Quality Review Report

2019-2020

Academy of Finance and Enterprise

High school 24Q264

30-20 Thomson Avenue
Queens
NY 11101

Principal: Victoria Armano

Dates of Review:
December 10, 2019 - December 11, 2019

Lead Reviewer: Jerry Brito
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>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels</td>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Culture

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.4</strong> Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.4</strong> Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Area of Celebration</td>
</tr>
</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><strong>1.3</strong> Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.1</strong> Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4.1</strong> 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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4.2</strong> Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5.1</strong> Evaluate the quality of school-level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to State standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

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

Findings

School leaders and staff effectively communicate high expectations to families connected to a path to college and career readiness and successfully partner with families. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that systematically communicates a unified set of high expectations to students.

Impact

Partnerships with families assist them in helping their children being college and career ready. Clear, focused, effective supports and exposure to business opportunities promote post-college readiness for all students, including high-need subgroups who own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- Yearly, school leadership distributes to families of prospective students a pamphlet that promotes the school’s accomplishments. The information emphasizes students’ academic successes, including that 99 percent of graduates attend colleges such as Boston University. The pamphlet also includes partnerships that support students to build a successful career, such as Virtual Enterprise International and Junior Achievement. In addition, school leadership and staff provide families with workshops so they learn how to prepare their children for college and future careers. This includes school leadership explaining the different types of diplomas available and the academic requirements needed for graduation. Furthermore, beginning in the ninth grade, school counselors meet regularly with parents to review their children’s transcripts and discuss next steps in preparing for graduation. During a meeting, all parents agreed that there is a partnership with school staff that allows them to understand their children’s academic status and how best to help prepare them for college, which is evident in 98 percent of the students attending college during the 2018-2019 school year.

- School leadership and staff emphasize and support students in preparing for college. A yearly college and career day enables students to engage in round-table discussions with career professionals around their college experiences. In addition, the school’s counseling department organizes an Academic Emergency Room (E.R.), a student-led tutoring program providing support to students needing extra academic assistance in a specific content area. Also, the guidance department conducts case studies of students missing credits for graduation to determine the support they need with a particular focus on students with disabilities. In addition, students use an online college preparatory program that assists them plan for college. The program includes features such as a personality inventory to highlight possible future careers, resume-building feedback, and help in the college application process. Also, school staff conducts tours to schools, such as Brown University, to provide students opportunities to learn about the academic and social expectations in a college setting. During a meeting, all students agreed that the school provides a variety of ways to support their preparation for college.

- School leadership and staff provide opportunities for students to prepare for future careers. The guidance department conducts mock job interviews to improve students’ interviewing skills. In addition, the school partners with organizations such as Citigroup and Girls Who Code to provide internship opportunities related to students’ career interests. During a student and alumni presentation, all agreed that the school prepares students for careers, especially in business. Several alumni noted that their high school experiences prepared them well for their current careers in business and politics.
Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use actionable feedback aligned with the school’s curricula to inform students of their strengths and academic gaps. Teachers’ assessment practices reflect checking for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

Although students are provided with actionable feedback, meaningful next steps are not always provided that can be used to support students’ achievement. Teachers’ effective adjustments meet all students’ learning needs but not all students are yet to be fully aware of their next steps.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use an assessment model that focuses on potential strengths and a next step that aligns with a content-specific rubric. In one algebra assignment, student groups produced a statistical analysis using categorical and numerical data centered on students’ time listening to music and rated based on a five-point rubric evaluating elements such as accuracy and summary description. The teacher noted that the group did well in using statistics and key academic vocabulary such as quartiles and medians. As a next step, the teacher noted that the group’s finding that the quartile and median having the same value was unusual and asked what the group thought it meant. In a Living Environment assignment, students answered questions in a short-answer question (SAQ) format centered on the effect of migration and disease in Africa and Asia. For one student, the teacher noted that he had to cite evidence and explain how it addresses the SAQ prompts. During a meeting, students agreed that they receive actionable feedback that at times highlights strengths and next steps.

- In an English assignment, students are tasked with writing answers to question prompts centered on a book they read and rated against a four-point rubric that evaluated areas such as writing quality and evidence. One student was provided various points of feedback on her analysis of the book Catching Fire by Suzanne Collins, including the need to double-space their responses, to expand her writing by combining ideas, and that the summary was long and it needed to reference her evidence in persuading others to read the book. In another English assignment, one student group was tasked with identifying a previously given expression related to expression of individuality, re-phrasing the statement and explaining the group’s view of the statement. The teacher complimented the group for expressing their thoughts on the statement. As a next step, the students were asked questions on whether or not people project thoughts about themselves onto others. A review of work products shows that there is a focus on providing students feedback that emphasizes areas in need of improvement. However, feedback has yet to always include meaningful information on strategies that students can use to improve.

- Across classrooms, checks for understanding and student self-assessments are conducted to monitor understanding and adjust lessons. In one tenth-grade English classroom, the teacher noticed that a group needed guidance in using evidence from select documents related to Social Darwinism and the Psychologist Theory of Conformity. The teacher addressed the entire class to ensure that students were basing their discussion on facts evident in the documents. Student groups were engaged in self- and peer-analysis of their work during their discussions. In an Earth Science Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, both teachers checked in and adjusted their lesson groups of students. A review of classroom practices and student work reveals a consistent use of checks for understanding and student self-assessment. However, these practices were not varied and did not address all students’ learning needs, as not all students were fully aware of their immediate next steps, across a few classrooms.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

School leaders and teacher teams ensure that curricula are aligned to State standards by creating school-specific unit plans and lesson plans that emphasize real-world connections. Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are emphasized in curricular and academic tasks and embedded coherently across grades and subject areas.

Impact

Alignment to State standards in the curricula has resulted in the coherence of and promotion of college and career readiness for all students. Emphasis on rigorous habits and higher-order skills in planned tasks require that all students demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- In a math unit plan, students are expected to extend their understanding of math functions by learning about function notation, domain, and range. The unit plan is disaggregated into essential questions that are aligned to State standards centered on functions and the appropriate use of graphs and tables. Designed to cover 35 lessons, the plan outlines the essential background knowledge students will need to successfully engage in the content, key vocabulary to be taught, and connections to real-world applications. In a fifteen-day Chemistry unit plan, students are expected to learn about chemical bonds. The plan outlines learning objectives that address State standards in math, science, and literacy. The plan describes prior learning necessary to address the content, key vocabulary, and assessment protocols to determine students’ understanding. In reviewing teacher team meeting notes, it is evident that teachers make strategic adjustments to unit plans and lesson plans to ensure alignment to State standards.

- In an English argumentative writing lesson plan, students are to use text evidence concerning self-driving cars to support a claim’s reasoning after reviewing articles concerning self-driving cars. Next, during a gallery walk, groups of students are to analyze and discuss the claims presented on posters relative to the self-driving cars. Student groups are to share which claims are the strongest by highlighting the text evidence in support of their claims. Aides, such as annotated text and relevant vocabulary, are provided to specific students, based on assessment data. In a World History lesson plan, groups of students are expected to evaluate the differences between the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal empires. The plan calls for student partnerships to review and discuss eight previously-studied documents related to the various empires. Next, groups of students are formed based on proficiency levels determined by student assessment data. Each group is tasked with reviewing posters on specific empires and collaboratively creating a thesis statement and identifying supporting evidence. The teacher will work directly with groups identified as needing support in understanding the content. During a meeting, teachers agreed that they design curricula that emphasizes rigor and making connections to real-world issues.

- An English lesson plan denotes heterogeneously-grouped students who are expected to learn and evaluate the Socialist Theory of human interactions. Student groups were provided specific documents related to the concepts behind Social Darwinism. Next, students engaged in group discussions related to the documents using a game designed to facilitate discussion, including question prompts to help with the group discussion. Vocabulary scaffolds and adjusted handouts are provided for students not meeting proficiency levels. A review of unit plans and lesson plans across grades and content areas demonstrates a focus on developing rigorous habits in student activities, promoting students making their thinking visible.
**Additional Finding**

| Quality Indicator: | 1.2 Pedagogy | Rating: | Well Developed |

**Findings**

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect the belief that students learn best when engaged in rigorous tasks that emphasize problem-solving and real-world connections and present in student work products and discussions.

**Impact**

Teacher practices and student discussions promote meaningful work products. Student work products reflect high levels of student thinking, participation, and ownership.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Across the vast majority of classrooms, the belief that students learn best when engaged in problem-solving and real-world connections is evident in student debates. In a United States (U.S.) Government and Politics class, students were engaged in research-based presentations related to the functions of federal agencies. Student partnerships presented their findings to the class and engaged their peers in a question-and-answer session that highlighted the research conducted. For example, one partnership presented research on the costs and benefits of the U.S. health care system. Students asked the presenting partnership questions such as the effects of defunding the Department of Health for the health care system. A review of instructional practices across all content-area classrooms demonstrates rigorous tasks that focus on problem-solving while making real-world connections, thus aligned to the school’s beliefs.

- Across the vast majority of classrooms, high levels of thinking and student-to-student discussions were evident. In an English class, students were learning to develop an argumentative essay that convincingly presented their viewpoints centered on self-driving cars replacing human drivers. Students are grouped according to their proficiency levels as determined through assessment data. Each group was tasked with analyzing and discussing student-created posters with various viewpoints and supporting evidence concerning self-driving cars. Next, student groups convened to review their findings and share out the effectiveness of the positions presented in each poster. In an Earth Science ICT class, student groups were working to identify unknown rock samples by using the characteristics of metamorphic rocks. Each group analyzed rock samples and discussed their characteristics, then recorded their observations, made preliminary identifications, and cited the evidence to substantiate. Discussions were facilitated using anchor charts and question stems for groups identified through assessment data needing additional help. A review of classroom practices reveals high levels of student discussions that demonstrate in-depth understanding and analysis of content.

- In a Virtual Enterprise (VE) business classroom, students were working on finalizing their written business plan related to the production of virtual sleep products geared towards high-school students, a plan that will be presented at a national high school business competition. Groups of students were working in specific areas such as finance and marketing, while a student chief executive officer (CEO) coordinated department tasks. Group tasks included the marketing department selling products to other virtual businesses across the country. A review of classroom practices demonstrated that work products were designed to challenge all student thinking and allow them to reflect upon their own learning and take ownership of their learning.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

School leaders and teacher peers strategically use effective feedback and next steps from classroom observations and instructional walkthroughs to support teacher development. Feedback to teachers accurately captures strengths, challenges and next steps about their practice using the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Impact

School leaders and teacher peers elevate schoolwide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection. Feedback articulates clear expectations for teacher practice, supports teacher development, and aligns with professional goals for teachers.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders use the Advance observation process in order to evaluate teacher performance, determine areas of strength and need, and plan follow-ups. The frequency of teacher observations is based on teacher preference determined during the Initial Planning Conference (IPC). The school leadership, consisting of one principal and two assistant principals, has developed an observation schedule giving all administrators the opportunity to observe teachers under their direct supervision. In collaboration with school leaders, teachers develop professional goals aligned with the Danielson Framework for Teaching during the IPC. In addition, school leadership conducts non-evaluative walkthroughs to monitor instructional trends and patterns outside of the Advance observation process, with a focus on developing culturally-relevant instructional practices. School leadership also facilitates a peer mentoring program in which teachers observe their peers’ classroom practices to help improve their own. Information gathered during observations, instructional walkthroughs, and peer classroom visitations informs teachers’ next steps, contributing to their professional development and elevating their instructional practice as evident in 100 percent of teachers achieving effective or highly-effective Advance ratings this past year.

- In an observation report, a business teacher was given detailed feedback on the use of scaffolds to best support student comprehension during a VE lesson. Specifically, the school leader provided a recap of the lesson, including how the teacher was able to effectively coach a student in leading a board meeting and helping students set up an online accounting system aligned with their business plan. As a next step, the school leader made two recommendations; that the teacher post group tasks either in the classroom or online so that students understand their assignments and expectations; that the teacher model the use of the point-of-sale (POS) accounting system and provide documentation so that students understand how it is used. In addition, the school leader referred the teacher to a previously-conducted professional development session centered on modeling strategies using interactive boards. A review of observation reports shows that school leaders provide detailed feedback and resources to help staff achieve next steps.

- School leaders and teachers collaboratively develop teachers’ professional goals using Advance observations and student assessment data. For example, an English teacher developed a goal of designing and executing a variety of cooperative learning strategies to promote higher-order thinking and discourse. In an observation report, the school leader cited improvement in student discourse by using a strategy called a flash debate, which promoted student debate centered on whether or not violence is learned at home. A review of documentation shows that teachers’ observation reports are aligned to and reference professional goals. A review of documentation shows that strategies and resources are embedded into both the professional goal sheets and in observation reports to facilitate teacher development.
Additional Finding

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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>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings

All teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations. Distributed leadership structures are embedded within the school community as evident through the rotation of department leadership roles.

Impact

Professional team collaborations promote the school's focus, have strengthened teacher instructional capacity schoolwide and data reveals increases in student achievement. Effective teacher leadership allows teachers to have an integral role in decision making with a focus on developing coherence in instructional practices and curricula.

Supporting Evidence

- During a history-department team meeting, teachers reviewed student essays related to the French and Indian War and used this analysis to determine the skills needing focus for the upcoming American history unit. Using the Atlas protocol, the team analyzed students' essays in alignment with an Advance Placement (AP) history long-essay-question (LEQ) rubric. In reviewing student essays, the team identified a number of students that were struggling with contextualization and historical reasoning in their writing. Next, the team devised an action plan to adjust teachers’ lesson plans, that included using differentiated primary sources and tailored questions to enhance understanding, thus concluded with all team members agreeing to review the efficacy of the adjustments at the next meeting and research other strategies. Consequently, a review of additional meeting agendas and minutes show that team members use the inquiry process, resulting in increased student achievement as reflected in formative assessment data.

- During a math-department team meeting, teachers compared the results of the prior year’s Algebra I, Algebra II, and Geometry Regents results relative to results on the September diagnostic test. An analysis of the student performance data showed several areas of need, including how to solve word problems, solving quadratic math expressions, and understanding the concept of normal distribution. This analysis led the math team to prioritize graphing and scaling, domain and range, and solving quadratic equations as its inquiry foci for the school year. The meeting concluded with a discussion on adjustments to planning to address the inquiry foci and future testing to assess progress. In a science department inquiry meeting, the teachers analyzed Chemistry assessment data to determine student understanding related to the property of solutions. Assessment data indicated that a group of students had gaps in understanding the colligative property of solutions and the factors influencing solubility. Team members created an action plan to address the gaps including a review of solubility factors to be used to adjust lesson plans. A review of teacher team notes and Regents assessment data indicates that this type of collegial inquiry is a vehicle used schoolwide to adjust curricular documents.

- All department teams are led by teachers who facilitate all team activities. Each year, department leadership roles are rotated so that each teacher has an opportunity to take on leadership responsibilities such as leading their academic department’s inquiry team. Department leaders meet regularly with school leadership to discuss data trends and adjustments to curricula. For example, the English department adjusted its unit plans to address gaps in the use of informational text after reviewing unit assessments. Teachers lead professional development sessions for colleagues that focus on improving instructional practices. During a meeting, teachers stated that they are integral in planning the structure and focus on their department’s inquiry teamwork, resulting in improved instructional practices and closing student achievement gaps.