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

High School of Applied Communication 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>To what extent does the school...</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>Proficient</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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</td>
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<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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<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>Proficient</td>
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<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>
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</tbody>
</table>

### 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>
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<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>Proficient</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>
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Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<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

Teachers are engaged in inquiry-based vertical teams that promote the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Teachers are active in distributed leadership structures such as student affairs advisor, data specialist, and inquiry team leaders.

Impact

Teachers’ collaborations strengthen their instructional capacity. Additionally, teachers have a voice in key decisions, such as professional development needs, which affect student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- The majority of teachers engage in inquiry-based professional collaborations and align their work to schoolwide goals. One goal includes improving student performance on Regents exams through teacher collaboration. As an example, a review of math team minutes reveals that they analyzed student work and determined that students struggled with multi-step word problems. Teachers then researched different problem-solving strategies and decided to implement the Circle, Underline, Box, and Evaluate (CUBE) strategy. The team also created a rubric of implementation to self-assess how each teacher was implementing the strategy. Teachers were also developing exit slips that included Regents questions that require students to use the CUBE strategy as evidence of implementation and to determine the impact on students’ performance and identify next steps. One teacher shared that the CUBE strategy has helped her identify specific areas her students struggle with within a problem. Therefore, teacher teams support schoolwide goals and strengthen the instructional capacity of teachers.

- As a result of inquiry-based collaborations, teachers have strengthened their instructional capacity in identifying new strategies and curricular adjustments to support student learning. For example, the English Language Arts (ELA) team was observed reviewing three pieces of student work to determine if students were able to identify how the author used tone to reveal the central idea. It was determined that while students were able to identify the central idea, they were not able to include how tone was used to reveal the central idea. The team decided to find exemplary essays to provide students with a model. Additionally, teachers discussed adding a lesson to review tone and how it is used to develop the central idea. One teacher at the team meeting shared, and all present agreed that collaborations provide each teacher with something different that they can use in their classrooms.

- Teachers have a voice in key decisions that affect teacher practice and student learning. For example, one teacher leader, with feedback from the staff, developed the professional development (PD) plan. As an example, three sessions on rigorous instruction were added to the PD plan after receiving feedback from teachers. Another teacher leader established a partnership with an organization that helps prepare students for postsecondary success with workshops on resume building and interview skills. Teachers also serve as inquiry-team leaders and facilitate their weekly meetings. Additionally, several teachers serve in leadership roles, such as student affairs advisor, assessment coordinator, and special education coordinator.
Findings
Teaching practices are beginning to reflect a set of beliefs that students learn best when they are cognitively challenged with student-centered tasks and opportunities to engage in discussions. Teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points into student work products and discussions.

Impact
Though teaching practices are informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching, all students do not yet consistently produce meaningful student work products in which they demonstrate their thinking. There are uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- The articulated belief that students learn best through discussions was evident in some classrooms. For example, in a grade ten ELA class, students discussed the text *Aztec Flowers* in small groups using a text-based discussion protocol. One student shared that he was wondering about the origin of sacrifice. Another student added that she had a similar curiosity. She said, "I'm wondering why a war would be started over a sacrifice." Throughout the classroom, students had similar discussions. In a grade eleven ELA class, students discussed how lost love could affect the human spirit using a poem and *The Great Gatsby*. One student shared that the last stanza of the poem refers to the fish not having a life outside the bowl and compares that to Gatsby not being able to give Daisy the life she wants. However, these articulated beliefs were not evident across all classrooms. As an example, in a chemistry class, after students independently completed the do now, the teacher asked students what they noticed about the chemical formulas. A few students shared their responses. Next, the teacher explained isomers and chain isomers, and students copied the notes. Additionally, in a grade nine ELA class, while students were using a text-based protocol to discuss *Night*, not all groups adhered to the protocol, thus missing opportunities to engage students in producing meaningful work products.

- During a grade ten integrated co-taught (ICT) algebra class, students had resource pages at their tables that included a QR code to a reference video on the topic, a sample problem, and formulas. During the lesson, equations of varying levels of difficulty were posted around the room. Students walked around the room and chose the problem that they would like to solve. Students were told they could discuss how to solve their chosen problems with their partners. While students had access to the resource pages and selected their own problem, some students struggled to factor the problem completely and waited for further teacher instruction. In some classrooms, students received vocabulary sheets to help them access the text; however, most students received the same vocabulary sheets and graphic organizers. For example, in a Global Studies class all students had the same vocabulary resource page and graphic organizer. Thus, strategies such as providing scaffolds are not yet consistently providing multiple entry points into the curricula.

- Opportunities for students to engage in high levels of thinking and discussion varied across classrooms. For example, in a grade ten ELA class, students were tasked with discussing the tone of three conversations based on the emojis that were included in the conversation. Some students completed this task quickly and did not have another task. One student shared that the task was easy and that in the text they are reading, he would use context clues to determine tone. In a Living Environment class, while students were provided with two higher-order questions to answer as the do now, not all students completed the task. Some students sat quietly, while some attempted one or both of the questions. During the share-out, the same two students shared their responses. Thus, student work products and discussions do not yet consistently reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.
## Additional Finding

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

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts such as text-based answers and application. Curricula and academic tasks such as argumentative essays and solving real-world problems, consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills.

### Impact

Curricular decisions build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students. Across grades and subjects, rigorous habits and higher-order skills are emphasized through tasks such as discussions for all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities.

### Supporting Evidence

- Curricular documents across grades and content areas evidence alignment with the Common Core and the integration of the math instructional shifts. For example, there is evidence of the math shift of application in an algebra unit plan with a task that requires students to solve a system of linear equations graphically and algebraically to apply to real-world problems. Furthermore, included in an algebra lesson plan is a task that includes students applying a recursive rule to solve complex math problems. Additionally, a review of unit plans reveals that skills such as solving linear equations and rate of change are built upon from course to course. Thus, curricula promote next-level readiness and consistently integrate the math instructional shifts.

- A review of lesson and unit plans reveals evidence of integrating the instructional shifts around reading and writing. Students have access to a variety of lessons that include equal amounts of literary and informational texts. As an example, a grade nine ELA lesson plan includes that students will use the text *The Night Face Up*, as well as an informational text on the Aztecs. Additionally, across content areas, students consistently cite textual evidence to support their discussions and written arguments. For example, a Global Studies unit plan includes a task in which student read different texts to identify textual evidence to support their claims as to who benefited from the Middle East Mandate. Moreover, a grade ten ELA lesson plan includes a task that requires students to identify textual evidence of how the author uses parallel plots to create suspense in the story. Therefore, curricula promote college readiness skills such as citing textual evidence to support claims.

- Across curricular documents, there is an emphasis on prompting higher-order discussions and rigorous habits. All students, including ELLs and students with disabilities, engage in the same tasks with supports such as vocabulary sheets and graphic organizers provided to ensure access to the tasks. For example, included in a grade nine Global Studies lesson plan is a task in which students use multiple text documents to determine how the Inca gained, consolidated, and maintained power in their empire. The plan includes that students will use a text-rendering protocol to discuss significant findings from their readings, as well as new insights that were gained from the text. Furthermore, a grade eleven ELA lesson plan reveals that students will engage in a discussion on how a poem connects to *The Great Gatsby*. Students will synthesize the poem’s central idea and then identify how it relates to themes in *The Great Gatsby*. In a Living Environment lesson plan, there is a task in which students review images of chromosome maps and compare and contrast normal and abnormal karyotypes, including the difference between male and female, as well as chromosomes that indicate down syndrome. Thus, tasks emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills such as analyzing and synthesizing information from multiple sources for all students.
Additional Finding

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

School leaders and teachers use common assessments such as mock Regents exams to determine student progress toward goals. Across classrooms, teachers’ assessment practices reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding, such as whole group and small group questioning, and student self-assessment.

Impact

Teachers consistently use common assessment data to adjust curricula and instruction. Teachers’ assessment practices result in the design and delivery of instruction directly connected to students’ needs.

Supporting Evidence

- The school administers common assessments in all core subjects four times a year, as well as mock Regents exams. Common assessments are developed by each department and are aligned to the skills and standards students need to demonstrate mastery of each course. After each exam, an item analysis is conducted to identify trends and patterns and next steps to improve student performance. As an example, ELA teachers in grades ten and eleven revised their curriculum to include more opportunities for students to practice synthesizing information after data from a common assessment revealed this gap. As another example, the science department revised its curriculum to include more scientific data and diagrams for students to analyze after this gap was uncovered. Therefore, common assessment results are used to adjust curricula across grades and subject areas.

- Mock Regents exams were used to determine students who need additional support to be ready for the Regents exams. As an example, school leaders and teachers used results from an algebra mock Regents exams to identify students whose scores fell between 65 percent and 80 percent. The school has a goal for all students to receive a score of at least 80 percent on the algebra Regents exam. Students in that group were then provided with additional small group instruction during lunch or after school. Thus, the school uses common assessments to determine student progress toward goals.

- Teachers continually check for understanding through whole and small group questioning, as well as individual conferencing, as needed. As an example, in a Global Studies class, after listening in to a couple of small group discussions, the teacher determined students were struggling with the definition of the word democracy. She adjusted the lesson by pausing the group discussions to redefine the word and provide students with examples. Additionally, while students were watching a video clip, the teacher wrote down some key vocabulary words that students may struggle with to review after the video clip. In a grade twelve ELA class, while circulating throughout the room, the teacher noticed that not all students were engaged in a higher-level discussion on the text. He reviewed the text-based discussion protocol with the class, which lead to more students discussing the text at a higher level. Therefore, teachers’ make effective adjustments to meet the learning needs of all students.

- Across classrooms and content areas, students also engage in self- and peer-assessments. As an example, in a Global Studies 2 class, students used a group discussion rubric to evaluate the quality of discussions they were having. Students were required to evaluate themselves, as well as peers in their groups. Students shared that using a discussion rubric helps improve their in-class discussions.
Additional Finding

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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

High expectations aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* are consistently conveyed to staff through documents such as a staff handbook, composite feedback, and memos. The school provides ongoing information to families regarding student progress toward next-level readiness.

Impact

Communication around high expectations is supported through professional development, ensuring that all teachers understand and work towards goals. Communication from school leaders and teachers through an online platform and other strategies provide frequent opportunities for families to understand student progress towards meeting expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders conduct composite observations of each department and provide feedback aligned to schoolwide expectations. As an example, all teachers are expected to use a discussion protocol in their classrooms. A review of feedback provided to each department after a round of composite observations reveals that each department is reminded to incorporate discussion protocols. Additionally, feedback includes examples of different protocols each department could use to meet this expectation. Furthermore, a review of the faculty handbook and instructional timeline memos reveals consistent sharing of high expectations around instructional design and delivery, grading policy, and professional responsibilities. Examples of items covered in the handbook include a suggested lesson and unit plan template, strategies for establishing a positive learning environment, and a ladder of referral for students in need of additional support. The staff handbook, composite feedback, and memos, taken together, reveal that high expectations are consistently communicated to staff.

- School leaders have developed a system of support and accountability that holds all staff to high expectations. Professional development supports teachers to meet high expectations connected to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Included in the schoolwide professional development plan is an action plan to support the school’s instructional focus, which includes increasing student engagement with high-level discussions. Included in the action plan are different discussion protocols that will be introduced during professional development to support teachers in meeting this expectation. Teachers are held accountable to meeting these expectations through both evaluative and non-evaluative observations. Thus, teachers are held accountable and supported in meeting schoolwide expectations.

- Expectations connected to college and career readiness are shared with families through an online platform, written communication, and in-person meetings. Families have access to an online grade book that allows them to stay informed about their children’s progress. During the parent meeting, all parents agreed that while the teachers use different methods of communicating, they are always kept informed about their children’s progress. Additionally, families receive information on course selections that are available to their child. One parent shared that this was very helpful in supporting her child’s progress toward graduation. Parents also receive monthly newsletters. Included in one newsletter is information on a schoolwide initiative that encourages all students to earn an 85 on exams because that is considered a mastery grade for college. The newsletter also includes how parents can support their child with this goal. A few examples include attending afterschool tutoring, monitoring the online grade book, and have regular conversations with their child about school. Therefore, school leaders and staff communicate next-level readiness expectations and help families understand student progress toward those expectations.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

School leaders support teacher development with frequent cycles of both evaluative and non-evaluative observations. Written feedback captures teachers’ strengths, challenges, and next steps using the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Impact

Observations result in feedback that promotes professional growth and makes clear the expectations for teacher practice as well as the supports available to them.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders conduct frequent classroom observations and provide feedback utilizing the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Teachers receive an evaluative or non-evaluative observation every four to five weeks. Each rated item includes specific, detailed evidence from the observed class to support the rating. Next steps for teaching improvements are included at the end of each evaluative observation report. School leaders use a cycle of observations that includes targeting teachers based on individual needs. Additionally, school leaders use non-evaluative observations to norm their practices to ensure that all teachers receive the same quality of feedback. Teachers confirmed that they received a different number of observations based on their needs. As an example, one teacher shared that as a new teacher, he received more observations and supports than a more experienced teacher and that this is had a direct impact on his practice. Furthermore, school leaders review data from previous observations to determine teacher growth. As an example, in an observation report, the school leader references that the teacher has made progress in designing coherent instruction as a result of implementing feedback from a prior observation.

- Observation reports contain feedback that captures teachers’ strengths and weaknesses and is accompanied by next steps the teacher should take to improve their practice and impact student success. For example, one observation report commends the teacher for implementing strategies that were promoted at a department workshop such as station teaching and using a discussion protocol. The school leader went on to recommend that the teacher include an exit slip with enough time for students to complete, as a strategy to assess learning. In the following observation, the teacher is commended for showing growth in several areas, including using assessment in instruction. In another observation report, the teacher is commended for using multiple sources to engage students in learning. Next steps for this teacher included providing a text-based discussion protocol to deepen student discussions. During the teacher meeting, teachers came to a quick consensus that school leaders provide feedback and follow-up to ensure feedback is implemented or offer additional support.

- A review of observation reports reveals teachers implement recommended strategies and demonstrate growth. Additionally, included in most observation reports are additional resources such as professional articles that are used to support teacher growth. Furthermore, observation reports include follow-up tasks such as writing a summary of the article or meeting with an assistant principal. For example, one observation report recommends the teacher plan multiple entry points into the lesson. In the next observation, the teacher improved in the area of designing coherent instruction as a result of implementing prior feedback. Therefore, school leaders provide feedback and support that promotes teacher growth.