

Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Professional Pathways High School

High school 22K630

**3000 Ave. X
Brooklyn
NY 11235**

Principal: David Decamp

**Dates of Review:
October 20, 2016 - October 21, 2016**

Lead Reviewer: Rod Bowen

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

Professional Pathways High School 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		
<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	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		
<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	Area of Celebration	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	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

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	1.4 Positive Learning Environment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Staff strategically serves as graduation guardians, whereby they engage in case conferencing and are in constant communication with parents to maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes.

Impact

At least one staff member knows each student well and plays an invaluable role in ensuring that the students adopt effective academic and personal behaviors.

Supporting Evidence

- Graduation guardians ensure that every student is known well. As one teacher described, “We guard them through to graduation. We help them with anything, not just academics.” Over the course of the year, graduation guardians engage students in reviews of transcripts and performance data, culture building through games and sports, and occasional breakfast sessions. A parent said, “My son used to have a bad attitude. The graduation guardian sees your child through every step of the way. She’ll talk to him and take him to the right staff member.” Students asserted that graduation guardians are like parents that you can talk to who give an extra push and know what you need in terms of Regents and credits for you to graduate.
- Teachers engage in regularly scheduled community meetings where the social worker facilitates case conferences. A review of community meeting minutes illustrated a protocol that requires teachers to describe the student’s behavior and strengths, identify what works best for the student, along with their challenges and how they can best be supported by the staff. One such case conference pertained to a student who becomes easily frustrated when confused with a challenge in class. Notes from this conference included, “She thrives on reinforcement and yet does not like being corrected in front of her peers and takes a long time to trust people.” One recommendation was giving her the option of maintaining her own assignments in a folder or portfolio. Teacher’s leave community meetings with specific strategies to implement during instruction while the social worker and/or guidance staff commit(s) to follow up with the student. Though not considered professional learning sessions, teachers agreed that the meetings provide them with concrete tools for cultivating desired behaviors and managing individual students based on their specific needs.
- Parents shared the positive impact on their futures that their children’s investment has had by attending Professional Pathways High School (PPHS) compared to their previous schools. “Our kids’ choices are being changed and they are striving to be perfect through making better choices.” Parents all agreed that their children have taken on behaviors while attending PPHS that were absent when they were students at their previous schools. Completing their assignments, increasing attendance, aspiring to go to college, and caring about the quality of their learning and work are all specific behaviors that parents have noticed in their children.
- Students spoke indirectly about persistence as they commented on going from not knowing if they would finish high school to looking forward to going to college.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to the curricula and beginning to reflect the school's belief that students learn best through an emphasis on writing, questioning, discussion and connecting learning to life. Pedagogy offers students inconsistent opportunities to produce meaningful work products and engage in discussions.

Impact

Student learning during instruction reflects uneven levels of student thinking, participation and alignment to the school's instructional beliefs.

Supporting Evidence

- There were numerous instances of students writing during observed lessons. However, the level of thinking required to engage in some of these tasks varied. In an English Language Arts (ELA) class, the teacher asked students to select a word or a phrase from a poem, identify the tone that it suggested, and what connotation it had: positive, negative, or neutral. However, teachers did not ask students to expand on their selections and rationalize their choices. During a social studies class, the teacher did not provide students with sufficient time to respond to a writing prompt as the class transitioned to a discussion, resulting in some students writing responses based on what was said rather than getting their thoughts on paper before the discussion.
- Although levels of questioning and discussion were present across classrooms, student-centeredness and rigorous thinking were inconsistent. In a number of classes, questions from the teachers were low level, only requiring students to respond with one word closed-ended answers. Additionally, in most cases, discussions were teacher-centered with very few opportunities for students to speak to one another and build on each other's thinking. An exception included an art class where students were overheard discussing artwork and providing feedback to one another. Lastly, in some classes, the teacher allowed some of the same students to respond repeatedly to questions, as observed in two social studies classes and an English class. Such varying levels of teacher practice provided limited opportunities for students to articulate their thinking more consistently.
- Examples of real life connections to learning tasks were observed across classrooms. In a social studies class, students engaged in a do now activity where they described a typical teenager living in Manhattan compared to teens from East New York, Brooklyn in preparation for comparing the cultures of Athens and Sparta. Students in a forensics class learned skills used to assess a crime scene to determine the guilt of a suspect. Students in a math class used algebraic thinking to determine whether it made sense to purchase a weekly or an unlimited MetroCard. In an English class, the teacher pushed students to make distinctions between their knowledge based on life experience versus evidence from the text as they analyzed a poem.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teachers make purposeful decisions to ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and emphasize a balance of informational and literary text. Across subject areas, academic tasks emphasize rigorous habits and higher order skills.

Impact

Teachers are in the process of building curricular coherence, particularly in the English department as they emphasize text analysis strategies as a means of promoting college and career readiness. All learners have access to rigorous, standards aligned academic tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- Curricular documents across grades and subject areas display a commitment to exposing students to non-fiction as well as literary text. An Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) social studies lesson plan required students to read about the core values and lives of women in ancient Greece. An article on the greenhouse effect was part of a science lesson. ELA plans called for the teacher to ask students to analyze song lyrics, fiction, and poetry.
- ELA curricula focused on Common Core Learning Standards such as citing strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis; and determining the meaning of words and phrases in context, including figurative and connotative meanings. The design of tasks informed by these standards would have students identifying key character traits and conflicts from a work of fiction, classifying the type of conflict, providing quotes to support the choice, and identifying the tone and meaning conveyed through a poet's word choice.
- A math lesson plan called for students to apply the learning standard to create equations that describe numbers and relationships to address real world decision making. Students would determine the price of pizza given various combinations of toppings.
- Materials from an art unit on painting outlined how students would engage in describing, analyzing, interpreting, and judging works of art with partners or in small groups and prepare for class wide sharing of their findings.
- Though annotation guides were present in classrooms, curricular documents did not emphasize annotation as a means for engaging text to coherently promote rigorous habits and college readiness.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Assessment practices, including conferencing and student goal setting, align with the school's curricula. Data analyses from common assessments help to determine student progress towards goals across grades and subject areas.

Impact

Teachers and students receive actionable feedback pertaining to student performance. Teachers use the results from common assessments to identify student skills requiring further instruction and to develop learning scaffolds for students who need them.

Supporting Evidence

- Students were able to articulate clear actionable next steps they would take to improve their work products based on feedback they had received. They noted specifics such as, "I mixed up the thesis and the body paragraph," and "I had a problem with backing things up and giving examples." Graded student work samples also evidenced actionable feedback. A scored rubric showed that a student had earned a level three under the criterion of claim. The rubric stated that the text makes a claim that is arguable and takes a position. The teacher's comment noted that if the student had used one more source he would have earned a level four. A science task included the comment, "You've demonstrated mastery of this content! Great use of vocabulary and connecting language."
- Teachers regularly conference with students and use it as an opportunity to review work, set goals and check-in on progress. Students memorialize goals and next steps for learning on forms such as the feedback tool and the goal-setting writing tool. The student reflection section of a sample feedback tool from a geometry course read, "I struggle with understanding the symbols. One thing I can do to improve is pay closer attention to the symbols in the question." Another student's goal-setting writing tool, which is to be filled out by both the student and the teacher, noted the student's need to use more expansive vocabulary to explain supporting evidence used in writing essays.
- A data analysis tool used by a science teacher after a quiz was broken up into four types of information: questions and or number of incorrect responses, content/skill/standard that need to be revisited, possible misconceptions, and next steps. One row of analysis acknowledged that students were not clear on what a good hypothesis looked like. The teacher analysis concluded that the 'if, then' format scaffold which was used on prompts to identify hypotheses during lessons was not present in the quiz. As a next step, the teacher planned to move away from the scaffold and focus students on what the question is asking for.
- Common writing assessments and tracking of student progress in the competencies of claim, development, cohesion, and voice support the instructional focus on argumentative writing. Teachers and students use a writing rubric aligned to these skills across grades and subject areas. Teacher analysis of student performance resulted in efforts to strengthen students' abilities to write claims by introducing the restate, answer, cite, explain (RACE) framework in an English class, pulling out evidence with short text in science class and engaging in mini-writing exercises in history.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The principal and assistant principal consistently communicate the importance of improving instructional practices in questioning and discussion as well as writing to the entire staff and provide training and ongoing feedback that are aligned to these high expectations. All staff thoughtfully communicates high expectations to all students.

Impact

Teachers hold themselves and each other accountable to the unified set of high expectations. Staff provides students with effective feedback, guidance and supports so that they own their learning experiences and are prepared for life after graduation.

Supporting Evidence

- The first trimester teacher intervisitation schedule clearly showed monthly rounds that focused on questioning and discussion. Written collegial feedback from one such intervisitation suggested the use of accountable talk stems. In addition, the guidelines for the teacher driven ELA Regents inquiry process included a focus on analyzing assessment data to determine whether strategies for writing were working and identifying next steps to ensure student success. Notes from teachers' common planning logs showed that they spent time discussing Socratic Seminar techniques.
- The professional development calendar showed numerous sessions on questioning, discussion, and writing. Sessions included sustaining and creating productive discussions, using protocols to scaffold skills for discussion, and writing baseline assessments. Additional topics included initial findings, writing assessment adjustments, and ensuring that teachers use baseline data to prepare students for the January Regents. Observation feedback for a new teacher included the suggestion that he pre-determine higher-level questions in his lesson plan and utilize wait time so that students would have time to think about their answers.
- Teachers consistently update an online grading and communication platform to keep students abreast of their progress toward promotion and graduation. Students use the online resource regularly to see their schedules, transcripts, attendance, and grades. One student shared, "We can communicate with our teachers about what we need to do to stay on track." Another stated, "That's how I know what work to make up."
- College advising has made a clear impact on student awareness of what lies ahead for them. They spoke of their exposure to different types of colleges and how college credits can differ from high school. They also were aware of how colleges and universities prioritize SAT scores, American College Test (ACT) scores, and grade point averages differently.
- Students spoke of the learning to work program, paid internships, and career fairs that they access. In addition to seven Advanced Placement classes offered across the four core content areas, the Computer Technology and Career Explorations courses are specifically designed to prepare students for post-high school success. Career Explorations is intended to have students understand their options regarding college and career. Sample tasks include developing an academic career plan and managing finances. Learning outcomes of the computer technology course include being able to read and write code and understanding file management. Students noted the various skills they have learned in the internship seminar class including resume writing, interview skills, and how to present themselves for interviews.

Additional Finding

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

Subject area teams collaborate during common planning time to engage in various pedagogical topics and processes including inquiry. Teachers are empowered to make key decisions.

Impact

Teachers gain instructional strategies and implement team wide initiatives that promote the achievement of goals regarding writing. Teacher voice positively affects teaching and learning as well as school culture.

Supporting Evidence

- The ELA team engaged in inquiry work pertaining to data generated from a recent baseline writing assessment. One finding was that students could pick evidence but not explain it. A suggestion was for team members to have students pull evidence from each passage and work on expounding on it. Another conclusion was that students were not specific about their claims. The conversation also went beyond content and touched on implementation strategies. “Based on the intervisitation yesterday, we saw students working better in groups.” As the meeting progressed, they arrived at consensus around having students do group annotation to focus them on key evidence. In addition, groups would be assigned opposing sides of an argument to clarify claims as well as understand counterclaim. Modifications among individual teachers included differentiating the text and using debate as a precursor to writing.
- Members from other teams shared evidence of similar inquiry based collaborations specifically relating to the school’s focus on writing. The science team developed clearer writing expectations for labs based on skills informed by the ELA department. In history, they worked to address the lack of organization in student writing by creating a scaffolding sheet that outlined the three components of an essay: introduction, body paragraph, and conclusion.
- Teachers are assigned as point people on a number of school partnerships and initiatives. One such partnership is with the Transfer School Common Core Institute (TSCCI), which resulted in the development of a peer evaluation tool for teachers. They also have direct input in the programming of students and design teacher grading days, which in addition to grading, serve as a time to analyze student data.
- Teachers are also integral in sustaining a positive school culture. As one teacher described, “We try to have a culture where kids want to be here.” Waffle Wednesdays, talent shows, and college trips are just some of the regular activities that teachers coordinate on behalf of the school community.