Quality Review Report

2018-2019

The Highbridge Green School
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 09X361

200 West 167Th Street
Bronx
NY 10452

Principal: Kyle Brillante

Dates of Review:
February 6, 2019 - February 7, 2019

Lead Reviewer: Jorge Estrella
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

The Highbridge Green School 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>
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</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>Area of Focus</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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Quality Ratings continued

### School Culture

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

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

School leaders make effective organizational decisions that are well-aligned to school goals and long-range plans. Staff and students are strategically grouped to accelerate student achievement, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, in all content areas.

### Impact

The school leaders’ decisions drive organizational partnerships that bring additional financial resources for pedagogical support, extended day programs, and investments in technology. Collaborative hiring practices maximize the quality of instruction to which students have access.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders make informed, highly effective organizational and budgetary decisions that are aligned to support the school’s instructional goals, Common Core Learning Standards, best teacher practice, and student achievement. The school has received an Expanded Learning Time initiative grant, totaling to date over $1.5 million. These additional resources help fund external literacy and math coaches and equip classrooms with state-of-the-art technology, such as laptops, interactive whiteboards, tablets, and document cameras. During the meeting with students, they shared that every day they use an instructional web-based platform to support them with math and English Language Arts (ELA).

- School leaders have made a significant investment in classrooms libraries for all classrooms. In addition, school leaders allocated resources for per-diem and per-session to allow teachers to participate in professional development (PD) or curriculum planning sessions as well as facilitate summer instructional activities with teachers, students and families. As a result, the school is making progress toward reaching its goals, with students demonstrating their learning in math standards. When comparing this school year’s baseline and midline assessments, the sixth graders math performance grew an average of three standards, increasing their total mastery 67 percent of math standards. In addition, the current eighth grade cohort demonstrated mastery of more than seven prerequisite skills and is on track to mastering all 12 in *Accelerated Math*.

- School leaders ensure partnerships with Community Based Organizations to offer a program that extends student learning time by three hours, until 5:20 p.m., five days a week. Another support for students is offered via after-school and Saturday programs, which are funded with Title I and Title III allocations. Approximately 90 percent of the students participate, receiving an additional academic and enrichment block each day, leading to a reduction of the overall number of students missing work. Indeed, the school tracking system reflects that the seventh grade reduced the amount of missing work between November 2018 and December 2018 by 50 percent. Based on the January 2019 Degrees of Power Reading (DRP) results, eighth graders have grown more than the national average, the equivalent to 4.75-years of growth in 2.5-years.

- Teacher assignments are decided based on student data and needs, a school-based option, and circular six. Faculty and school leaders decided to restructure the day to include reading and math interventions with a seven-period day. After-school programs are targeted for students to work on literacy strategies using a research-based program designed to promote students’ academic language and argumentation skills. In addition, the school hired two additional English as a New Language (ENL) teachers to provide push-in and pull-out support to ELLs. School leaders and teachers engage in a carefully designed hiring process. This involves resume screening, a rubric-based interview protocol, demonstration lessons, a mock inquiry meeting with student work analysis, and an in-person final interview with all stakeholders, including students. This practice enables better student outcomes because of the collaborative efforts to boost the quality of the professional community and expand professional expertise.
### Area of Focus

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

Across classrooms, lessons provide multiple entry points into the curricula with an emphasis on the use of Tier II and Tier III words to promote academic vocabulary. High levels of student thinking and discussion are evident across classrooms, but pedagogy does not always ensure equitable participation opportunities for all students.

**Impact**

While most learners, including ELLs and students with disabilities, are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills, ownership of learning for all students is sometimes hampered where instruction is less student-centered and more teacher-led.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Across classrooms, lessons embedded multiple entry points and the use of purposeful questioning techniques. Teachers used visuals, leveled texts, and several types of graphic organizers, ensuring scaffolds for all students. In some classes, teachers asked open-ended questions to push student thinking, facilitated responses, and gave students an opportunity to deepen their thinking by questioning each other during pair-share, using the turn and talk approach, and in whole class discussions. In a self-contained sixth-grade math class, students were asked to create equivalent expressions in a group setting and share explanations with each other using reason and evidence. Students used the CUBES strategy (circle key numbers, underline the questions, box math action words, evaluate what steps to take, and solve) and then checked to solve their word problems with their partners.

- Across classrooms, students were observed annotating text, using textual evidence to support their claims, and using academic vocabulary by fusing in Tier II and Tier III words. Instruction included supports for differentiation, such as varied texts, choice of tasks, choice of reading and scaffolds to increase student thinking. In an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) eighth grade ELA class, students were grouped based on their DRP levels. Visual supports, such as pictures, schedules, and color-coded materials were used to provide scaffolds for ELLs, students with disabilities, and struggling students. The use of differentiated tasks provided opportunities for students to have high levels of thinking and participation. However, in a sixth-grade special education math lesson, students worked on equivalent expressions using the distributive property. While the students had access to manipulatives such as algebra tiles, clear directions on how to use them were not provided. As a result, some students were unable to complete tasks. Consequently, the scaffolds in lessons such as these were not strategic.

- In most classes, teachers implemented collaborative protocols for students to have conversations and small group discussions based on questions posed by the teacher. Students in groups were assigned roles such as facilitator, materials manager, recorder, and task manager. In many classes, students were observed facilitating the learning process and were diligent in their roles. For instance, in an eighth grade social studies class, students were asked to work in groups to discuss different forms of protests and determine the persuasive power of each. Then they had to determine if the forms of protest used in the film Iron Jawed Angels were successful. Students were observed discussing their ideas using accountable talk stems, sentence starters, and graphic organizers, with each student taking individual roles within the group, facilitating the learning process. Furthermore, in order to provide context for ELLs, the teacher projected clips of the film, provided transcriptions, and offered peer support. However, in an eighth grade math class, although there were opportunities for turn-and-talk, during whole group engagement, interaction was teacher-directed. The teacher posed a question to students, received responses, and then asked another question. This teacher-led approach prevented students from responding to each other, resulting in the absence of student ownership.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

The school has effectively and strategically integrated the Common Core and the instructional shifts into curricula. Weekly inquiry team collaborations allow teachers to plan and refine academic tasks, promoting cognitively challenging curricula across grades and subjects.

Impact

As a result of strategic curricular decisions, all students across the grades have many opportunities to experience engaging and coherent curricula that deepen their thinking. Therefore, students are well-equipped for the demands of colleges and careers.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers prioritize three essential intellectual skills (EIS): reading to infer; constructing a compelling argument; and evaluating for precision and accuracy. To support the implementation of these core academic and college readiness skills, curricula are aligned to the Common Core. Teachers design their own curricula across content areas and incorporate the instructional shifts, leading to high-level, text-based discussions, a focus on process, argumentative writing, and increased text complexity. Fluency, reasoning skills, and effective communication are reinforced through student-to-student discussion and open-ended, real-world problem solving. To support teacher capacity and build coherence, the EIS is consistently incorporated across unit plans. For instance, teachers adjusted the Understanding by Design unit template to include specific reference to each core skill and a standard expectation for argumentative writing. A review of instructional planning documents revealed that units of study are building coherence in the development of how tasks are being designed to allow students to demonstrate their learning. All lesson plans use “I can” statements, such as “I can develop strategies to identify solution sets” or “I can analyze the key points of a controversial debate.” As a result of this coherent approach to curricula design across subject and grades, teachers prepare all students for a path to college and career opportunities.

- Teacher teams consistently engage in analysis of student work and an ongoing review of data from baseline assessments, performance tasks, and student writing samples. For example, at the beginning of 2018, the seventh-grade inquiry team used baseline writing assessments to gather data about students as writers. Teachers noticed that students, including ELLs and students with disabilities, were not at grade level in writing a thesis statement, picking strong evidence, or composing an introduction or conclusion. Thus, teachers developed strategies to support students in these specific areas, created an ongoing calendar to review student work on a continual basis, and made necessary curricular modifications based on their observations. One strategy designed to support students in writing thesis statements was using images to organize ideas into generalized reasons. A graphic organizer with a checklist to guide students through the decision-making process as they evaluated the strength of their collected evidence helped students with their evidence collection. To support students in writing grade-level introductions and conclusions, student models and categorizing sentences were among strategies used.

- Across the school, teachers’ lesson plans include targeted, small-group instruction and modified or differentiated tasks ensuring that all learners are appropriately, cognitively engaged and working towards meeting grade-specific expectations. For example, the eighth grade number sense and equations unit includes embedded supports for ELLs such as guided notes, word banks, turn-and-talk activities, and strategic groupings. Lesson plans reviewed evidence that teachers are using summative and formative assessment data to inform groupings, leveled texts, scaffolds, and extensions for higher achievers.
Additional Finding

<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 assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with curricula and the learning targets of units and lessons. Teachers’ assessment practices consistently use varied checks for understanding, such as probing questions, and student self-assessment.

Impact
Teachers' assessment practices provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student progress. Ongoing checks for understanding gauge students' progress towards learning targets and, in some cases, result in effective, on-the-spot instructional adjustments during lessons.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use rubrics aligned to the Common Core to evaluate students’ proficiency and content knowledge. An eighth grade science rubric includes making a compelling scientific argument, and a performance task rubric includes these criteria for success: thesis, evidence, analysis, language, structure, and content knowledge. Student work is assessed on a four-level scale. A level 4 for content knowledge reads, “I have created my own definition of ‘life’ that is sophisticated, shows a deep understanding of the content, and/or challenges current scientific ideas.” Students articulated that rubrics are used to grade and self-assess. They also agreed that rubrics provide them with detailed information of what is expected to complete their assignments, such as essays, projects, or performance tasks.

- Teacher feedback to students was observed in most classrooms, in student work folders and on bulletin boards. Students shared that they receive verbal and written feedback from teachers and peers. Student work products reviewed revealed that teachers provide written feedback and next steps in the form of glows and grows. One example of feedback reads, “You did a great job following the structure of the argument essay and using transitions to introduce each part of the essay. Next time include two sentences of analysis so that you can explain what your evidence means and connect it to your thesis.” Another reads, “Great Job creating a double number line. Next time, make sure the double number line starts with the original ratio the problem gave you and label the number line.” Students agreed that teachers’ feedback “helps them produce better work products and improve their grades on their assignments.”

- Most teachers use questions, student responses, student share-outs, written assignments, conference notes, and hand gestures to gauge students’ progress towards the learning targets that inform levels of understanding and learning. Teachers were observed conferring with students to clarify strategies, concepts, and/or essential skills for academic improvement, such as using CUBES strategies for math, annotating text, and using evidence to support claims in discussions or writing. In observed lessons, during group work activities, teachers circulated about the room interacting with students and asking them probing questions to further their thinking. For example, in an ICT sixth-grade ELA class, while students were working in groups discussing a text related to their focus questions, teachers circulated around the room, noting students’ responses. In some cases, teachers paused the conversations and asked students to ensure that they use textual evidence to support their points. In addition to this, once groups were on track to accomplish their tasks, teachers offered support to individual students who needed one-on-one attention.

- Students shared that they frequently engage in self-assessment activities, such as reflections after tasks or exit tickets at the end of their lessons. A review of written reflections showed that students assess their own work. In a science performance task, a student reflection read, “My score is 3.9 because I did include my thesis, sufficient evidence and clear analysis in my writing. I also backed-up my claim with textual and experimental evidence.”
Findings

School leaders systematically communicate high expectations to the entire staff through ongoing feedback and professional learning aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. A culture for learning is maintained that promotes student ownership of their learning.

Impact

The school values of grit, responsibility, empathy, enthusiasm and inspiration (GREEN) promote effective communication and support high expectations for learning, resulting in a culture of mutual accountability. Students are provided with clear, focused, and effective feedback as well as guidance supports that ensure students are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders consistently communicate high expectations for teacher practice through the use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching as a lens to inform ongoing feedback that is directed towards meeting the needs of all teachers. PD sessions, common planning time meetings, and individual conferences are devoted to creating a shared understanding of effective teaching practices and provide learning opportunities for all faculty. In addition, the school leader and teachers developed a staff handbook that includes detailed instructional expectations, GREEN values, teamwork expectations, logistics, and school policies. Furthermore, school leaders send weekly reminders to staff about instructional outcomes, observed best practices, upcoming schoolwide events, and students' academic and social emotional progress towards meeting the GREEN values (individually and aggregated by class and by house). Thus, teachers have a well-defined understanding of effective teaching practices, and clear expectations are embedded in the school’s culture, enhancing student work products and discussion schoolwide.

- To promote higher levels of professional trust among teachers and support the development of teacher practice, school leaders provide ongoing opportunities for intervisitations, co-teaching, modeling, and co-planning. For their intervisitations, teachers use protocols with elements of the Danielson Framework for Teaching, thus creating a normed understanding of the expectations of Danielson. At weekly sessions, teachers debrief about their observations and exchange feedback with colleagues. The outcomes of these discussions are transparent and are shared in an online sharing file platform. As a result, school leaders provide targeted and individualized support for teachers, resulting in shared accountability focused around student learning.

- School staff ensure that preparation for articulation to high school starts with students in the summer bridge program. There, incoming sixth graders engage in learning activities to understand the culture of high expectations and the GREEN values and receive the scope of middle school academic expectations across content areas. In addition to their rigorous curriculum, seventh graders engage in College Access for All work activities, including college advisory sessions and trips to colleges. Moreover, eighth graders take two Regent classes, Living Environment and Algebra. Faculty members support all students and families from grades six to eight in understanding the high school articulation process, with one-on-one sessions, targeted advisory lessons, help for students filling out applications, and counseling students about the different high school options. Students shared that the school is preparing them for a path connected to college and career readiness by teaching them skills such as annotation, using text evidence to support their claims, and engaging in problem solving. Students shared that weekly progress reports and the online grading system keep them informed about their progress towards the next grade level. As reported in the 2018 School Quality Snapshot, 87 percent of this school's former 8th graders earned enough high school credit in ninth grade to be on track for graduation, which represents four percentage points above the comparison group.
Findings

Teacher teams systematically analyze classroom practice, assessment data, and student work. Embedded distributive leadership structures promote teachers’ voices in key decisions, from planning curricula to improving practices and student achievement.

Impact

Embedded data collection systems effectively support collaborative teacher analysis of student work and student assessments, which results in shared improvements in teacher practice and mastery of goals for subgroups of students. Teachers are empowered to play an integral role in impacting student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher team meetings documents reveal consistent use of protocols to analyze student work and assessment data across grades and subjects. In literacy inquiry team meetings, teachers assess student data to identify trends to create focus across content areas. One focus is on ELLs, with the purpose of improving their literacy skills. Teachers identified ELLs who presented different levels of reading and writing ability. During the observed eighth grade literacy inquiry team meeting, teachers analyzed writing pieces from these students. Identified trends for students were the following; improvement from writing an unstructured essay to a structured essay, with paragraphs; counterclaims include clear refutation; beginning to extend elaboration; and a demonstrated better understanding of text. Then, teachers discussed strategies to implement to support progress towards mastery, such as the use of visually mapping steps, reinforcing the implementation of academic vocabulary, offering opportunities for students to practice the expansion of their ideas, and providing actionable feedback that students can use during revision. Teachers shared that this team data analysis has provided them with detailed information about their students’ progress and needs as well as opportunities to reflect on their practices and share strategies with colleagues.

- Sixth-grade inquiry team documents revealed that teachers fused literacy strategies across subjects and integrated more hands-on activities, as well. In a sixth-grade science lesson about the relationship between an object and its motion, students built a ramp and were comparing the speed of a car on a road with bumps and with a flat road. Students recorded their findings on a chart and wrote conclusions about their experiments. ELLs received language supports from peers and the teacher and used a sentence starter chart. All students demonstrated mastery in conducting their experiment, working effectively in groups and using academic language. As a result of such team practices, the sixth-grade grew an average of 12 percentage points in vocabulary when comparing baseline with midline assessments, increasing their total number of words mastered by more than 60 percent. ELLs grew at comparable rates, increasing their mastery to 55 percent of words.

- Distributed leadership structures are in place, and teachers are making instructional decisions that impact student learning. The roles held by teachers are integral to the success of the school. For instance, the school has literacy, math, and strategic reading coaches who lead PD, participate in leadership team weekly meetings, and meet regularly with new teachers. Teachers also make curriculum decisions and lead schoolwide activities, such as designing and implementing the advisory curriculum and participating in the hiring process as members of the hiring committee. Teachers reported that intervisitation empowers them to share best practices, watch colleagues in action, and offer and receive feedback. Teachers shared that this opportunity has helped them improve their practice as well as promote their growth as instructional leaders. In this regard, teachers exercise leadership in the school and affect student achievement by supporting and developing one another.