Quality Review Report

2019-2020

Metropolitan Diploma Plus High School

High school 23K647

985 Rockaway Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11212

Principal: Meri Yallowitz

Dates of Review:
October 23, 2019 - October 24, 2019

Lead Reviewer: Debra Tasioudis
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


School Quality Ratings

### Instructional Core

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<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>Proficient</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>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>
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</tbody>
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### School Culture

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<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>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</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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### Systems for Improvement

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<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>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</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate schoolwide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
<td>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</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</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Evaluate the quality of school-level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to State standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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</table>
### Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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</table>

**Findings**

The principal, teacher leaders, and teacher peers support the development of all teachers with effective feedback and next steps from frequent observations. There is a strategic and transparent system in place for professional learning, tenure decisions, and succession planning.

**Impact**

Effective feedback from formal observations, peer intervisitation, and supervision of teachers promote teachers’ professional growth and lead to improved quality of student work products.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The principal frequently observes teachers in pre-determined cycles of observation that are adjusted daily during morning meetings, based on feedback from the assistant principal and teacher leaders who conduct informal observations. A review of teacher observations reveals that feedback to teachers aligns to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and offers next steps that are specific, actionable, time-bound, and prioritized. One sample of feedback specified assessment of instruction as a focus area for the teacher’s next step, suggesting a time and date to observe a colleague’s practice and offering an explanation of expectations for student self-assessment. In another observation report, the focus was on lesson planning, with the next step to meet with the principal within the same week to plan a lesson together. In a meeting, new teachers shared that feedback from observations is helpful in their achieving tenure.

- Teacher leaders also conduct frequent cycles of observation and promote professional growth of teachers. In post-observation conferences, the teacher and coach, who is also a teacher leader, review the lesson that the coach observed or the principal’s most recent written observation feedback (or both). The teacher and coach then select a component from the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* as a focus for the teacher’s next steps, review the component’s critical attributes, note how the critical attributes change for each rating category, and then align instructional practices to meet the attributes as next steps. In a coaching session observed during the review, the coach and teacher reviewed the coach’s low inference notes from recent class visits, reflected on the teacher’s growth areas, and examined the principal’s written next steps for the teacher. They agreed that in both observations, managing student behavior was a focus. Consequently, they set the next instructional steps for the teacher to visit a colleague with exemplary practice in using non-verbal cues to guide student behavior. The goal for the teacher would be to adopt the practice of having students use a chart of emotions to identify personal needs as they are welcomed into the classroom. This example is indicative of how the school leader and coaches align feedback and next steps to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* to promote teacher growth and reflection.

- Structures for peer intervisitation, such as learning walks and shorter “pineapple visits,” allow teachers to know the instructional strengths of colleagues and create a transparent system for managing professional learning. In the learning walks, facilitated by teacher leaders, teachers develop an area of focus for their visits during common planning time, visit one another, and take low inference notes. Teachers then meet to review the notes and their connection to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, collaboratively identifying next steps based on the visit, as demonstrated in notes shared. In shorter intervisitations, known as “pineapple visits,” teachers observe one another and then meet to discuss instructional next steps that they will commit to adding to their own instructional practices. To follow-up on this process, teachers discuss their progress during common planning time and have additional visits with one another to monitor their peers’ progress in their commitments. In these ways, teacher peers work together to elevate schoolwide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection.
Area of Focus

Quality Indicator: 1.2 Pedagogy  
Rating: Proficient

Findings
Teaching strategies provide students with scaffolds, such as sentence stems and other accountable talk tools, and provide multiple entry points for student work products and discussions.

Impact
While there are not always extensions and student ownership of tasks and classroom discussions, student engagement reflects high levels of thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classes, teachers create multiple entry points into tasks and discussions through the use of anchor charts, sentence and question stems, and accountable talk routines. During observed mini-lessons, teachers routinely provided model responses and text annotation, as observed in both science and social studies classes. Students are also given differentiated tasks and have access to the thinking of peers. For instance, in a math class some students worked with supports, such as a calculator and partially completed data tables, and there were differentiated problem sets for groups of students. In these heterogeneous groups, students were able to share their ideas as they completed their independent work, allowing students access to the thinking of their peers as the learners engaged in problem solving. Student tasks and supports were differentiated, with sentence stems and partially completed data tables to support students with disabilities, and Multilingual Learners (MLLs).

- In a few classes visited, students worked with strategically provided high-quality supports and extensions. In a Geometry class, some students engaged in a discussion of differences between histograms and bar graphs while other students worked to make and interpret histograms of quantitative data. One student worked with a differentiated task sheet with adjusted text and data sets, individualizing support for the student while still allowing him to engage in problem-solving and high-level discussion with his peers. In a Living Environment class, students worked in small groups to describe and analyze the impact of global warming and industrialization while the teacher worked with another student on a higher-level task to prepare her for an Advanced Placement exam. While this provision of high-quality supports and extensions is in use in a few classes, they are not yet in place across the vast majority of classes.

- Across classes, student work products and often discussions reflected high levels of student thinking and participation. In a math class, students engaged in discussion with the teacher and one another about calculating deductions from a paycheck, engaging students in real world problem solving. In a social studies class focused on the expansion of imperialism, students worked through writing tasks during discussions with one another. They were aided by the thoughts of their peers written on charts at different stations, which students accessed by moving in small groups from station to station. Similarly, in an environmental science class, students worked in small groups to answer teacher-provided questions about the carbon cycle. While students demonstrated high levels of thinking in their discussions, there was a missed opportunity for students to pose their own questions and take ownership of their discussions.
### Additional Finding

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

Teachers consistently align units and lesson plans to State standards, emphasizing literacy standards alongside content standards. Tasks are rigorous and consistently emphasize higher-order skills across the grades, with a focus on writing from evidence and deep understanding in math.

#### Impact

The curricula promote college and career readiness skills and are accessible to all learners, including students with disabilities and MLLs.

#### Supporting Evidence

- Lesson plans shared throughout the review aligned to State standards and often included literacy standards and skills alongside content standards. For instance, lesson plans for science and social studies classes focused on content acquisition as well as engaging students in determining the central idea of the text and developing a claim with supporting details. Similarly, math lesson plans for Algebra and Statistics classes focused on math standards but also included tasks to promote student use of math vocabulary in writing about their mathematical thinking or to explain mathematical data.

- Student work reviewed during the observed math common planning meeting demonstrated alignment to the State standards and emphasized higher-order skills. One task asked students to identify, describe, and draw geometric rotations and reflections. Another task asked students to write about their own mathematical thinking, as well as the thinking of a peer as they shared ideas while they reviewed and critiqued their work. English assignments shared by students also demonstrated alignment to the standards, with a focus on students determining the main idea of small chunks of texts as well as using analysis and inference skills across texts. A ninth-grade task asked students to read several non-fiction articles on the same topic, find the main idea of each paragraph and analyzing how the sub-topics came together to support the main idea. Similarly, an eleventh-grade task asked students to annotate portions of a fictional text. Following this, they had to write an analysis of the author’s technique and explain how the ideas from each small chunk of text connected to the author’s purpose.

- Unit plans and weekly instructional guides created by teachers use a common template and include attention to the State standards, topics to be covered, essential questions for students to ponder, and an outline of learning activities. The unit and weekly guides also include considerations for offering multiple entry points to provide access to information and knowledge to all learners. This includes the use of differentiated texts and other generalized strategies for adapting tasks to ensure that students, including those with disabilities and MLLs, have access to the curricula. During classroom visits, student tasks observed included students responding to differentiated texts in ELA, students using graphic organizers, and students having access to sentence stems in science and social studies classes. Consequently, standards-based curricula and tasks are rigorous, challenging, and accessible to all learners.
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

There is a schoolwide emphasis on the analysis of student work and progress by both teachers and students during reviews of rubrics and grades. During instruction, teachers use a variety of checks for understanding, including student self-assessments.

Impact

Assessment practices provide actionable, meaningful feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. As a result of teacher assessment practices, students are aware of their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers across the school have a common grading policy aligned to the school's curricula and use a common online grading system to ensure that students have a clear portrait of their mastery on class assignments and exams. In a meeting with students, all agreed that the online system makes it easy for students to see where they are in the work and where they need to focus more time and attention, including in what specific areas to seek additional help and support. Beyond this, students praised the schoolwide approach to conferencing known as "Focus Fridays," a structure used in every class on every Friday to review end-of-unit assessments. These assessments are given to students across the grade, who then have one-on-one conferences with their teachers, providing each student with an in-depth and clear portrait of student mastery. As one student shared, "We do a run-down of our grades. We review comments on our work from the week and they give us a bigger glow and grow." Another student shared, "The teachers have individual meetings with students. Even if you don't come on Friday, you do it on Monday, so you always know where you are and what you need to work on next." Other students shared that teachers across the school also provide comments and next steps on assignments, especially those where students scored under 65 percent, so that students can revise their work for additional credit.

- A review of assignments and exams shared by students in a meeting revealed that all student work was graded and had actionable next steps. Students also shared that teachers regularly sit with them to review their work and comments, making their next steps clear. For instance, on "Focus Fridays" teachers provide ongoing support for feedback given. One student shared feedback received from the teacher about providing more analysis in her writing. When asked about what that means, the student shared, "Sometimes I write the way I talk, and it comes out wrong or incomplete. I need to add more evidence from the text and explain myself more. I am working on this in other classes too." This type of actionable and meaningful feedback was common in student work shared and observed across classrooms and on hallway bulletin boards.

- Across classes, teachers use a variety of checks for understanding during instruction. These include questioning of individual students, providing new questions or tasks on-the-spot for small groups of students, and making mid-workshop interruptions to ask students to share a problem at the board or share their thinking with the class. Students also use rubrics while they are engaged in class discussions and writing tasks so they can self-assess as they work. In a Global History class, two students shared their work with one another and then reviewed laminated writing rubrics at their desk, which led to revisions of their responses. In a math class, the teacher interrupted students working independently to invite a student up to share his thinking at the board. This encouraged other students to share their thinking, and, as a result, several students were able to correct their own work. In both a science and a social studies class, students shared that they were collecting evidence from texts today and focusing on particular questions during the lesson so that they would have what they needed to complete a longer writing task or essay on Friday, demonstrating that students are aware of their next learning steps.
## Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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### Findings

School leaders and staff consistently communicate high expectations to staff through a handbook, professional learning, and the observation process. A path to graduation and college and career readiness is communicated to parents and students.

### Impact

There is a culture of mutual accountability among staff and a partnership with families that supports student ownership of their progress.

### Supporting Evidence

- Through the staff handbook, professional learning, frequent informal classroom observations, and a daily muster with the teacher leaders, the school leaders communicate clear and consistent expectations to teachers. These include professional responsibilities such as communicating with families and other elements of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. School leaders, including the model and peer collaborative teachers, hold teachers accountable for instructional practices and professional growth through the observation process. Teachers and teacher leaders also facilitate most of the professional learning in the school, on topics such as creating station activities, promoting student discussions, and improving literacy and math instruction. Teachers hold one another accountable for new learning through interactions during common planning time, intervisitation, and coaching visits.

- Parents praised the constant communication teachers and school staff have with them through texts, phone calls, and in-person meetings. Parents shared that they are made aware of the smallest student successes and challenges. In addition, teachers discuss with them academic and behavior support adjustments offered to students, resulting in a partnership with school staff that most have never before experienced. Parents also stated that teachers and guidance counselors include notes about students in the online grading platform and are in regular contact about student progress. As one parent noted, “At this school they are always calling and it’s a great thing. They tell you about how many credits your child needs, any changes to their schedule, any changes in behavior. They really work with you to understand what the students need.” Another parent offered that her child had only one more Regents Exam to complete, so they encouraged him to take Advanced Placement (AP) classes. As she shared, “He will finish his coursework in January, so they have a technical program for him until he can walk for graduation in June. They really help you plan beyond this school and help you focus on the goals after graduation.” Other parents agreed that communication and connections with the school go beyond just what the students need, so that students, staff, and parents are all a part of the Metro family.

- Students frequently meet with their guidance counselors to review their plans to monitor their progress toward graduation. As a student shared, “They tell us what we need to do to graduate. We sit down with my transcript and look at the classes and Regents that I need. They encourage you to take the AP classes, but they don’t give you unnecessary classes.” Students noted that they can also look at their transcripts in the online grading platform and that they can see their guidance counselors every day if they want to get guidance on a path to graduation. These one-on-one meetings ensure that all students, including high-needs subgroups, own their educational experiences and are prepared for the next levels. As a result, this school has persistence and graduation rates that are twelve and fifteen percentage points higher than other schools in the school’s comparison group.
**Additional Finding**

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

Teachers engage in inquiry-based collaborations on common planning teams focused on promoting the implementation of school goals and State standards and examining both student and teacher work.

**Impact**

The instructional capacity of teachers is improving through inquiry. The work of teacher teams typically results in improved student progress.

**Supporting Evidence**

- In an observed math team meeting, the team used two protocols during their work time. One focused on the teacher work while the other focused on analyzing student work. Through the use of the first protocol, the team provided feedback to a presenting teacher, new to the profession, offering guidance on her lesson planning and instructional practices. The teachers also shared practices from their own classes, widening the focus from just the presenting teacher to sharing instructional strategies with an eye toward creating common practices across the department. This demonstrated a focus on strengthening instructional practices, one of the school's goals this year. A review of binders from other teams revealed that this focus on inquiry into teacher work is common across the school. As the teachers moved to looking at student work, they reviewed three pieces of student work representing different levels. The team discussed what the task required of students, how it connected to standards, and what the students’ work samples revealed about their learning. The team also analyzed the work to determine learning gaps that could be used in planning to promote student progress toward specific goals. The teacher team then moved their focus to planning. They worked to create a shared approach to meeting the needs of all students across all classes, including those similar to the students whose work was reviewed.

- Teacher across the school meet during common planning time with their content teams and engage in a cycle of inquiry focused on strengthening the school’s instructional core, a school goal for the year. The teams work together to refine and adjust weekly instructional guides, lesson plans, tasks, and rubrics. A review of the school's curricular artifacts revealed how this work promotes the implementation of the State standards, particularly literacy standards and skills included in lesson plans across the grades and subjects.

- In a question and answer session with teachers, all shared that looking at student work and data from common assessments is a consistent focus of teacher teams. As a teacher stated, “We meet in inquiry teams during common planning time every day. One part of the inquiry is to look at student work. This week, we looked at three students’ work last week from unit two, and we made changes to our lesson plans to improve student data. For me, I was moving too fast. I taught students how to make a claim, then how to inference, but was not getting good quality work. I need to just slow down and get students to focus on determining importance and focusing on vocabulary before we move on to inferencing. We are already seeing better student work and discussions.” Similarly, in another meeting, a new teacher shared how their work on the social studies inquiry team also allowed her to improve her planning practice and create more coherence in the use of strategies for analyzing texts across the content area. Thus, as a result of professional collaborations, teacher practice has been strengthened.