

Quality Review Report

2017-2018

Liberty High School Academy For Newcomers

High school 02M550

**250 West 18 Street
Manhattan
NY 10011**

Principal: Rhonda Huegel

**Dates of Review:
November 15, 2017 - November 16, 2017**

Lead Reviewer: Liza Zarifi

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

Liberty High School Academy for Newcomers serves students in grades 9-12. 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 | | |
|--|---------------------------|-------------------|
| <i>To what extent does the school...</i> | 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 | Additional Finding | Proficient |
| 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 | Area of Focus | Proficient |

School Quality Ratings continued

| School Culture | | |
|--|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>To what extent does the school...</i> | Area | Rating |
| 1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults | Additional Finding | Well Developed |
| 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 | Well Developed |
| Systems for Improvement | | |
| <i>To what extent does the school...</i> | 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 | Well Developed |
| 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 | Area of Celebration | Well Developed |
| 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 | Well Developed |

Area of Celebration

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

Leaders and teacher peers support the development of teachers with effective feedback from strategic use of frequent cycles of classroom observation and analysis of student work and data. Feedback accurately captures strengths, challenges, and next steps grounded in the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*.

Impact

Feedback articulates clear expectations for teacher practice and is aligned with professional goals. Teacher development practices promote teacher collaboration and professional growth.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders support the development of teachers with frequent cycles of classroom observation and feedback. The leadership team keeps a transparent tracking document for observations and logs all time spent in classrooms, including frequent informal observations. This is shared with staff and used for reflection at cabinet meetings and to inform professional development (PD) needs and goal-setting. Leaders send teachers feedback within two days of the observation, and feedback is aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and teachers' professional goals. One piece of informal feedback for an English teacher focused on developing questions to use with complex texts. The feedback offered suggestions to reduce the number of and focus the questions asked in a lesson so that they are connected to the most critical aspect of the reading. Another piece of feedback for a science teacher aligned to a school goal of increasing Regents performance, offering suggestions on differentiation to support various levels of English as a New Language (ENL) students. Teachers reported that the feedback and support they receive is clear and that they know what expectations are for next steps.
- Teacher peers support the development of teachers through a weekly PD structure of learning walks. These learning walks provide dedicated time for teachers to either invite teachers into their classrooms to receive feedback or join an observation in another classroom. After one observation in a math class, the teacher received email feedback with "glows and grows" from the group. Glows pointed out the preparation of students in their group work presentations and the integrated use of technology in the lesson. Grows included the suggestions of having students utilize a checklist to take notes during presentations and of providing teams with time to discuss their notes prior to giving team feedback. The teacher was able to integrate these suggestions into a subsequent lesson and reported that receiving feedback from colleagues has had a positive impact on teacher development and building supportive relationships across the school.
- School leaders utilize student work and data to support the development of teachers. Teachers complete a scholarship report reflection after each marking period in order to reflect on student achievement in connection with their own practices and professional goals. Questions on the reflection guide teachers to consider causes for differences in performance between course sections, the connection between class grades and Regents performance, and learning gaps for specific groups or individual students. These reflections support work on professional goals and are revisited during mid-year conferences to monitor progress toward meeting these goals. Teachers reported that these reflections support their ability to analyze instructional trends, identify gaps, and reflect on performance differences between students and class sections.

Area of Focus

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| Quality Indicator: | 2.2 Assessment | Rating: | Proficient |
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use assessments and rubrics that are aligned with the school's curricula and provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. While teachers and leaders use common assessments to determine student progress across grades, there are missed opportunities to create a clear portrait of student mastery using common rubrics and grading policies.

Impact

Teachers use rubrics and assessments to provide actionable feedback to students. Results from assessments are used to adjust the curricula and instruction, but there are missed opportunities to make feedback meaningful and track adjustments to increased mastery for groups or individual students.

Supporting Evidence

- Multiple rubrics from different sources are used across classrooms, and use can vary depending on type of task and content area. For example, there were various rubrics used to score written work, one called a "cause-and-effect paragraph rubric," another called a "story rubric," and another from the six traits rubric. Students are informed as to what grade they have on a task and generally receive feedback on areas of strength and areas for growth. However, there are missed opportunities to make rubrics more coherent to provide a clear portrait of student mastery.
- Teachers provide actionable feedback to students using assessments and rubrics. For example, a teacher gave feedback to a student on a writing piece, saying, "ideas must be expressed with direct and concise sentences" and "this is good information but poorly organized." Another teacher gave rubric scores on a piece of student work and wrote "could use more descriptive language." Nonetheless, there are missed opportunities to offer more specific and meaningful feedback to students for next steps across the vast majority of classrooms and content areas.
- The school uses common assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas, and the results are used to make adjustments to curricula and instruction. Teacher teams and leaders analyze assessment results to determine student progress and propose curricular adjustments to teams. For example, the leadership team and faculty analyzed the Living Environment Regents, the Algebra Regents, and the New York State English as a Second Language Test (NYSESLAT) results and identified that students weren't demonstrating proficiency in writing, which led to an increase in writing instruction through the use of the Collections curriculum. However, teams do not track the impact of curricular changes and adjustments on specific groups of students in order to see all students demonstrate increased mastery. In addition, though teams are developing strategies to enhance the curriculum and support learners, as seen in gallery walk posters, and using data to inform adjustments, they have yet to commit to specific changes and adjustments and track the impact of those changes.

Additional Finding

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| Quality Indicator: | 1.1 Curriculum | Rating: | Proficient |
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula align to the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts through collaborative planning practices. Teachers utilize student work and data to refine the curricula and academic tasks.

Impact

School leaders and faculty make purposeful decisions to build coherence across the curricula and content areas to promote college and career readiness for all students. The refinement of tasks provides access to the curricula and cognitive engagement for all levels of the schoolwide ENL population.

Supporting Evidence

- Faculty align curricula to the Common Core and integrate the instructional shifts across content areas. Teachers plan common approaches to annotation and graphic organizers to support access to complex texts. Additionally, teachers plan for instruction on academic vocabulary to support language and writing development across content areas. For example, an ENL lesson plan indicated key vocabulary and aligned supporting materials. An Earth Science lesson plan indicated vocabulary and utilized matching visuals in the do now activity. Rigorous questions are planned using three frameworks—Webb’s *Depth of Knowledge*, Rigor/Relevance, and Bloom’s Taxonomy-- in order to build coherence across classrooms and content areas. An eleventh grade English lesson included a higher-order question connected to the objective, and a Global Studies lesson indicated a set of higher-order questions that framed the activities. As a result of these practices, curricula and lesson plans promote college and career readiness for all students.
- Curricula and academic tasks are planned with a content and an ENL language objective to ensure all levels of students have access to grade-level content. English classes utilize the Collections curricula across grades to ensure ENL students have access to grade-level appropriate complex texts, and teachers refine tasks through weekly planning meetings using student work and data. The ENL teacher team reflected on student data to analyze the use of scaffolds and supports for students writing an American Literature essay. The science and physical education teams modified their curricula to better support English Language Learners through the integration of instructional strategies such as graphic organizers, visuals, and key vocabulary support. Consequently, planning practices provide access to the curricula for a diversity of learners and promote cognitive engagement across levels.
- Teachers utilize the Sheltered Instructional Observation Protocol (SIOP) to plan their lessons in order to support the schoolwide ENL population having access to the curricula and academic tasks. Lesson plans across content areas include questions aligned to content and language standards, lesson assessment, and meaningful activities. Content areas, such as Global Studies, use English Language Arts standards to plan lessons that provide access to complex texts such as Supreme Court cases, speeches, and articles about historical events. Tasks are refined according to ENL levels to ensure all learners are cognitively engaged and working collaboratively.

Additional Finding

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|---------------------------|---------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Quality Indicator: | 1.2 Pedagogy | Rating: | Proficient |
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies such as strategic groupings and scaffolds for various ENL levels consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula and promote student discussion.

Impact

All learners in this ENL school have the opportunity to demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in work products, including persuasive essays, presenting content in multiple ways, and engaging in discussions that reflect high levels of participation.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula so that all learners are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks. In an ENL English class, the teacher differentiated access to the task by forming two groups that used different texts and Bloom's question levels. In a Global Studies class, the teacher provided translated Spanish materials, and some students used translation services on their phones. In an ENL literature class, the teacher provided two versions of the text including one with supporting visuals, and created small groups with differentiated entry points while working on theme. One group worked with sentence starters to analyze a section of the text, and another group identified two quotes and explained the connection to the theme. As a result of multiple entry points built into instruction, students were able to demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in their work products.
- Student work products reflect high levels of thinking and participation through student choice across classrooms. In a government class, students were able to choose which text (a Supreme Court case) they read for analysis and how they creatively presented the content. In a journalism class, students chose topics to write about. For example, one student wrote articles about immigration and gun control based on personal interest. In a science class, students could choose how to present a project: using PowerPoint, creating a poster, or writing an essay. In an English class, students were able to choose the theme of a particular text to analyze, citing text-based evidence and engaging in discussion with classmates to debate the relevance of specific evidence to the chosen theme.
- Students engage in discussions across classrooms. In an algebra class, students worked in small groups to solve problems and represent solutions on chart paper to share with the class. In a government class, students discussed the meaning of a political cartoon and historical artifacts to develop context for a Supreme Court case. In an Advanced Placement English class, students analyzed and discussed a student essay in order to practice applying the rubric, identifying strengths and areas for growth in the writing. Students pushed each other's thinking through asking clarifying questions and probing for more explanation. In a Global Studies class, students discussed readings in small groups and then engaged in a whole-class discussion to share ideas and make connections to political cartoons and maps. Discussions reflected high levels of students' thinking and participation across classrooms.

Additional Finding

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

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations for professionalism and instruction to the entire staff. Leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations for college and career readiness and successfully partner with families.

Impact

School leaders consistently communicate and provide training on high expectations, resulting in a culture of mutual accountability for these expectations. Family communication and partnerships effectively support student progress toward those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders consistently communicate to the entire staff high expectations for instruction and communication. The principal unpacks the Learning Environment Survey data with teachers at the beginning of the school year, and faculty plan how they will contribute to improving growth areas and maintaining strong results. Leaders connect this data to Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) goals and teams create an action plan. This year, teachers have dedicated time in their teams to improving rigor in instruction by focusing on sharing strategies for differentiation and building student independence through working in cycles to share data and make changes to instruction and the curricula. Teams hold each other accountable through presenting their changes to each other for feedback and by conducting intervisitation. This work has been built from structures that were put into place last year, and teams receive feedback on team meeting minutes from leaders to improve their facilitation and outcomes. These practices have resulted in a culture of mutual accountability and transparency among teams through direct colleague feedback and collaboration.
- School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to college and career readiness with families through structures including Open School Night, weekly outreach, pupil path and online platforms, report cards, and letters from guidance counselors. The school purchased translation technology, which has led to an increase in attendance at events. For instance, on Open School Night about 125 families were informed about requirements for graduation as ENL students, guidance team services, and the supports in place to assist their children. The faculty has also built a website to communicate school information and utilizes various programs such as Skedula to keep families informed of student progress. Parents reported feeling well informed by the school and that they have multiple ways to communicate with staff through online platforms, workshops, and dedicated time for parent visits on Tuesdays. These practices have led to strong partnerships with families to support student progress towards meeting expectations.
- The staff begins partnering with families immediately upon each student's arrival. As this is a transfer school and a school for newcomers to the country, all families and students meet with a team of counselors and teachers upon intake for an interview and to learn about the services offered by the school, as well as graduation and course requirements. Counselors and supports are matched according to language and family needs, and counselors send frequent letters and make weekly phone calls to families to discuss student performance in courses, offer attendance support, and address any gaps in progress students may have towards successfully completing course requirements.

Additional Finding

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

The majority of teachers participate in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations including interdisciplinary and department teams. Distributed leadership structures are in place to build and facilitate teacher leadership across the school.

Impact

Teacher team collaborations promote the achievement of school goals and strengthen the instructional capacity of teachers across content areas. Distributed leadership structures ensure teachers have a voice in key decisions that impact student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet weekly to promote the achievement of school goals and strengthen instructional capacity. Teams utilize the Data Action Model to investigate problems of practice and make curricula and instructional changes. The ENL team used a “Noticings and Wonderings” protocol to analyze data from a midterm examination and make connections to the scaffolds and supports students received at different levels. Teachers discussed changes to instruction in order to build student independence and provide scaffolds in a strategic, data-driven way. Last year, teacher teams focused on implementing language objectives and leveraged cycles of inquiry work to refine the curriculum and unpack instructional strategies related to these objectives to support all levels of ENL students. As a result of teacher team work, rigor of instruction has increased in classrooms, as evidenced by teacher observation data and by the closing of the gap between student passing rates in courses versus those on Regents exams. Additionally, about 96 percent of teachers were rated effective last year.
- Teacher teams promote vertical alignment across the school and strengthen instructional capacity across content areas. Teams meet in five week cycles and alternate between interdisciplinary and department teams. One interdisciplinary team looked at student essays in order to inform adjustments to instruction in alignment with the school goal of increasing achievement on Regents exams by five percent. The teachers identified aligned strategies, such as common graphic organizers and annotation methods, to incorporate for groups and individual students to increase students’ writing abilities by creating a “pathways to success” document to capture these strategies within each content area and share them with department teams.
- Distributed leadership structures are in place so that teachers are building leadership capacity and have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning. Teachers serve on various committees that impact decision-making, programming, and teacher development across the school. There is a PD committee that designs data-driven PD plans based on teacher observation data and teacher choice. There are four teachers representing different content areas who serve on the committee, along with the leadership team. Teachers lead department and interdisciplinary meetings and rotate facilitation roles to develop their leadership skills. The administrative team reviews minutes from meetings and offers feedback to strengthen teacher capacity and outcomes. As a result of these practices, more teachers serve on committees and have a voice in key school decisions.