problems with DDT. Using videos, charts, graphs, and articles, groups of students studied harmful issues related to DDT use, with a focus on identifying relevant information and applying inferencing skills. ELLs used electronic tablets to provide further vocabulary support. The type of media analyzed by each group was determined by the group’s proficiency level, including the use of extension questions for higher proficiency level groups. In a sixth-grade social studies lesson, groups of students worked collaboratively to analyze various documents related to the death of Julius Caesar. The complexity of the texts was aligned with a group’s proficiency level. The goal of the lesson was for each group to agree upon who killed Julius Caesar, and the motive. In all visited classrooms, teaching practices enabled students by providing multiple paths for them to access the content being taught.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings

All teachers use 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 consistently reflect the varied use of ongoing checks for understanding and self-assessment through the use of student reflection sheets.

Impact

Actionable and meaningful feedback, in the form of rubric-based next steps, is provided to students regarding their achievement. Teachers make effective adjustments to meet all students’ learning needs and students are aware of their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- In a sixth-grade math assignment, students worked collaboratively to graphically create a geometric shape on a coordinate plane. The assignment was rated using a four-point rubric, which included one next step for improvement. The rubric was used to assess such items as math reasoning and errors, and working collaboratively with others. For one student, the next step indicated that he should continue to challenge himself by using key words in his explanation, including using evidence to prove that his solution is valid. In a seventh-grade informational writing assignment, students were asked to write an essay based on the book, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. A four-point rubric was used to assess writing conventions, such as introduction, transitions, and conclusion. The teacher complimented one student for a well-organized essay with properly used transition words. As a next step, it was suggested that the student needed to clearly connect the claim made to the evidence provided. During a student meeting, there was consensus that all teachers regularly provide feedback with clear next steps.

- In a seventh-grade math end-of-unit assessment, students were asked to reflect upon their work in solving equations and inequalities. Students were asked to note their reflections and next steps on a reflection sheet, which provided sentence prompts to help guide their thinking. One student reflected that he was successful in setting up the problems to solve them. As a next step, he wrote that he must do better in reading the question carefully and to check his work after solving a math problem. In an eighth-grade mock ELA test, students were asked to reflect on how they can improve in preparation for the upcoming State test. One student reflected on how well she did going back to the text in answering questions, using an annotation strategy learned in class. As a next step, the student wrote that she needs to do better in using context clues to find the meaning of words. A review of student work products showed that students consistently reflect upon their own work and develop next steps.

- Teachers consistently employ checks for understanding to effectively adjust their lessons, as needed. In an eighth-grade social studies lesson, student groups analyzed World War II propaganda posters. The teacher checked on student progress when she paused the lesson, noting that students were having difficulties in discerning the differences between the Japanese flag today compared to at the time of World War II. The teacher asked students to apply their inferencing skills and historical evidence to understand the difference between the two flags. In all visited classrooms, there was evidence of checks for understanding that enabled teachers to adjust their lessons.
Quality Indicator: 4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development

Rating: Well Developed

Findings

All teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations that promote the school's focus on building academic vocabulary and inferencing skills. Distributed leadership structures are embedded within the school community.

Impact

Collaborations within professional teams strengthen teacher instructional capacity schoolwide, while data indicates increases in student achievement. Teachers build leadership capacity through structures such as the instructional cabinet and they have a voice in key decisions.

Supporting Evidence

- In a seventh-grade team meeting, teachers focused on how to implement book club strategies to build students' skills in understanding vocabulary words by using context clues. Team members reviewed a three-year trend on student performance on the New York State (NYS) ELA test on the skill strands of analyzing how particular elements of a story or drama interact, and vocabulary acquisition. The team also reviewed current summative school data on these strands. Next, the team reviewed the different school initiatives adopted to address these skill strands, such as Word Generation, iBAV, and modifications to the seventh-grade curricula in teaching vocabulary to determine their efficacy. The team agreed that the initiatives overall have improved the development of academic vocabulary. They also agreed that the data indicated that further work is needed in the use of context clue skills to further develop acquisition of academic vocabulary. Team members decided to incorporate book clubs into the upcoming unit on the book, Lyddie, to build context clue skills, which they based on published academic research.

- A sixth-grade social studies inquiry team meeting summary indicated that team members decided to focus on inferencing skills based on students' performance on a baseline assessment. Team members modified their lessons to explicitly teach inferencing skills while studying text sources on early hominids. They also revamped assessment rubrics to effectively assess inferencing skills. Subsequent analysis of mid-year summative data indicated that students were still struggling with inferencing when analyzing text evidence. Further modifications to unit and lesson plans were made to teach inferencing skills through an in-depth analysis of evidence in units on Hammurabi's Code, and a study of geography's impact on culture. A recent review of data demonstrated that there was increased student proficiency in inferencing skills during the Hammurabi's Code unit, but no increase noted in the geography unit. Team members discussed the discrepancy, which included the possibility that the length of the assessment may have affected the results. As a result, team members adjusted the assessment protocol to mitigate the possible effect of any difference in assessment protocols and modified how students collected evidence. A review of teacher-team meeting minutes demonstrated grade and department inquiry cycles that align with the school's instructional focus, which lead to modifications to curricula.

- Distributive leadership structures are evident in the instructional cabinet, which is comprised of model teachers, peer collaborative teachers, and coaches. The instructional cabinet oversees the school's instructional initiatives, and the members act as liaisons with school leadership. In addition, lead teachers facilitate grade- and department-level inquiry work. The school also has a teacher-team focused on the development of academic vocabulary schoolwide. In a teacher meeting, all agreed that distributive leadership structures enable teachers to influence and modify curricula.