Quality Review Report

2019-2020

Metropolitan High School, The
High school 12X248
1180 Rev. J.A. Polite Ave.
Bronx
NY 10459
Principal: Latoya Key

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

Lead Reviewer: Elsa Kortright-Torres
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>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>Area of Celebration</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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Developing</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>Developing</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### School Culture

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Focus</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 Focus</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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the schools instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</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>
</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>
</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>
</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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

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

Findings

School leaders and faculty use a common lesson template and curriculum maps with links to resources to ensure alignment to the State standards. Academic tasks consistently emphasize higher order thinking skills for all students.

Impact

There is coherence in curricular documents as evidenced by inclusion of the frame of the day, the use of a three reads protocol, and a focus on high leverage vocabulary and common annotation strategies. Translated documents and Power Point Slides in different languages as well as differentiated graphic organizers for Multi-lingual Learners (MLLs) and students with disabilities provide access to rigorous tasks for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of curricular documents indicates that teachers use a schoolwide lesson plan template to plan their lessons. Every lesson plan requires a framing of the day in the form of three questions: What are we doing? Why are we doing it? and Where is it leading? Teachers state the objective of the lesson, rationale, and next steps by using this format. Lesson plans also contain the learning target, standards, vocabulary, and purposeful grouping of students. In a Living Environment lesson plan, the learning target is to use the Three Reads Protocol to define vocabulary about the immune system. In a grade nine English lesson plan, the framing of the day consists of students using a Research Paper Organizer to write an argumentative essay which culminates with a one- to two-page essay that includes evidence from reliable resources. The standard for the lesson is to write arguments to support claims using substantive evidence as well as reading for information to cite strong textual evidence to support analysis of the text. The inclusion of the Three Reads Protocol, standards being addressed, culminating tasks, and what students will learn and why results in coherence across grades and disciplines.

- To promote college and career readiness and build coherence across content areas, teachers include the high leverage standard addressed in the lesson and include common protocols and rigorous tasks in their lesson plans, such as citing evidence to support claims and solving real world problems. For example, in a Global Studies grade ten lesson plan, the learning target aligns to the standard, which requires students to determine who was most responsible for the Cold War by completing a placemat activity to analyze multiple texts. The framing of the day includes the why: to evaluate all sides’ responsibilities in the breakout of the Cold War that leads to a culminating writing assessment in which students determine if the War was inevitable. Similarly, in a geometry lesson plan, the learning target tasks students with solving real-world problems by applying similar triangle proportions to right triangles. The lesson plan identifies the standard being addressed and includes the what, why and where is it leading, which is to demonstrate an understanding that by similarity, side ratios in right triangles are properties of the angles in the triangle leading to definitions of trigonometric ratios for acute angles.

- Rigorous academic tasks are evident in curricular documents. There are specific plans and differentiated tasks so that all students, including MLLs and students with disabilities, engage in rigorous activities. For example, in an English as a New Language (ENL) lesson plan, there are differentiated learning targets according to students’ language proficiency levels so that students can successfully achieve the standard: closely read a text to determine what it explicitly and implicitly implies and make logical inferences from it. In a Chemistry lesson plan, students are provided with translated worksheets and a glossary. In an Algebra lesson plan, students with disabilities are provided with sentence starters to complete an entrance ticket and differentiated graphic organizers. The use of supports for MLLs and students with disabilities results in students consistently provided with tasks that emphasize higher order skills and rigorous habits.
Area of Focus

Quality Indicator: 1.4 Positive Learning Environment

Rating: Developing

Findings

The school is developing approaches to build culture, discipline, and social-emotional support to groups of students by partnering with community-based organizations. Attendance is monitored and tracked to provide incentives such as games and awards to improve students’ daily attendance.

Impact

While school leaders have provided clear expectations around discipline and developed programs such as the women’s and men’s groups, students and parents shared feeling unsafe and unable to trust anyone at school. Attendance is improving; however, not all students are known well by at least one adult.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and staff have planned events to build cultural awareness such as having a Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration and daily announcements during the month of February to highlight the contributions of Blacks to celebrate Black History Month. Students shared that these events have taken place to improve the morale of students. In addition, student government has started to plan events around holidays such as Valentine’s Day. Students also shared that teachers provide help when needed. Though these practices have started, they have yet to show impact of improving school culture, as evident in the responses to questions about school culture in meetings with students, parents, and teachers. Students and parents alike shared that they do not feel safe at school. A new cellular phone policy was implemented this school year to reduce the amount of distractions and lower behavioral incidents. Students have to hand in their cellular phone in the morning and retrieve them back at the end of the school day. Though students understand the need for change and providing clear rules, students expressed not feeling safe in school and that there are inconsistencies in enforcing new policies such as the phone policy.

- A community-based organization has provided opportunities for students to attend trips, provide tutoring services, and promote self-advocacy. Through this organization, students who are struggling academically, emotionally, or with attendance receive one on one attention and referrals to other in-house mental health organizations. Four advocates are available to support approximately 20 students each. At the time of the review, data indicated that chronic absenteeism had decreased from 61 percent to 57 percent compared with the same the time the previous year. While attendance is being tracked and supports are beginning to have an impact on improving student attendance, students expressed concern in not having an adult that they can trust or that they cannot consistently trust each other.

- School leaders shared efforts to provide incentives for students to feel motivated to come to school to participate in extra-curricular events. Leadership reported that during the month of February 2020, there were several events calendred, including scheduled games, sports events, and celebrations such as Black History trivia, a costume contest, and bingo events. In addition, there are opportunities for students to participate in lunch events such as Black History chat and chews, and Valentine’s Day events such as the mouthwatering pancakes event for students. Members of student council shared that these events are planned to improve morale and student voice in the school. In addition, students, school leaders, and staff reported that the girl’s group was formed to support the unique needs of girls in the school. Girls are provided with information on teen drug use, coping with trauma, and events that support social emotional needs such as having a spa day and a vision board activity. Similarly, the men’s group explore topics such as personal identity, disproportionality, and college preparation. Though these efforts are evident in school documents, these have yet to yield positive statements from constituents about school culture.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to the curricula and starting to reflect a set of beliefs that students learn best when they are engaged in meaningful discussions, engaged in productive struggle, and collaborate in small groups. Student work products and student discussions are inconsistently meaningful.

Impact

Across classrooms, teachers conduct mainly teacher-student discussions prompted by teacher questions, thereby opportunities for small group, student-centered collaborations. The lack of opportunities to engage in meaningful tasks that require high levels of thinking and participation hinder students’ cognitive levels of engagement.

Supporting Evidence

- In a Living Environment classroom, the teacher had a Power Point slide with notes for students to copy in their notebooks about the immune system. Students copied from the slides and were introduced to the vocabulary through reading the presentation slides. There were limited opportunities for students to engage in discussion in small groups. In a grade nine English classroom, the students used an outline created in the previous lesson to write a first draft of an argumentative research paper on a choice of three topics. Students were working with a partner, on their own, or in a small group. The teacher circulated to support students as they finished their organizer or had difficulty with starting to write. Students wrote their thesis statement and thought about evidence to support their statement. Though students worked in groups or with partners, in support of the core beliefs of how students learn best, this was not seen in the Living Environment classroom where the lesson was completely teacher led and students were not engaged in productive struggle.

- In a Global studies classroom, students were tasked with engaging in a think, pair, share on the Cold War and its differences to World War One and World War Two. The teacher led the discussion as she called on students to answer questions about the different wars and reviewed the previous lesson. Though there were accountable talk sentence starters on students’ desks, students did not use these to engage in student to student discourse. In a Geometry classroom, the teacher had a student volunteer read the criteria for success. Students worked on word problems using real world scenarios about applying knowledge of similar triangle proportions to right triangles. Students worked in pairs and triads and grappled with the problem as they asked each other questions. Some students were not engaged in relevant discussions and completing the task. While these classroom practices provided opportunities for students to work in small groups and some students engaged in productive struggle, there were missed opportunities for students to use discussion protocols and create purposeful groups to maximize student engagement.

- Across classrooms, there were uneven levels of student participation and cognitive engagement. In an ENL classroom, students were provided with multiple ways to access information. The teacher presented a video then reviewed the framing of the day and the learning target for the lesson. The class, comprised of entering, emergent and Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE) learned to conduct a three-read protocol using a chunk of a text followed by completing a graphic organizer that required students to infer and cite evidence. In an Advanced Placement (AP) Literature classroom, the students studied Shakespeare’s *King Lear*. In both classes, there were missed opportunities to pose a challenging question for students to discuss in groups then justify a reasoning for their answer. Instead, teachers asked questions, conducting primarily frontal teaching. Consequently, across classes, students who are more vocal participate in discussions, while more reserved students or MLLs listen or do not engage even though supports are provided.
Findings

Across grades and content areas, teachers inconsistently use teacher-created rubrics, checklists, and New York State English Regents assessment rubrics to provide feedback for students. The school is starting to use common assessments such as bi-weekly tasks aligned to the Regents exams.

Impact

Students are provided with limited feedback from teachers to inform their progress. The limited use of common assessments to adjust curricula and instruction hinders monitoring of student progress toward achieving the State standards.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of student work products indicates that in some subjects, such as English and social studies, teachers use the New York State Regents rubrics to assess writing assignments. Likewise, teachers also use checklists. Students reported using checklists to review criterion required to include in their essays and were provided with a rubric with their graded work. Rubrics show that teachers circle the criteria accomplished by students, but do not always include a rationale for the score. On some of the rubrics there are grades and feedback written as glows, or something the student did well, and grows, or ways to improve their work. One checklist used in a social studies task required the students to use documents and cite textual evidence. The students received feedback about using text evidence; however, students were inconsistently provided with actionable feedback related to the essay or next steps to improve their work. In a math classroom, a bulletin board with student work was observed posted along with a teacher-created rubric used to grade the work. The criteria to achieve different levels from novice to distinguished was circled, yet there was no feedback from the teacher or a peer. Consequently, students' work products show inconsistent use of rubrics with actionable feedback to ensure students understand their next steps for improvement.

- After reviewing Regents data and conducting an item analysis of the English Regents exam, teachers decided to focus on analysis of text and writing using textual evidence. Teachers administer bi-weekly, Regents-aligned tasks to monitor student progress of this standard. Teachers reported using the data from the bi-weekly tasks to adjust instruction. In math, teachers conducted an item analysis of the Regents and found that students need assistance with short-response questions and understanding Algebraic concepts. In English, after students read Animals in Translation, and learned to ask questions about the text, the bi-weekly task consisted of students writing two paragraphs in which they discuss a claim that the author makes, state their position, and support it with evidence from the text. Though a decision has been made by teachers and school leaders to track student progress using bi-weekly tasks aligned to content standards and the Regents, there is inconsistent use of the bi-weekly tasks to track student progress, plan, and adjust instructional lessons according to individual student needs or the needs of groups of students that are at-risk of not achieving the standard.

- There is a grading policy that consists a breakdown by percentage for homework, projects, exams, and class participation for the overall grade. The policy incorporates Habits of Work and Learning (HOWLs) to grade class participation. Students receive a HOWL grade at the end of each marking period accounting for 20 percent of their final grade. Students are also graded on their personal responsibility for learning which includes preparation, completing work, and maintaining a notebook. Students are also graded on their responsibility as a community member by using accountable talk protocols, group norms, and attendance. Although the grading policy aligns with the school belief of creating an environment of community and collaboration, rubrics and checklists are not aligned to the grading policy and not all students are unaware of their academic progress and achievement.
**Findings**

School leaders communicate high expectations to the staff through professional learning (PL), the implementation of the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT), and instructional walkthroughs. School leaders and staff are developing structures to inform parents of schoolwide expectations.

**Impact**

School leaders are developing structures such as instructional rounds to hold teachers accountable to high expectations. Families are inconsistently informed of their children’s progress through an online grading system, phone calls, and new structures such as coffee with the principal.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Through PL, teachers received an introduction to instructional rounds, or classroom walkthroughs. A Power Point presentation to staff outlined the goals, which include gaining a deeper understanding of the definition and purpose of instructional rounds. During the presentation, school leaders modeled the use of a placemat strategy to improve student group discussions. The strategy requires group members to write down an idea on a large piece of paper and then rotate to provide feedback on the ideas written on the placemat by their peers. Though this strategy is being used in some classes, there is inconsistent evidence of instructional rounds impacting implementation of the use of the placemat strategy to increase small group discussion and participation. In addition, school leaders developed a common definition for what rigor is and looks like in classrooms. Though teachers were informed about this definition through a memo, accountability for the expectation of creating rigorous tasks have yet to take hold across the school.

- School leaders implemented the ILT, which is comprised of teacher leaders from each of the departments and members of the administration. Through this platform, the team implemented a new lesson plan template and a Power Point template to have a coherent way to present lessons in class. The frame of the day is included in the lessons’ Power Point presentations, which consist of three questions: *What are we doing? Why are we doing it? and Where is it leading?* These expectations are monitored by school leaders as they conduct walkthroughs. A review of lesson plans demonstrates the consistent use of the lesson template. Though there is evidence of the consistent use of the lesson plan template and framing of the day questions, teacher feedback around the effective implementation of these practices are not evident. In the school leaders' cabinet meeting notes, and ILT meeting notes, there is inconsistent evidence of how school leaders and the ILT are monitoring expectations and thus having established a system of accountability for these expectations.

- Through the implementation of new structures, school leaders and staff are taking proactive measures such as calling parents ahead of time when students are missing assignments, updating grades in a timely fashion, and providing parents with resources to include them as equal partners in maintaining high expectations for students. However, parents reported inconsistency in families receiving support from the school in helping their students make progress toward meeting the schoolwide expectations. Practices such as coffee with the principal, automated phone calls about upcoming school events, and live phone calls from teachers and school leaders have started to occur. Also, the staff are developing systems to inform parents of student progress toward credit accumulation, class progress, and preparation for college and careers. Parents reported that teachers will call toward the end of marking periods if students are missing assignments. Parents also reported that there are key members of the staff such as guidance counselors that inform them of their children’s’ progress toward achieving requirements for graduation. Meeting notes with the guidance counselor are captured in a document titled *Status Report by Cohort.* For instance, to announce the administration of the January Regents, a reminder flyer was sent home to parents.
Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in instructional professional collaborations on teams to analyze Regents data, student work, and plan lessons aligned to the State standards. Teacher teams are beginning to plan differentiated instruction for students with disabilities and MLLs.

Impact

Teacher teams meet to determine students in need of interventions based on their performance on Regents exams and lessons are planned that align to the standards; however, these efforts have not resulted in improved teacher practice and progress toward specific goals for MLLs and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- The majority of teachers have common planning time to plan lessons and analyze data from Regents examinations. A review of meeting notes from the English, social studies, and math departments indicates that teachers have a template to record the minutes. There is also a space in the form to record data noticings and wonderings. In an ELA team meeting in December, the objective of the meeting was to create learning targets that students would be able to understand. The team also went over students’ writing folders expectations such as using trackers so that students keep track of their own progress. Though the meeting’s objective was to analyze and create learning targets for students, the meeting notes did not reflect changes to learning targets and only one teacher stated that she will revise her learning target language so that it is more student friendly. In addition, subsequent meeting notes that reflect the team analyzing data after making changes to the learning targets were not evident. In January, teachers discussed gaps in student skills for the first semester using data from the bi-weekly tasks and developed learner centered problems to address skill deficits, such as connecting supporting evidence to the main idea. However, meeting notes from subsequent meetings to examine progress of students were not furnished.

- A social studies team met to conduct a Looking at Student Work (LASW) protocol to analyze students’ bi-weekly task. The facilitator followed the protocol and provided copies of the protocol to all participants. Teachers shared students’ strengths and areas in need of growth. They concluded that most students could connect their evidence to the writing prompt and that the bi-weekly tasks are providing students with practice for the Regents, thereby building their confidence. In the next step of the protocol, which was to identify a problem of practice, the facilitator led the team in a discussion about what they like or dislike about the bi-weekly tasks and the protocol that was used, rather than focus on successful or unsuccessful strategies employed by the team to address gaps in achievement. The meeting concluded with defining next steps which require teachers to bring back student writing to check if they are using strategies such as Claim, Evidence, Reasoning (CER). Though the meeting objective is aligned to the school goal of improving Regents scores, there is a lack of consistency in using analysis of data to identify a problem of practice to improve teacher capacity and achievement levels for groups of students.

- The math department notes from an October 2019 meeting reflect teachers conducting an item analysis from the Algebra Regents exam. The notes indicate that only four students from a class answered a question correctly, while only two students with disabilities in another class passed the Regents. Another teacher noted that none of her MLLs passed. As next steps, teachers decided to collectively commit to ensuring that students complete their homework. While teachers are analyzing data from the Algebra Regents, the team’s lack of actionable next steps to improve teacher practice, focus on groups of students, create goals, and monitor their progress using data hinders improvement of teacher practice and increased achievement for groups of students.