Quality Review Report

2016-2017

High School for Violin and Dance

High school 09X543

1110 Boston Rd.
Bronx
NY 10456

Principal: Franklin Sim

Dates of Review:
March 16, 2017 - March 17, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Edward Hazen

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

High School for Violin and Dance serves students in grade 9 through grade 12. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm.

School Quality Ratings

Instructional Core		
To what extent does the school...	**Area**	**Rating**
1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards	**Additional Finding**	**Proficient**
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	**Area of Focus**	**Developing**
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	**Additional Finding**	**Proficient**

School Quality Ratings continued

School Culture

To what extent does the school...	Area	Rating
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults	**Area of Celebration**	**Proficient**
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	**Additional Finding**	**Proficient**

Systems for Improvement

To what extent does the school...	Area	Rating
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	**Additional Finding**	**Proficient**
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	**Additional Finding**	**Proficient**
4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection	**Additional Finding**	**Proficient**
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	**Additional Finding**	**Proficient**
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 the CCLS	**Additional Finding**	**Proficient**

Quality Indicator:	1.4 Positive Learning Environment	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

The school has a safe environment and inclusive approach to culture-building, discipline, and social-emotional support.

Impact

The culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes encourages student voice, resulting in students adopting academic and personal behaviors that prepare them for college and career, and support progress towards meeting the school's goals.

Supporting Evidence

- Students, parents, and teachers reported that the school is a very safe environment and that there are rarely any major disruptions or incidents, such as a fight. Students and teachers noted that they treat each other with respect at all times. Students further stated that the level of trust is such that they feel that they could approach any teacher at any time if they had an issue either in school or outside of school. Students shared that although the school is not small, the environment makes it feel a lot smaller than it is because, "everyone treats each other like family here."

- To encourage student voice and equity in the educational process, school leaders established 'Town Hall' style grade-level meetings in which students are provided an opportunity to express their opinions, desires, and concerns on index cards, which are collected and reviewed by school administration. Ideas, issues, and concerns raised at the town hall meetings are then addressed with students and the School Leadership Team (SLT) and a collective response is crafted to address them. Students reported requesting the addition of non-academic after-school activities such as cooking, arts and crafts, and cosmetics clubs as well as the opportunity to interact with teachers outside of the classroom through staff-student events, such as a basketball game. School leadership granted all of their requests.

- Structures are in place to ensure that every student is known well by at least one staff member at the school and that students are aware of their progress toward graduation and are being adequately prepared for life beyond high school. School leaders track students' college and career readiness through the use of a "Passport Portfolio." The portfolio serves as a conduit through which teachers provide individual feedback on student progress toward graduation and college preparedness. The information is shared with students' families during a college night themed open house. Students reported that the Passport Portfolio has been helpful in keeping them on track to graduate.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula or extension activities, leading to uneven engagement in collaborative tasks and higher-order thinking and discussion for all students.

Impact

Student work products and discussions reflect uneven levels of student thinking and participation across grade levels and content areas.

Supporting Evidence

- In some classes, teachers provided multiple entry points into the lesson by providing students with scaffolds such as graphic organizers, writing prompts, and sentence starters; however, this practice was not prevalent across most of the classrooms observed. In an eleventh grade English Language Arts class, the teacher had created leveled groups in which students were grouped by ability and provided with differentiated worksheets and discussion starters aligned to Webbs *Depth of Knoweledge*, but in most classes, students were in groups but using the same worksheet and the expected student output was the same. This resulted in uneven levels of engagement in higher-order thinking tasks and discussions for most students.

- Across classrooms, students were grouped together to encourage peer discussion and collaboration on tasks and work products; however, there was no consistency in grouping with intentionality or in creating structures to hold individual students or the groups accountable to the discussion, task, or expected outcome. In a math class, students were directed to collaborate in small groups to solve a math problem. When students were asked to hold up their red-yellow-green cards so the teacher could see if students understood the procedure, one group did not participate as directed but this was not addressed by the teacher. Similarly, another group did not interact with each other as directed nor did all group members solve the math problem. This led to uneven levels of student thinking and participation while working collaboratively.

- In most of the classrooms, no extension activities were provided to students, so pairs or groups that completed activities ahead of their peers were often observed discussing topics unrelated to the lesson objective or task, or sat with nothing to do until their peers finished with the activity resulting in varied levels of student engagement. In a life sciences class, two students were observed talking to each other, unfocused on the do now writing prompt. At the conclusion, neither student had written anything. Another student had her eyes closed during the activity. During a follow-up discussion on parts of a cell, the teacher asked several lower-level questions and moved the lesson along at a slow pace. Some students became disengaged in the conversation and were observed talking about unrelated topics.

Quality Indicator:	**1.1 Curriculum**	**Rating:**	**Proficient**

Findings

School leaders and staff have a process in place to ensure alignment of the curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards and plan rigorous academic tasks that are accessible for a variety of learners.

Impact

The curricula reflect planning, tasks with rigorous habits that build coherence across subjects and grades, and supports college and career readiness for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders ensure that inquiry teams meet regularly to examine student work and performance data to inform revisions to curricula and academic tasks. A review of meeting minutes and agendas indicated that teacher teams meet frequently to analyze student work products and data to identify patterns and trends and refine tasks to address identified gaps in student achievement. The school's Literacy Action Plan requires all departments to include narrative writing tasks in their units of study that requires students to compare and contrast arguments citing textual evidence. Across grades and departments, the Common Core Learning Standards instructional shifts are evident in unit plans and lessons plans. Across content areas, teachers require students to cite text-based evidence, make claims, and use accountable talk when participating in group discussion. Schoolwide, school leaders and faculty have made it a priority to have students write arguments to support claims using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence as identified in the school's literacy plan.

- A review of curriculum maps, unit plans, and lessons plans indicate that teachers plan for multiple entry points into a lesson for a variety of learners by adjusting the curricula and identifying possible scaffolds that could be used for the lesson such as graphic organizers, leveled reading passages, and visual aids and cues. Lesson plans include language objectives to support English as a New Language (ENL) students and instructional strategies for students with disabilities. For example, a tenth grade Algebra lesson plan used the Frayer model of vocabulary development to support English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities with the concept of linear function and included a graphic organizer for these students. Some teachers included extension activities for higher-level students in their lesson plans such as self-reflective writing tasks.

- Agendas and meeting minutes indicate that the departments meet vertically and horizontally on a consistent basis to ensure that unit plans and lesson plans are in alignment with the Common Core Learning Standards and address the needs of a variety of students and learning styles. Across all content areas, teacher-created work products such as unit plans, lesson plans, rubrics, and graphic organizers generated from these departmental meetings are made accessible to all teachers via the use of the school's GoogleDocs, thus allowing Integrated Co-Teaching staff (ICT) and ENL teachers 24 hour access to curricula and materials to plan specialized instruction and tasks for the students that they support.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use common assessment data to monitor student achievement and make instructional adjustments. Rubrics are used to provide feedback to students on their writing in most classes.

Impact

Students are provided feedback with actionable next steps in most classes, leading to some students monitoring progress toward their goals and taking ownership of the quality of their work products. Assessments are used to make adjustments to curricula and instruction at the department level and determine students' progress toward meeting classroom and schoolwide goals; however, this is not consistent across all content areas.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use common rubrics to provide students with actionable feedback, particularly for their writing pieces. The English Language Arts department uses the New York State (NYS) Common Core Regents rubric across classes and grade levels to assess students on their writing and provide them with next steps for improvement. Similarly, the social studies department uses the NYS Regents Rubric for the Document Based Question (DBQ) essay across grades and courses to assess students' progress toward mastering the ability to craft a high quality thematic essay. Students shared that the feedback that they receive has been helpful to know in what areas they have to improve; however, they reported that the feedback was not consistent across all subject areas and grade levels because while most teacher comments provided specific next steps for improvement, others were sometimes vague in identifying the next steps.

- Teacher teams use an inquiry protocol to analyze data from a variety of sources, including teacher generated formative and summative assessments and City and State generated performance tasks and Regents exams. Teachers utilize the protocols to identify areas for improvement, then target areas of the curricula that require revision in order for students to be successful. Teachers also consider instructional strategies that could be adjusted or implemented to address the performance gap. Students are re-assessed to see if the additions or revisions had an impact on student achievement levels. An English Language Arts teacher team was observed analyzing student assessments using a Reflecting on Assessment and Student Work protocol, facilitated by a teacher leader. The team assured that the standards and skills of the unit are being addressed in the assessment (writing a claim, making a counter claim, writing a conclusion), then verified that it aligned to the school's goals. The team then identified strategies that could be used to assist students with disabilities to meet the standards such as teaching them how to internalize a graphic organizer to help them organize their thoughts prior to starting to write.

- School leaders and teachers report that each teacher team has a leader who attends a Student Achievement Team (SAT) meeting every Monday to meet with leadership and coaches from the Center for the Professional Education of Teachers from Columbia University Teachers College. This supports the team leaders in their preparation to lead their teams' inquiry work, to examine schoolwide student achievement patterns and trends, and to consider possible vertical and horizontal curriculum revisions. Team leaders use the weekly Monday meetings to inform their adjustments to instruction at the team and classroom level.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

School leaders communicate high expectations to staff through professional learning opportunities, and staff provides feedback to parents on their children's academic progress in school. Systems are in place to ensure that students are on track to graduate.

Impact

Systems of accountability for staff and ongoing communication with students and families ensure that they are aware of their children's progress toward graduation and pathway to college and career readiness. The school's system of advisement and progress monitoring results in students taking ownership in tracking their own progress.

Supporting Evidence

- School Leaders are committed to communicating expectations to teachers, holding them accountable, and providing the ongoing support that is required in order to improve staff members' professional practice. Expectations around curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment are shared with faculty at the beginning of the school year. The school has a "Drop Everything and Write" initiative which has been articulated to teachers via faculty meetings and regular emails from school leaders. The school also works with Teachers College to provide teachers with support in differentiating their instruction through a series of professional learning sessions. School leaders share data from instructional walks with teachers so they can assess the level at which the initiatives are being implemented schoolwide.

- Passport Portfolios delineate expectations against which students set goals that are college and career related. Students are expected to select their best work products from various classes to put into their portfolio, which they maintain from year-to-year so that they can see the improvement in their work over time and to ensure that they are making progress toward college preparedness and graduation. Students stated that the portfolios are meaningful because it can be used for a job or college application and it helps them monitor their progress toward adequately preparing to pass the New York State Regents exams and staying on track to graduate.

- Students report that the coursework in the majority of their classes is challenging and that there are supports in place to assist them if they struggle. Students further reported that the Common Core Learning Standards are hard, but realize that it is adequately preparing them to pass the Regents exams and to be better equipped for college. They noted that the guidance provided by faculty and leadership, including the Passport Portfolios, have been instrumental in keeping them on a track to college. Parents stated how helpful school staff has been in helping get their children prepared for college, not just academically, but with campus visits and assistance with preparing college applications and financial assistance paperwork.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured inquiry-based collaborations that align to the schoolwide goals, leading toward improved teacher practices and teacher involvement in organizational decisions.

Impact

Increased instructional planning and collaboration have strengthened and improved teacher practices and leadership capacity which affects student learning across grade levels. Teachers have taken an active role in schoolwide decisions related to teaching and learning.

Supporting Evidence

- The majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry based professional collaborations to ensure the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards across grade levels and subject areas. School leaders have created vertical and horizontal teacher teams that meet weekly to collaborate on revisions to curricula and instructional resources, such as graphic organizers that support multiple entry points into lessons for a variety of learners. For example, an eleventh grade social studies unit plan contains sentence frames and discussion starters that students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs) can use to engage in a debate about the value of imperialism. Also included is a structured debate protocol for debate teams with guidelines to assist ELLs and students with disabilities such as leveled grouping and minimizing the number of points they are required to argue. Work products generated by the collaborative teacher teams such as unit plans, lesson plans, and rubrics are reviewed at departmental meetings and posted to the school's shared drive to allow access to the documents by all staff members.

- Teacher teams use a Reflecting on Assessment and Student Work protocol to ensure that there is alignment to the Common Core and the instructional shifts when collaborating on lesson and unit planning. During a teacher team meeting, teachers were observed using the protocol to examine student work from an end-of-unit performance task in which students had to write a claim, make a counter claim, and develop a conclusion with supporting textual evidence. Teachers used their collaboration time to discuss noticings, wonderings, and possible next steps for supporting struggling students to meet the rigor of the task. Teachers noted that the task met the rigors of the Common Core, but identified specific students with disabilities that would need additional support. Consequently, the team decided to reteach students how to use their graphic organizers as a way to organize their thinking and writing prior to starting their essay. It was also suggested that an acronym be established to assist students in remembering the steps to writing their essay, and in turn help students internalize the strategy.

- Distributive leadership structures are in place so that teachers have the opportunity to lead departmental discussions and plan professional learning activities with their colleagues. Each teacher team has a team leader that is responsible for attending a student achievement team meeting every Monday. During the Monday meetings, the team leaders meet with both school administration and professional development specialists from Columbia University's Center for the Professional Education of Teachers/Teachers College program. The staff development specialists support the team leaders in their preparation to lead collaborative inquiry meetings and to plan professional development sessions for staff to establish a coherent and consistent system for analyzing student work products.