Quality Review Report
2019-2020

Leaders High School
High School 21K572
2630 Benson Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11214

Principal: Thomas Mullen

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

Lead Reviewer: Kevin Bradley
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

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

School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></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 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 Focus</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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

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

Findings

The school’s approach to culture-building, discipline, and social-emotional support includes both academic and social-emotional learning. Structures are in place to know each student well and personalize supports.

Impact

There is a safe environment and inclusive culture that supports progress toward the school’s goals and positively impacts student behaviors. School leaders meaningfully involve student voice in decision-making to initiate, guide, and lead school improvement efforts.

Supporting Evidence

- The school’s approach to building culture is based on the core values of leading, learning, contributing, and exploring and is evident in crew and academic classes. In addition, each week at a schoolwide community meeting core values are reinforced, and an award goes out to a student who has consistently exhibited these traits throughout the week. Through a peer mentor program, twenty-six eleventh and twelfth graders are paired with ninth grade crews to serve as mentors. These mentors receive weekly training to lead team-building initiatives and crew lessons every Friday to ensure that ninth graders are supported and included in school culture and come to embody core values of leading, learning, contributing, and exploring.

- The school meaningfully involves and honors student input on school improvement initiatives. The school’s approach to discipline is focused on changing behavior, repairing harm, and building community. Restorative practices allow students to reflect on and learn from their mistakes, thus resolving conflicts as a community. A peer mediation program empowers students to take the lead in resolving conflicts between peers. Justice League empowers students to examine schoolwide culture issues connected to inclusiveness and justice. Students are trained to lead circles addressing school culture issues with students and analyze school data to discuss issues with and make recommendations to school leaders. In October 2019, student representatives of the program led a workshop for teachers at the EL National Conference in Atlanta. Meaningful student voice also occurred during the Black Lives Matter initiative, as students made a schoolwide presentation, advocating for more staff members of color. As a result, of the eleven staff members that have been hired since, 73 percent are people of color.

- Crew is the focus of personalized structures to ensure that every student is known well by at least one adult. Every student is part of a crew of about fifteen students and a crew advisor that meets four times a week throughout their high school career. The crew curriculum focuses on social-emotional learning, goal setting, college and career readiness, and personal and collective growth. Crew typically begins in a circle and crew leaders facilitate lessons and initiatives to build relationships with students and support them in building relationships with each other. Crew leaders continually conference with their students to reflect on their attendance and academic achievement data, set goals, and develop strategies to meet those goals. All crew leaders receive training through NYC Outward Bound and staff implement reflective crew lessons and lead circles that focus on social and emotional growth. The personalized support structures have impacted students’ personal and academic behaviors through leadership targets, which are 30 percent of overall grades. Leadership targets include deadlines, punctuality and presence, perseverance, collaboration, and self-advocacy.
Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula, reflecting a coherent set of beliefs that students learn best by grappling and constructing understanding through big ideas. Across these same classrooms, there were high levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact

Across the vast majority of classrooms, student work products and discussions reflected high levels of student thinking, participation, and ownership. However, in some instances there were missed opportunities for equity of voice and student-to-student discussion.

Supporting Evidence

- During a US history immigration policy case study lesson through the Building Background Knowledge (BBK) process, student groups had chart paper in front of them that they had used when discussing prior knowledge about immigration policy. Students were building knowledge by each reading an expert text on immigration policy to construct their understanding. During an Algebra 2/Trigonometry class, students were involved in group discussions and grappling with meaning of sine & cosine on a unit circle. A think-pair-share opportunity let students discuss their noticings of patterns that stood out to them. The teacher had individuals from groups discuss and asked follow-up questions of other groups to add to the discussion. The teacher gave students a sentence starter to allow groups to reconvene their conversations. Student-to-student conversations moved to whole class dialogue and then back to student groups. During a twelfth-grade English Language Arts (ELA) class with a focus on thesis creation and essay organization, students worked with each other in groups on a big idea key to the ELA Performance Based Assessment Task (PBAT).

- During an English 10 class, there was strong classwide discussion with teacher prompts and students had opportunities to call on each other to participate. High levels of thinking were evident in the discussion, as 100 percent of students were involved in the turn and talk and the classwide discussion included a variety of student voices. During an English 9 class, students sat in groups with chart paper about theme from *The Sun is also a Star*. Students engaged with each other about the text. The teacher prompted each group to share out their theme and asked students to record what their group had shared on a notecard for display in room. During a Global 10 class, the teacher set up norms for a Socratic seminar, and there was some inequity of voice as one student spoke five times, another spoke twice, five others spoke once, and six others were not heard from during the observed visit. Across the vast majority of classrooms, student discussion reflected high levels of student ownership, however there were missed opportunities to deepen understanding through student-to-student discussion.

- During a living environment class, the learning target was tied to long term targets and the consortium rubric about different types of scientific experiments. Once the lesson transitioned to a scavenger hunt bingo activity, a strong student discussion about key components of a valid experiment followed. During a chemistry class, students were in groups reading through two different articles per table, with each student being responsible for summarizing and sharing the content. During an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) Geometry class, students were in groups with a problem-solving toolkit as they generalized to see the patterns. Various students had opportunities to answer teacher questions during whole-class instruction. During group work, three out of five groups were involved in discussions with peers, but two of the groups worked individually, missing an opportunity to construct understanding through discussion.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

Curricula are strategically aligned to State standards. Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are emphasized in academic tasks that are embedded across grades and subjects.

Impact

Curricular alignment to the State standards results in coherence across grades and subject areas, promoting college and career readiness for all learners. Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are emphasized so all learners must demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- Lesson plans originate from a common template and consistently challenge students to utilize rigorous habits. Learning objective statements in lesson plans include from an eleventh-grade US history lesson plan, "I can synthesize information from a variety of sources to inform my understanding of Trump’s immigration policy," and from an Algebra II/Trigonometry lesson plan, “I can make arguments and justify my reasoning using math as evidence.” Lesson plans consistently detailed high-level questions. Examples of higher-order questions found in curricular documents include in a twelfth-grade government expedition plan, “To what extent should students maintain their constitutional rights when they’re at school?;” in an Algebra I expedition plan, “How can I justify my reasoning?;” and in a ninth-grade science expedition plan, “What are some examples of how humans are affecting ecosystems and the environment?” As a result, curricula promote college and career readiness for all students.

- Coherence across grades and subjects appears in vertical maps that outline specific connections to consortium rubric categories that are designed to build students skills towards passing their Performance Based Assessment Tasks (PBAT). A science department vertical map includes alignment for the mastery passage linked to PBAT for scientific process using the consortium rubric and a math department vertical map ensures that every math class uses consistent long-term learning targets connected to the consortium rubric. An English department vertical map includes building thesis skills over each of the four grade levels aligned to the consortium rubric for PBAT. As a result, coherent curricula are strategically aligned to consortium rubric categories and build student skills towards PBATs.

- A review of curricular documents demonstrates academic tasks that emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills for all students. For example, lesson plans in English emphasize the value of text-based evidence. An English 11 lesson plan asks students to identify strong and specific evidence to support multiple perspectives in a text. An English 9 lesson plan asks students to work together to become deep readers who make inferences about characters, ask deep questions and analyze themes and symbolism in a text. Lesson plans include differentiation for students with Individualized Educational Programs (IEP), including manipulatives to help students visualize situations and guiding questions printed for specific students to allow all students to demonstrate their thinking. Lesson plans involving Multilingual Learners (MLLs) include translation of materials into native language supports, ensuring that MLLs are able to demonstrate their thinking according to the same high-level standards expected of all students.
Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school’s curricula and offer a clear portrait of student mastery. School leaders and teachers use common assessments, such as end of unit benchmarks, to create a clear picture of student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas.

Impact

High quality assessment practices provide actionable and meaningful feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. Teachers use student assessment data to adjust curricula and instruction, leading to increased mastery for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Across the vast majority of classrooms, samples of student work products show teacher-written actionable and meaningful feedback directing students to the steps they should take to strengthen their work. On an example from a ninth-grade social studies assignment, the teacher wrote “Be specific in your writing! Explain who you are talking about and why these differences occur.” Another example from an English PBAT is “Your previous paragraph about symbolism in The Yellow Wallpaper does a great job of showing that Gilman was being critical of sexism, but I’m not sure you have shown any evidence that Bradbury purposely shows a need for gender equality. It just sounds like he characterizes women in an unfair way.” A periodic functions PBAT includes, “To make this outstanding, try to think of a way you could model how global warming will affect the temperature over time. What do you think the graph would look like over the years? Which of the variables in the parent equation could you change to help you model this?” Assessment practices aligned to consortium PBAT projects offer a clear portrait of student mastery by consistently highlighting strengths and areas for improvement.

- There is a schoolwide mastery-based grading policy. Student progress is assessed toward academic learning targets and leadership learning targets. Student performance broken down by learning target, and each learning target is assessed at least three times, using varied strategies and giving students multiple opportunities to demonstrate learning. All classes build toward PBATs that are aligned to standards-based New York Consortium rubrics in each core content area. The New York Consortium rubrics are used across all classes and teachers use the language of the rubric when giving students feedback on their written work. Students also use the rubric to reflect on their own work and give peer feedback. One student reported during the student meeting, “The feedback from the rubrics helps us analyze based on evidence and data. With this analysis we have to push our thinking to the limit to get a very good grade, step by step.” Across the vast majority of classrooms, students receive actionable and meaningful feedback.

- Common assessments include PBATs in eleventh and twelfth grade that serve as Mastery Passages replacing the Regents exams as graduation requirements, with the exception of the English Regents, which is still required of all students. Benchmark assessments are conducted throughout the year building skills needed to pass the PBATs. An example of curricular adjustment includes the inclusion of thesis focused on in English curriculum across all grade levels based on data analyzed by the school that indicated students needed stronger thesis in their writing and were having trouble coming up with their own arguable level-four thesis statements. Evidence of all students demonstrating increased mastery includes PBAT data showing papers rated outstanding went from 13 percent to 33 percent.
Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: Well Developed |

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to staff and students and offer support through clear, focused, and effective feedback. Teachers and staff establish a culture for learning.

Impact

Communication through teacher teams and professional development (PD) around high expectations result in a culture of mutual accountability. Students are prepared for the next level and own their educational experience.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders conduct frequent classroom observations to provide feedback utilizing the Danielson Framework for Teaching as the standard for professionalism, quality instruction, and high expectations. High pedagogical expectations are aligned with work plans and are communicated through the individualized instructional coaching received by every teacher. A grading handbook makes clear that school leaders support teachers in their understanding of standards-based grading. A PD plan outlines topics to support teachers by building skill sets and improving teachers’ practices. Teachers reflect and share their progress towards professional goals throughout the year using a structured review process during teacher-led conferences with colleagues and school leaders. One teacher shared that mutual accountability results from team meetings where they hold each other accountable through the spiraling curriculum aligned to consortium rubrics to build skills towards mastery passage PBATs and teachers are dependent on each other to follow through as the curriculum and instruction links teachers across grade levels.

- The school's Instructional Leadership Team (ILT), comprised of department and grade teams, and school leaders, develops and refines the school's work plan. This plan articulates schoolwide goals that drive professional development. Through staff, department, and grade team meetings, the ILT consistently communicates high expectations that must be met to achieve these goals. Mutual accountability extends through the staff owning the mastery passage PBAT process to communicate a unified set of high expectations to all students. Math and science teacher teams, along with English and social studies teams, collaborate to norm around the consortium rubrics for their content area mastery passage PBATs. In addition to receiving extensive feedback from the teachers of their mastery passage class, this accountable collaboration between staff allows for each student to be paired with a teacher-advisor who provides additional clear, focused, and effective feedback and guidance to ensure that every student has the support they need to meet the high expectations of these graduation requirements.

- The school's culture for learning consistently communicates high expectations that help prepare students for their next level of education. The college counseling team, internship coordinator, and crew leaders collaborate to communicate with students and families the steps that must be taken for college and career readiness. Students self-assess and share their strengths and areas for growth with their crew leader and family at Student-Led Conferences (SLCs) twice per year with 95 percent student participation. The school implements the College Access: Research and Action (CARA) College Inquiry program throughout ninth through twelfth grade crew curriculum and through a college dreams class taught by the college counselor taken by all students for two semesters. The internship/community service coordinator teaches a career dreams class taken by all eleventh graders. Through this class, students research opportunities and learn the job search skills needed to secure a rewarding internship. During the 2018-2019 school year, 84 percent of eleventh graders secured and completed internships.
Findings

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations. Across the school, grade teams meet on a consistent basis to analyze assessment data and student work products, as well as to share teaching strategies.

Impact

Professional collaborations strengthen teacher instructional capacity and result in schoolwide instructional coherence. Systematic analysis of student data and work products has resulted in mastery of goals for focus groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- An observed English department inquiry team meeting involved teachers examining student essays across grade levels. The team looked at essays of identified students and first reviewed the work on their own and then shared their noticings with a partner. The whole team discussed noticings and patterns. The team identified appropriate complexity of ideas and analysis of author’s choices as strengths and how can the team put a stronger focus across grades for more authentic writing. Implications and next steps about how the team could support the students to improve their writing included to vertically and horizontally align sheets of supports for MLLs, to incorporate more independent reading books, and to incorporate more authentic audience activities within classrooms. A teacher spoke about how the work of the team has strengthened teacher instructional capacity stating, “We learn to teach better within this team and my lesson planning is better. How we teach English here is something we own by working collaboratively to meet our students’ needs.”

- In grade teams and department teams, teachers engage in meetings to share and refine best practices, problem-solve dilemmas, and examine student work and use that information to drive instruction. For example, the math department team focuses on their work plan goal to reinforce deep and flexible thinking for students in a variety of contexts. Co-teaching teams in every core subject area, including a special education or ENL teacher, meet weekly to develop scaffolds and strategies to make lessons accessible to MLLs and students with IEPs, while also making sure these students are still being challenged to think deeply and flexibly. The work of teacher teams had resulted in schoolwide instructional coherence.

- The school’s inquiry cycle begins with analyzing student data and work to identify gaps and trends. The next step involves framing the issue by conducting an article study to generate a question. The teams then create an action plan, identify implications for instruction, and identify evidence of success. Teams take action and collect new data, followed by assessing and reflecting. Teacher team inquiry uncovered a need to increase instructional supports to help students develop level-four thesis statements in essays aligned to PBAT assessments designed to build college and career readiness. Because of teacher teams’ systematic inquiry work in department and grade level teams, mastery of goals for groups of students are evident in increases in college and career readiness aligned to PBATs. For example, in 2018-2019 the College Persistence rate was 75 percent, 17 percent higher than the city average, and 5 percent higher than 2017-2018.