Quality Review Report

2019-2020

Lyons Community School
Secondary School 14K586
223 Graham Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11206

Principal: Taeko Onishi

Dates of Review:
February 25, 2020 - February 26, 2020

Lead Reviewer: Robin Posner
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

Lyons Community School serves students in grade 6 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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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</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>
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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 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>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>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 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Area of Celebration Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Additional Finding Well Developed</td>
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</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 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 Well Developed</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 Well Developed</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 Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Additional Finding Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Evaluate the quality of school-level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to State standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

| Quality Indicator: | 1.4 Positive Learning Environment | Rating: | Well Developed |

Findings

A highly supportive and extended family culture is evident throughout the school. There is a nurturing and personal learning climate with effective social and emotional structures, including an advisory program, in place.

Impact

Students are adopting effective academic and personal behaviors in a safe and inclusive culture and student voice is meaningfully involved in school improvement efforts.

Supporting Evidence

- The school’s theory of action for culture building is embedded in its mission statement as follows: “If the school community approaches learning through a social lens, where students are given increased choice, inquiry and project-based learning, and students are given opportunities for new experiences and ideas, while being known as a student and a person, then student engagement and growth will be accelerated.” This is applied consistently across the school through its positive behavioral management system, which rewards students for displaying the school’s values of community, owning actions, never giving up, and staying safe and resolving conflicts. These values are re-emphasized in classroom and non-classroom settings through teacher- and student-led lessons and discussions. Additionally, students are divided into Crews, a more targeted advisory program, the center of culture and team building for staff and students. Parents, staff, and students unanimously agree that the school community fosters a safe and respectful climate in which students’ social, emotional, physical and academic needs are readily addressed by school efforts.

- Students are active in student roundtables, and initiate, guide and lead improvement efforts that have an impact on student experiences. Student leaders advocated to lead more of the restorative circles work. This led to the creation of a peer-connection program in which eleventh and twelfth graders mentor ninth and tenth graders, as well as a student-led restorative justice program in which students resolve conflicts through peer mediations, peer assists and peer mentoring. Other changes initiated by students include shifting school practices away from parent-teacher conferences to student-led conferences, where students present their work and their goal-setting plans to their family. Students share that student-led conferences are collaborative, allowing them to be partners with their teachers and parents in their learning and goal-setting.

- The school has structures in place to ensure that students’ social-emotional learning needs are met. The guidance counselors and teachers work as a team to support students’ social-emotional needs through an advisory program, Crew, that has a restorative justice and social-emotional curriculum as its center. This enables students to learn language and vocabulary cues to help them express their feelings, both positive and negative. Students share that their Crew advisors know them personally and most are like their school parents. Students further share that each individual student works with their crew advisor to create an individual plan for anything that might need to improve, such as projects or plans for progress towards goals. Teachers and guidance staff facilitate various workshops, including sessions on Crew and student-led conferences, to support and partner with parents to aid in their child’s academic and social-emotional achievement. There has been a decrease in chronic absenteeism and in increase in overall student attendance. Additionally, there has been a significant decrease in levels four and five incidents and in suspensions as evidenced by the Online Occurrence Reporting System data.
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, multiple entry points are evident in the use of small-group strategy instruction, student-to-student interactions, and time for guided and independent practice. Across classrooms, student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact
All learners are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills, yet there are missed opportunities for meaningful extensions for those ready for additional challenges. Student ownership of their learning is not visible across the vast majority of classes.

Supporting Evidence

- Teaching strategies, such as the use of small-group instruction and leveled texts at various levels of difficulty, provide multiple entry points into challenging tasks for a variety of learners across classrooms. For example, in a grade-ten English Language Arts (ELA) lesson, students collaborated in groups to synthesize their ideas through peer discourse, texts and their own understandings about identity in society. Students worked in heterogeneous groups that include Multi-Lingual Learners (MLLs) and students with disabilities to annotate text and share ideas via discussion prompts. This variety of learners was supported in this work through various scaffolds, such as tiered texts, vocabulary previews, and texts with visual supports. Such strategic application of multiple entry points was evident in some, but not in the vast majority of classes. In a grade-eleven math class, students worked in small groups to sort equations into four categories and then solve the equations that had been identified as being able to be solved. While supports for those not at mastery were evident, such as scaffolds, individual teacher support and a mid-workshop interruption to explain some misunderstandings, there were missed opportunities for meaningful extensions for those ready for additional challenges.

- In some classrooms, teachers provided multiple entry points into the curricula via the interactive white board, rubrics, checklists, and other scaffolds including graphic organizers. In a middle school science lesson, students were tasked with annotating articles to gather more information on microbiomes. Students were asked to jot down predictions, clarifying questions, or inquiry questions for each paragraph. Students were then to share out with their elbow partner and jot down additional information gleaned from their partner. However, students who were struggling were not given any supports, and fast finishers of the task were not provided with any extension activities. In an ELA class, students were in groups working on literary analysis. Despite being paired, students were not always asked to share out their discussions, resulting in missed opportunities for students to demonstrate their thinking.

- Across classrooms, student discussions and work products reflect high levels of commitment for students to demonstrate their thinking. Students in Global Studies collaborated in groups of three or four students to chart their thinking around problems people in another country are facing today. Students utilized different colored markers to identify their own thinking as part of the group work. Students then did a gallery walk to analyze each group’s work, providing feedback and next steps. Within group conversations, students used the content-specific academic vocabulary, and pushed each other to articulate their noticings, asking for clarifications and justifications from texts or short films they have watched to prove each specific point a student made. However, in a science lesson, where students were asked to annotate different text features in a text, some students interviewed were unable to articulate their thinking or why this work was important, representing a missed opportunity to build student ownership of their work.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating: Proficient</th>
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Findings
School leaders and faculty make purposeful decisions, such as using the Core Four, to align curricula to State and content standards. Faculty plans and revises curricula and academic tasks using student work and data.

Impact
The alignment of the ELA curricula from grades six through twelve builds coherence across the grades. Revisions to tasks provide access for a diversity of learners and engage all students, including MLLs and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- School leadership and staff make purposeful decisions to ensure the curricular alignment to State and content standards. Leadership and teachers decided to implement standards-aligned curricula across all grade levels in math and science thus, ensuring coherence in these curricula across grade levels. Teachers design and review learning opportunities, including the lessons presented to students and the tasks they are asked to complete, with the purpose of strengthening the connection between reading and writing, as well as content knowledge across all curricular areas. For example, teachers reviewed curricula to ensure students were reading books at their instructional level across content areas and added in science and social studies texts that support students who are not reading on grade level. Across reviewed curricula, including Integrated Co-Teaching, (ICT) and general education lessons, there is evidence of the school’s Core Four initiative which focuses on inquiry, prediction, clarifying and synthesizing, which are aligned to the State and content standards around using text-based evidence across core-content areas.

- Lesson planning in all content areas illustrates multiple ways to present academic tasks which integrate standards and the Core Four. For example, one lesson plan calls for students to cite evidence from a text and use graphic organizers and a sight word list to accomplish their assignments. In another lesson plan, students are asked to complete an exit ticket by explaining how they solved a math problem and demonstrating how they determined the complexity of the system solution. In a science plan, students are asked to make predictions about a text using prior knowledge and text features, such as subheadings, captions and titles.

- Teachers plan and refine lessons and tasks based on results from assessments of student work, Individualized Education Plans, and teacher observation data. Teachers adjust lesson plans to provide scaffolds and supports for students. A math lesson plan indicates that while students will start out as a whole class, they will move into pre-determined groups of four for scaffolded support. The lesson plan also includes notes on different scaffolds available for groups of students. An ELA lesson plan has high-performing students paired with lower-performing students to help provide peer-to-peer feedback. Other plans indicate that students will be pre-assigned to high, middle, and low groups based upon exit tickets, on-demand writing and conferencing.
Additional Finding

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

Use of various assessments aligned to the curricula provide a clear portrait of student mastery. Utilizing data from common assessments, such as the Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) and performance-based assessment tasks (PBATs), teachers and school leaders adjust curricula and instructional practices.

Impact

Assessment results are used to provide meaningful feedback to teachers and students, and all students, including MLLs and students with disabilities, demonstrate increased mastery.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses data from PBATs, running records, unit tests, exit tests, and the State assessments to determine strategic groups, refine whole-class instruction and identify student needs to inform additional instructional support. The analysis of assessment results has led to the development of instructional goals for staff and students and the reinforcement of skills across all subject areas. The use of data to inform and adjust instruction in all content areas is consistent across classrooms and classroom checks for understanding lead to instructional adjustments that support all learners. For example, teachers and leaders noted that initial DRP scores for middle-school students were low. They then gave a secondary assessment to note if the issue was comprehension or decoding. Once this was determined, a pull-out program targeting specific skills was created for students scoring below grade level. Students were placed into groups for comprehension or decoding based on the assessment results. The winter administration of the DRP showed that all students, including students in the pull-out program, as well as students with disabilities, had already made more than a year’s gain in reading.

- Classroom visits and meetings with teachers and students revealed that feedback on student work is detailed and includes next steps. Teachers were observed conferring with students and providing them with strategies for improvement in their work. Also, comments on ELA student work provided students with positive feedback and next steps. One teacher noted that she liked how passionate the student was about her topic and how much she knew. Next steps included going more in-depth about the topic and to tie everything together during the conclusion. A student shared a literary essay in which she received a high score on the rubric. The teacher gave her feedback on tightening up her loose ends. Students stated that teachers meet with students to give specific feedback on what can be improved the next time. Students also shared that they assess their own work and their peers using rubrics to provide feedback. They also expressed that teachers across content areas use rubrics in order to track progress. Work reviewed shows evidence of teacher, peer- and self-assessments across core content areas.

- The school uses a range of common assessments that include the DRP for ELA as well as PBATs across content areas. Teachers also administer running records to assess student fluency and comprehension of text. Furthermore, teachers gather data from formative assessments and student work to track and ascertain levels of student learning and gather it in student trackers alongside conference and observational notes. This data is then used by inquiry teams to adjust curricula as needed. Students are then reassessed using teacher-developed interim assessments to determine mastery or further interventions. The use of data to inform and adjust instruction in all content areas is consistent across classrooms. As such, based on the 2018-2019 State assessments, student proficiency, including MLLs and students with disabilities, has increased by 15 percentage points in ELA in middle school over last year.
### 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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#### Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to staff through a variety of methods and forums, such as PD and the faculty handbook. Teacher teams and staff systematically communicate a unified set of high expectations for all students.

#### Impact

Consistent communication of high expectations results in a culture of mutual accountability for teaching and learning, enabling all students to receive clear, focused, and effective feedback and guidance supports to ensure that students own their educational experiences and are prepared for the next level.

#### Supporting Evidence

- School leadership uses the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* to inform classroom instructional practices and communicate expectations around the school's initiatives. This includes weekly updating of the online grading tool by teachers, ensuring student-to-student interactions in every class and implementation of the Core Four, and ongoing communications with students and families. Information around school initiatives is provided regularly to teachers and staff via email, memoranda, individual and group teacher conferences and the faculty handbook. Professional Development (PD) workshops emphasize these focus areas. Through ongoing PD opportunities relative to the school’s instructional foci, all stakeholders learn and work together to provide rigorous and challenging instruction for all learners, as well as examine ways to support high expectations across grades and subject areas. Across classrooms, the impact that PD has is evident in curricula and lesson plans. Lesson plans indicate implementation of the Core Four Initiative and time for student-to-student interactions. In addition, school leaders and teachers regularly examine curricula, instruction, and the identification of classrooms that teachers are free to visit and learn from colleagues. One teacher noted; “It was at an intervisitation, where we visited to see specific practices, that I learned new strategies for student-to-student conversations.”

- Staff communicate expectations and feedback that prepare students for the next level through a variety of means, including the general grading policy and consistent use of content-specific rubrics that are aligned to the Performance Assessment Consortium standards. Students are given advice and guidance for their next steps, such as in college information sessions and school selection assistance meetings. In advisory, students are tasked with outlining interests, identifying schools of interest and mapping the steps necessary to be successful candidates for those schools. Interviewed students described how they receive specific feedback from peers and teachers, such as deepening their analysis by greater use of text-based details. Students also shared how feedback improves their work and helped them to get a better grade, and articulate personal steps to take so that they can be successful in transitioning to college.

- The school provides numerous activities for students to support them in their development and to provide them with the appropriate tools to succeed in college and the workplace. Rigorous coursework that includes a PBAT are offered to all students. Students shared that there is an expectation that all of them will go on to college. Students meet with their Crew advisors regularly. Students bring their goals and areas of strengths and weaknesses to meetings to help guide conversations around the best colleges to which they should apply. School staff also provide workshops on applying to colleges and knowing their requirements, and help schedule college visits to City and State colleges.
Additional Finding

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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</table>

Findings

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations, such as grade-specific inquiry teams, cross-graded department teams. Distributed leadership structures are embedded throughout the school and allow for lead teachers and inquiry facilitators.

Impact

The work of teacher teams results in schoolwide instructional coherence and increased student achievement for all learners. Through distributed leadership structures, teachers play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- The vast majority of teachers engage in structured professional collaborations that result in instructional coherence. For example, the middle school literacy team focused on creating a literacy vision around multiple entry points and accessibility that aligned to the school’s Core Four Initiative. They then used that to create targeted strategies to support learners. Artifacts from this teacher team include teacher self-evaluations of their practice, as well as the creation of a list of implemented strategies including the use of the restate question, answer completely, cite evidence and explain (RACE) strategy in writing, as well as targeted rubrics and checklists for teacher, peer- and self-assessments. Interviewed students, across grades and content areas, articulated the consistent use of checklists, rubrics, in-person conferences and other sources of feedback that leads not only to actionable feedback, but also to meaningful feedback which they can apply in multiple classes. There is evidence of such inquiry across the school thus, resulting in strengthening the capacity of teachers to self-assess their practices and resulting in instructional coherence.

- Such strategic teacher inquiry into their instructional practices has led to a consistent growth in student achievement across multiple years as measured by the State ELA tests. For example, 15 percent of students performed at level 3 or 4 in 2018; 30 percent of the same group of students performed at level 3 or 4 in 2019. Such increased academic achievement is reflected in all subgroups, including students with disabilities and MLLs. This pattern of increased student achievement is also reflected in an increase in the College Readiness index, from 47 percent to 55 percent.

- Faculty play integral leadership roles as grade or department leaders, members of the school leadership team, and leading inteventiations and inquiry, all resulting in opportunities to make key decisions for the school community. For example, the math team conducts inquiry around the instructional foci and monitors progress towards goals. This work drives curriculum and scheduling design. As a result, they redesigned how math instruction is implemented throughout the week, across the school. In addition, teacher peers also serve as hosts and facilitators for instructional rounds, focusing on specific domains that demonstrate best practices. Through these structures, teachers have an impact, not only on high expectations for instruction, but also on schoolwide improvement efforts through development of problems of practice and instructional foci.