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

New Voices School of Academic & Creative Arts 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>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to State 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 State standards and the 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 Celebration</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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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### School Culture

**To what extent does the school...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<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>
</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>
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</tbody>
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### Systems for Improvement

**To what extent does the school...**

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<thead>
<tr>
<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>
</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 schoolwide 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 State standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator: 1.2 Pedagogy
Rating: Well Developed

Findings
In the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices reflect a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, which supports real-world connections and applications, multiple entry points, and scaffolds for all learners, and is informed by discussions during team collaborations.

Impact
Across classrooms, all learners, including Multilingual Learners (MLLs) and students with disabilities, are engaged in challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in student work products.

Supporting Evidence

- Across grade levels and disciplines, teaching practices align with the school’s coherent set of beliefs that students learn best when there are rigorous tasks with meaningful, creative, and transparent support so that all learners, including students with disabilities and MLLs, have opportunities to think critically about content. The instructional teams collaborate to provide scaffolds, supports, and enrichment tasks that align to the activities planned for the units. This model enables teachers to share instructional practices, as well as to address the needs of varied learners. Common practices observed in classrooms include modeling, checks for understanding, visual and auditory supports, higher-order questioning, student-to-student collaboration, and differentiation in the form of scaffolds like discussion prompts, sentence frames, and graphic organizers to make thinking visible. As a result of these structures, students scoring at proficient math levels on the State math exam increased eleven percent, from 68 percent in 2018 to 79 percent in 2019.

- Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers strategically provide multiple entry points and high-quality supports and extensions into the curricula. For example, students in a grade-eight English Language Arts (ELA) class were reading a poem connected to their class novel. Students had the text to read as they listened to the poem. The poem was played multiple times allowing students the opportunity to take notes and create meaning as they read and listened. High-leverage vocabulary was identified and students used highlighters and graphic organizers to support note taking and text annotation. During a grade-eight math lesson on comparing lines and linear equations, students had multiple models to use as a reference for their thinking and white boards to make their thinking transparent. In a grade-seven math class, students used proportions to solve real-world percent problems. Two graphic organizers were given to targeted students, one with and one without percent proportion supports and students who demonstrated mastery, were given a budget that they had to work backwards from in order to solve the problem.

- All learners in classrooms had instructional supports that enabled them to access higher-order tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in their work. For example, in a grade-seven Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) humanities class, all students participated in a Socratic seminar. Students partnered in order to provide coaching to each other during the seminar and students had graphic organizers to help articulate their ideas and to track the feedback that they gave to each other. Students had thought time and struggling learners or reticent speakers were provided with additional teacher time and guiding questions to ensure that they were able to actively participate in the seminar with their peers. Similarly, in a grade-six ICT humanities class, students had a variety of resources to support their group work with textbooks, online access, a content-related magazine, pictures, and maps. Students had group roles that enabled all students to participate. Students with less fluency had appropriate resources and were given strategic roles which required them to understand concepts and key vocabulary and allowed them to engage in the group product and presentation.
Findings

Across most classrooms, teachers use or create assessments and rubrics that are aligned with school’s curricula. Teachers check for understanding through questioning and other formative assessments.

Impact

Teachers provide verbal actionable feedback; however, there are missed opportunities for personalized and meaningful written feedback regarding student achievement. Although teachers make instructional adjustments to meet student needs, students are not always aware of their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- Curricula-aligned rubrics are utilized across subjects and grades to provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement; however, there were missed opportunities for personalized and meaningful written feedback. For example, a rubric to evaluate a grade-eight ELA project had areas of success and areas of challenge highlighted, but there was no personalized and meaningful feedback on the rubric for students to use to guide future work. Similarly, a grade-seven math rubric was used to evaluate a performance task; however, there was no personalized feedback or next steps provided. On a grade-seven rubric used to evaluate a literary essay, the teacher provided some feedback which stated, “We need to work on paragraph and explanation development,” but did not provide next steps for a student to take to improve the work.

- Students shared that, at times, they were able to use feedback from teachers across their classes. For example, one student received verbal feedback the previous year regarding analyzing a text that she used to guide her work this year. Another student received verbal feedback around citation of sources and best practices in paraphrasing that she used throughout her classes. Written feedback; however, was not consistently meaningful. In reviewing student work, an eighth-grade humanities writing task had feedback such as “Be clear who you are writing about.” and “Your summary must include how Crooks was portrayed after Curley’s wife addressed them” while a sixth-grade literacy task had “Good wrap-up, you need a stronger clincher.”

- In some classrooms, teachers were observed making adjustments based on formative assessments of student understanding; however, students did not consistently exhibit awareness of their next steps. During a grade-eight math class, students were asked to share their thinking on individual white boards regarding two models of graphs demonstrating linear equations. Based on student responses to teacher questioning and white board responses, the teacher provided additional models of the graph to ensure that students understood how to interpret speed as the slope of a linear graph before moving on. Similarly, in a seventh-grade math class, as the teacher circulated around the room during small-group work, she then brought the class together to address a common point of confusion she identified for students on a task regarding rations and proportions. In addition, one student shared that when she had struggled with providing context in her writing in class, her teacher had pulled her and a few other students into a separate small group to support them in practicing the skill using a different text. However, students were not consistently aware of their next steps. For example, in a grade-six STEM class on physical fabrication, while students were building magic wands, they were unclear about the activity, or as to what their next steps would be, or as to how they would apply the content being learned to future tasks.
School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the State standards and strategically integrate real-world connections, and higher-order thinking skills in curricula and academic tasks through planning and refining using student work and data.

**Impact**

Purposeful planning results in coherence across grades and subjects and the promotion of college and career readiness for all students. Refinements based on student work and data ensure that all learners have access to curricula and tasks and are cognitively engaged.

**Supporting Evidence**

- A review of lesson plans and units of study reflect alignment to the State standards and the strategic integration of real-world connections and applications. For example, in a seventh-grade math unit on analyzing proportional relationships in order to use them to solve real-world and mathematical problems, restaurant menus are used and students are asked to use proportional relationships to determine the percentage of tax and tip and then to factor in a discount. Similarly, students in a grade-seven science class are tasked with conducting laboratory experiments on brine shrimp with a lens on making connections between limiting factors in biology and environmental change and impact. Additionally, a review of curriculum for ELA shows the integration of trade books that reflect issues in which students could make real-world connections, such as bullying in the sixth grade and understanding one’s own identity in seventh grade.

- Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data so that all students have access and are cognitively engaged in tasks. For example, in a seventh-grade math lesson, supports, scaffolds, and enrichment tasks were planned on the team level using data from common assessments. Targeted students would be provided with a graphic organizer to support self-monitoring of their progress while students who had demonstrated mastery would be challenged with working within a set budget. In a seventh-grade science lab lesson, student grouping is data driven, based on a diagnostic assessment. Utilizing this data, teachers created focused supports, such as graphing scaffolds for students in need of math support while students demonstrating mastery were challenged to design additional investigations that would increase their understanding of ranges of tolerance and limiting factors. In addition, in a grade-eight ELA lesson using the text *Of Mice and Men*, students are asked to synthesize their understanding of the text with Robert Burns’ poem “To a Mouse.” The lesson included multiple supports to provide access for all learners including visual and auditory supports, annotation support, and for MLLs, access to the texts in their home languages.

- School leaders and staff spoke about collaborating on the strategic revision of curricula to support access to rigorous curricula for all students. For example, in order to support all students, including struggling learners, students with disabilities and MLLs, in accessing the Living Environment curriculum and the subsequent Regents exam, the seventh-grade curriculum was revised to allow for an increase in lab work to provide more hands-on experience to a variety of learners along with curricular shifts to better align with the content needed for the Regents exam. The ELA curricula demonstrate vertical alignment with attention to previous and subsequent curricula along the grades. For example, after teachers noted that students were struggling with the rigor of the Socratic seminar, they integrated The Philosopher’s Chair into the grade-six curriculum, a structure that introduces and refines skills necessary for Socratic seminar. Teachers reported that as a result of this curricular adjustment, students were better able to engage in the Socratic seminar and; therefore, had access to richer class discussions and more complex ideas.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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</table>

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to staff and provide the supports needed to meet those expectations. School leaders and teachers use a variety of methods, including one-on-one conversations, conferences and online platforms, to partner with families to support student progress.

Impact

A culture of mutual accountability ensures that school leaders and staff contribute to the establishment of high expectations and ongoing and frequent communication with families promotes meaningful partnerships that contribute to student progress.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders consistently articulate high expectations through a staff handbook, discussions at regular grade- and content-team meetings, the school website, online platforms, emails, and individual conversations. The staff handbook contains guidelines for communication with caregivers, instructional design, delivery of content-specific lessons, classroom environment, data protocols, homework and grading policies, along with standards for daily school operations and maintenance of student safety. Expectations for teachers are codified in a document that includes varying instructional practices to meet the needs of all children, creating an environment that recognizes individual learning styles and multiple intelligences, and practicing tolerance and respect for diversity. Feedback aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching supports and promotes the implementation of these best practices across classrooms, and reinforced by teachers taking part in intervisitations thus, holding each other accountable for sharing best practices and learning opportunities that increase teacher capacity.

- School leaders hold staff accountable for expectations and provide ongoing support by conducting cycles of teacher observations, including conferences, walkthroughs, regular classroom visits, and providing actionable feedback. Ongoing formative feedback supports teachers in strengthening their instructional practice. School leaders meet with teachers and teacher teams weekly to discuss the ongoing impact that teaching the units of study has on their students, their action plans, and the adjustments they have or will make based on student progress. Also, teachers and school leaders meet weekly in teams in which best practices and problems of practice are examined and solutions are shared thus, fostering a mutual accountability. The school community’s culture of mutual accountability is also evident in teachers’ reliance on their colleagues to arrive at teacher-team meetings prepared to engage in data analysis, inquiry of student work, and review of the different strategies that teachers use to address students’ various needs. As a result of these structures, teachers are reflective about their craft and receive targeted, ongoing support that further improves the quality of their practice.

- High expectations are shared with families through multiple tools, including a family handbook, monthly newsletters, a smartphone app, email, text messages, individual and group phone calls, and the school website. The handbook highlights how families communicate with staff, the methods by which parents can access their student’s progress including an online platform, along with academic and behavioral expectations. Workshops have also been part of the school’s process for sharing high expectations and partnering with families covering topics, such as the high-school application process and adolescent social-emotional health. One parent shared that they felt like they were part of a team with the school and that staff is available for conferences upon request, in addition to teachers being in frequent communication with them. Parents spoke about having the opportunity to speak with teachers at drop-off, pick-up, as well as to ongoing and consistent communication from teachers and from the guidance counselor.
Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

School leaders support teacher development with effective feedback and next steps from observation cycles and student data. Teacher observation data is used in the design and facilitation of professional development (PD), as well as informs decisions regarding teachers’ assignments and succession plans.

Impact

Varied PD experiences and effective feedback elevate schoolwide instructional practices and ensure the development of teacher leaders.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher feedback is aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching and teachers are provided with support to implement initiatives and targeted feedback. For example, a teacher team working on identifying areas of student misconception determined a shared strategy and a scaffold to implement across the classrooms with a lens on ensuring coherence. The department leader provided resources and formative classroom feedback during the follow-up team meeting, and also, extended targeted individual feedback to teachers through one-on-one conferencing and follow-up emails. The administrator then followed up through formative classroom visits and additional feedback and resources designed to support teacher growth. Other feedback to teachers highlights best practices in building discussion and questioning skills and in use of formative assessments thus, supporting teacher growth in these areas.

- In addition to the reports resulting from official classroom observations, there are the conversations that follow formative classroom visits. Teachers shared that the school leaders do not necessarily write up these observations, but do provide other forms of feedback on school initiatives. For example, one teacher spoke about the feedback and support provided in differentiating instruction through flexible grouping. The teacher and administrator met to discuss possible structures to support increasing differentiation, co-planned tasks, and specific grouping based on assessments and knowledge of students. Following the lesson, the administrator and teacher met to debrief and collaborate on next steps. As a result, the teacher found that students receiving targeted instruction in small groups demonstrated an increase in timely task completion.

- PD is designed around identified teacher needs surfaced through observations, formative walkthroughs, teacher team meetings, and teacher goal setting, as well as in response to a review of student assessment data. PD documents, team notes, and feedback reveal that PD is offered both to support vertical coherence, as well as content-specific support. For example, following an analysis of formative classroom visits, school leaders noticed that teachers needed support in using data to create small groups. The PD calendar reflects the specific needs of different content areas regarding the use of data and assessment. The humanities department PD focused on analyzing data from the 2019 State ELA exam to create differentiated support for targeted student groups. The PD provided for the math team focused on the use of an online platform designed to facilitate assessment and grouping in that content area. Similarly, the science team is supported in using targeted assessment tools, differentiation strategies for students with disabilities and utilizing small groups to support student content mastery. As a result of this support, teachers report being comfortable visiting each other and sharing best practices to support student achievement. Additionally, school leaders have used the data from official and unofficial observations to make decisions regarding succession plans, and developing teacher leaders so that their coordination of programs and mentoring of teachers continuously grows.
Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
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Findings

Teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations, such as grade-level and content-based teams. Teacher teams utilize assessment data and student work for students on whom they are focused.

Impact

Inquiry-based team collaborations promote achievement of school goals, strengthen teacher capacity, and improve progress toward goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers and school leaders meet weekly in both content- and grade-level teams and provide one another with peer feedback. In these meetings, data and student work are reviewed, trends are noted, and curricula is revised and refined, based on identified areas of student need. Also, teachers share pedagogy and intervention strategies and provide each other with constructive feedback focusing on improving instruction by making real-world connections, as well as increasing opportunities for students to collaborate in order to build meaning. Teachers reported that the weekly planning meetings benefit them in their planning and their reflection on their work. As one teacher stated, “We always discuss what we are going to do and then talk about it afterwards. It makes us better teachers to have those discussions, especially knowing that you have to share with colleagues.” As a result, on the school survey, 96 percent of teachers say that they collaborate to design instructional programs.

- Teacher teams utilize data in order to develop curricula that meet the needs of a variety of learners and that provide access to rigorous curriculum. For example, the science team examined student data and the Regents curriculum to identify areas in which students would need more support in order to be able to pass the Regents exam in middle school. They identified that students needed increased lab time in order to cover content needed to demonstrate mastery on the Living Environment Regents exam. With this in mind, the science team realigned curriculum to provide increased opportunities for students to work on labs and designed targeted scaffolds to ensure that students with disabilities and MLLs have access to the content. As a result of this work, all learners have the opportunity to take the Living Environment Regents exam in June. Across the math department, teachers utilize an online platform that supports students where they are and provides more challenging work to students that show mastery. Data from the online platform is analyzed weekly in the math team meeting in order to collaboratively design scaffolds to support student progress. The focus on data analysis in teacher teams and the resulting adjustments to classroom practice have contributed to the eleven percent increase in math proficiency demonstrated on the State math exam in 2019.

- During a team meeting, the math teachers reviewed their diagnostic data to identify areas of misconception that might lead to errors in student work, and determine student needs. Working collaboratively, they determined that students had a ten percent difference in a question regarding the same standard and identified that students demonstrated mastery when given the equation, but struggled more with the concept when presented with a word problem. Teachers agreed to provide scrap paper for students to use to make their thinking transparent and to work with students on annotating the word problem in order to support them further in identifying areas of need. Teachers also collaborated to identify and mitigate potential student misconceptions in a current lesson on ratios and proportional activity and took steps to integrate a mini-lesson on the difference between sub-total and total when figuring out the percentage students would leave as a tip on a restaurant check.