Quality Review Report

2019-2020

The Facing History School
High school 02M303
525 West 50th Street
Manhattan
NY 10019

Principal: Dana Panagot

Dates of Review:
November 13, 2019 - November 14, 2019

Lead Reviewer: Buffie Whitfield
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

<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>Area of Celebration</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>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

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

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

Findings

The concepts of Identity, caring and responsibility, decision-making and choosing to participate are purposely embedded throughout curricula, as are modifications of tasks that are informed by student work and data.

Impact

All students, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, have access to cognitively engaging academic tasks that require them to demonstrate their thinking. The rigorous learning opportunities provided students result in their being prepared for college and career.

Supporting Evidence

- The school partnership with Facing History and Ourselves informs the design of rigorous learning tasks across grades and subjects. These learning experiences help students prepare for the ethical and moral decisions of adulthood. The curricula are structured around the four themes: identity, caring and responsibility, decision-making and choosing to participate. The emphasis on the themes result in a coherent approach to how students are expected to show what they know. In a Global History unit plan students are to analyze examples of Nazi propaganda to determine how it communicates powerful messages about who should be included and who should be excluded from German society. Performance tasks like these are in evidence across all content areas.

- All lesson plans indicate the instructional focus, definition of cognitive engagement, unit essential question, and state learning standards, learning targets, and differentiated tasks. A lesson plan for a neuropsychology class focused on skills to be employed in a case study to test the reliability of memory. Layered curriculum was used where students work at their own pace. Sentence starters are provided for Multi-Language Learners to help them engage in accountable talk. The scaffold also provides the students with space to take notes to help them practice active listening. Students with disabilities were purposefully considered in the planning of the task through discussion prompts. Student specific support was outlined for individuals and pairs of students based on the teacher’s understanding of their learning needs.

- The objective of an English lesson plan was for students to draw conclusions regarding how does dehumanization affect perpetrators, bystanders and victims. The unit encourages students to think critically about the role of dehumanization within the historical context of the Holocaust and build on connections. The task asks students to make historical and contemporary connections enabling them to analyze the nuances of dehumanizing language and behavior within society. A writing task requires students to write about something that they resist in their life. The task involved students looking at images, commenting on paper images and other peers’ comments. However, in a few classes and during the student interview, a few students stated they do not believe they are being continually challenged. This belief was evidenced on the 2018-2019 NYC School Survey, where 51 percent of students said that they are challenged in their classes and 69 percent of teachers say that students feel challenged.
Student work products and discussions do not yet reflect the strategic implementation of multiple entry points, customized supports and extensions across the vast majority of classrooms.

Impact

Though all learners are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks, the levels of student thinking and participation do not yet reflect student ownership of learning across the vast majority of classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- During a neuroscience class, students discussed two examples of bias in an experiment. The teacher asked several higher order questions intended to push student thinking, such as, “What do you think we need to do, and why?” In a math class, students worked in circles to discuss how confident students are in their solution from the previous day’s tilted square task. The teacher attempted to engage students in a discussion. However, in some cases, the teacher answered her own questions. Additionally, a few students arrived late and expressed reluctance to participate in the activity thus diminishing their ownership of engagement with the day’s lesson.

- In a Social Studies class, students engaged in a gallery walk. Students moved from one image to another making comments of the visual presentation with their peers. There were missed opportunities for students to memorialize their thoughts, as student note taking was not in evidence. Additionally a few students struggled seeing the images that were posted around the room. In another Social Studies class, the teacher led students using a prompt, which was related to what they knew about Haiti. Students wrote what they knew and then shared with a partner. The teacher asked questions and students shared their opinions. Most students were able to share their opinions and some students used resources to site evidence of their claims. However, there were missed opportunities for more students to evidence higher-order thinking as appropriate supports were not clearly evident.

- In one class, students were working in groups with assigned roles. Students selected one of the tasks that involved drawing a graph of a quadratic function. At one point, the teacher asked a student to elaborate on her observations. The student thoughtfully responded, acknowledging a mathematical strategy. The teacher encouraged students to make connections and ask questions. Though the conversation was rich and aligned to discussions that might take place during panel presentations, it was teacher centered. Students consistently responded by addressing their thoughts back to the teacher.
### Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Findings**

Across subject areas and grades, teachers create performance-based assessment tasks (PBATs) aligned to a task-based rubric. Purposeful formative assessments and specific grading policies are employed.

**Impact**

Students receive actionable feedback that informs the improvement of their work. Teachers are responsive to student misunderstanding during instruction and make effective adjustments to meet student-learning needs.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Using Consortium and content based rubrics, teachers develop PBATs, within departments, which are vertically aligned to ensure that student achievement increases as students’ progress toward graduation. Alignment and coherence in the design of the PBATs is supported through the grading and panel processes where teachers across divisions assess the portfolios of all students.

- Students discussed the ways in which they receive ongoing feedback and they noted that they are consistently being pushed to be more specific, find more evidence to support their theses and make more connections to other sources or the outside world. Written feedback on student work included encouragement to use figurative language, guidance on how to develop an effective conclusion by revisiting the theme, making connections between the text and something outside of the text, and pointing out redundancy. During the small group meeting most students shared that the feedback has strengthened their abilities. For example, a student shared the improvement of his grammar as result of teacher's feedback. Another student shared how she used the experimental design rubric to clearly describe how she plans experiments.

- The results from diagnostic, benchmark, and performance tasks help teachers in each department select priority standards on which they want to focus and to identify specific errors and misconceptions in student learning. These assessments allow teachers to pinpoint skills and develop focus areas for curricula mapping and the use of certain teaching strategies. They also determine student progress in relation to the relevant content standards. When teachers noticed that there was a gap in activities to support the needs of students, teachers incorporated “why” students are engaging in the activity on a day-to-day basis. Teachers created more authentic learning activities and revised pacing calendars, updated curricula planning documents, and supplemented curricula resources based on the results of assessment data.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

Teachers are provided training to support the school community’s efforts to implement the philosophy of Facing History and Ourselves into every aspect of teaching and learning. School staff systematically communicates the importance of real world experience, community outreach and college readiness.

Impact

Professional goal setting, learning and collaboration result in a culture of mutual accountability for implementation of the core values. Students own appropriate aspects of their learning experience and receive effective feedback, guidance and opportunities that prepare them for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- Training for the ongoing implementation of the core values occur during teacher team meetings. PBATs and lesson plans give evidence to their consistent integration. This commitment to shared and ongoing learning maintains a professional culture of mutual accountability. Teachers were asked to identify an essential question that would inform their professional focus and growth for the year. The questions were either directly or indirectly connected to core values. “How are our core values reflected in my classroom and professional work this year?”

- All students have access to an on-line platform that houses information on performance in classes. However, most agreed that the primary source for information pertaining to their status and progress is their advisor, who dedicates time during advisory over the course of a term to check-in with students or schedule additional conferencing time as needed. Teachers mentioned that at times they structure circle conversations so that students can hear from their peers and learn from each other regarding topics such as PBAT completion and the college application process.

- Teachers and other staff have a set of clear, systematic structures, which articulate high expectations for students entering the workforce or going to college through the academy structure at the school. The teacher-coordinator, guidance counselor, and dean support students. With the addition of three Advanced Placement courses student progress towards college and career readiness expectations is evident. Students shared that they are held accountable by the school to be prepared for the next level in their lives. One student commented that he had learned the difference between a scholarship and a grant, and that he planned on applying for a Pell Grant. Based on students’ feedback, the school is working on increasing internship opportunities based on students’ needs to enable them to have additional, authentic real world experiences ensuring their preparedness for college and beyond. Interests in the medical, legal, art and entrepreneurship fields are leading to plans for incorporation in class offerings.
Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: | 4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision | Rating: | Well Developed |

**Findings**

School leaders frequently observe teachers to provide feedback on their pedagogy and curriculum development. This feedback highlights effective practices and illustrates steps to be taken to support improved teaching and learning.

**Impact**

Teachers, including new teachers, are supported as they develop and improve their skills and grow as professionals.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The school leader determined that the skills and expertise of two assistant principals would be utilized most effectively by assigning one of them to support the differing needs of the teachers. The principal and assistant principals meet with teachers during pre- and post-observation conferences to review the evidence from informal and formal walkthroughs and to look at student work to determine achievement. The focus of the discussions is on what students are being asked to do during the lesson. Across observation reports, school leaders consistently provided feedback to strengthen curriculum and lesson planning. For example, one report suggests that the teacher ensure that mathematical practice standards and essential questions are addressed and assessed daily. One teacher indicated that school leaders often deliver verbal feedback immediately following observations to ensure timely implementation of practices to strengthen teachers’ practices.

- School leaders develop a schedule for conducting observations so that in addition to the observations conducted by the assistant principals, the principal observes each teacher at least once each term. To strengthen teaching practices, school leaders norm observation practices through jointly conducted classroom visits after which they share the results with each other in order to agree on the feedback that should be provided. Collective feedback showed a need, based on Advance data, that teachers need strengthening in planning and instruction. Additionally, teachers focused on how they can connect the past to present in a way that is meaningful to students’ lives. School leaders also identify common needs for future professional development, in terms of authenticity of lessons, which they believe should be planned in collaboration with the teachers.

- Written feedback to teachers incorporates specific suggestions for improving pedagogical skills. In observation reports reviewed there was a clear indication that some teachers struggled with managing student behavior. Feedback given an Integrated Collaborative Team suggested that the teachers attend to students’ inappropriate language by being mindful of who is walking around and to stand next to the groups where behavior was expectations. In another report where the teacher received a developing rating in engaging students in learning, the feedback strategically states, “The learning tasks and activities are partially aligned with the instructional outcomes but require only minimal thinking by students...allowing most students to be passive or merely compliant. The groupings of students are moderately suitable to the activities. The lesson has a recognizable structure; however, the pacing of the lesson may not provide students the time needed to be intellectually engaged.” The administrator provided the teachers an understanding of why the indicator was rated developing and the steps needed to improve the practice by advising the teachers to invite students to make their thinking visible through discussion and written reflection.
Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: | 4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development | Rating: | Well Developed |

Findings

The majority of teachers engage in a weekly and structured teacher team meeting on inquiry-based collective subject areas. Teacher voice is also actively incorporated in curriculum design.

Impact

The work of teacher teams promotes improving the quality of instruction as well as student achievement on PBATs. Teachers are empowered to make various decisions that positively impact learning for all students within the school community.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers from across grades and subject areas meet regularly and review work samples for students they share. During this time, teachers analyze work products, identifying misconceptions, and areas of concern to adjust instructional practices and offer additional support to students. At the teacher meeting, teachers followed a protocol and reviewed work through the lens of the task with a clear purpose and authenticity. Clarifying or probing questions were asked connected to the quality of student work. Teachers also offered feedback to the teacher whose student work they reviewed along with strategies that will support students on their PBATs. According to team minutes, the math teachers focused on skills they want students to know such as, logical thinking where students choose and evaluate strategies, questioning and justification. During the meeting, a math teacher shared they also want students to improve their problem solving and engender greater independence. The math team is concentrating on the essential question, “How does the math we are doing help you understand the world around us?” Teachers shared students are increasing their use of mathematical language and practice standards to solve problems. The resulting modification in teachers’ practice help ensures improved pedagogy and improved learning.

- During a meeting with teachers, staff illustrated various distributive leadership structures that are present in the school. Teachers shared they attend off campus professional development and turnkey their learning with colleagues. Social workers, guidance counselors and teachers facilitate presentations regarding financial aid for both students and their parents. Teachers take on leadership roles through formal and informal structures. New teachers are mentored and supported by veteran teachers via weekly meetings and classroom intervisitations. During the meeting with teachers, several new teachers shared the mentoring has positively impacted their emotional well being, leading to their improved teacher practice.

- Teachers spoke of having autonomy over the curriculum. Students complete four PBATs, which include an analytic essay, a social studies research paper, a science experiment, and an applied mathematics problem. Teachers realized that students struggle with analysis based on recent PBATs. Teachers collectively modified rubrics to include analysis. Teachers also spoke of using this discretion to allow issues relevant to students to drive instruction and lesson planning when appropriate. Teachers’ abilities to be creative and responsive in their instructional designs are emblematic of their roles in making decisions that affect all students learning.