Quality Review Report

2017-2018

New Directions Secondary School

Secondary School 09X350

240 East 172 Street
Bronx
NY 10457

Principal: James Waslawski

Dates of Review:
April 19, 2018 - April 20, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Phyllis Siwiec

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

New Directions Secondary School serves students in grade 6 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	**Additional Finding**	**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	**Area of Focus**	**Developing**

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	**Additional Finding**	**Proficient**
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	**Area of Celebration**	**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**	**Developing**
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:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

The school leaders and staff consistently communicate high expectations and share information with families regarding student progress toward college and career readiness. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations for all students.

Impact

Communication from school leaders and staff includes an online gradebook system and other platforms, four mandatory Parent-Teacher-Student Conferences per year, and an academic articulation procedure that involves administration and parents in direct communication to support individual students. Teacher teams offer ongoing and detailed feedback to students in preparation for their next steps.

Supporting Evidence

- In addition to the four mandated parent-teacher-student conference nights, the school team meets with families of specified students through their academic articulation procedures, which place school administration and guidance teams into direct communication with families to work out specific and relevant student improvement plans. Using PupilPath, KinVo, and other cell phone-based platforms school staff closely monitor student progress and convey this to families. According to parents, one of the initiatives that the school communicated to families was getting students ready for their tests including Regents exams. There is a Saturday school of which the parents spoke highly as well as an extra hours after school for academic support. In addition, parents praised the school's ability to support their students in "getting ready for independence" while planning college trips and the necessary preparation for college and careers.

- There are internships that are proving to be a vital component for students, as expressed by school leaders, teachers, and students. Most students at New Directions express interest in having an in-school internship, which runs from 3:00 pm to 5:30 pm three days a week. The primary community based organization (CBO) partner, Wediko Children's Services, manages the middle school component, the dean manages the high school component, and the high school counselor manages an internship program for students with disabilities. Internships provide opportunities for students to earn their own money, develop pro-social behaviors, and to understand the working world. Students often move from in-school internships to jobs in the community outside, according to school leaders.

- Communicating high expectations for student behavior, attendance and academic performance in middle school is done through the middle school advisory session which takes place two to three times per week for each middle school cohort. In advisory, students check in, discuss recent problems, build community in small classroom-based projects or games and collectively communicate their concerns and ideas to their advocate counselor and/or teacher. Advisory class in middle school is where Wediko Children's Services teaches social-emotional skills directly to students, sometimes with the collaboration of the core academic teachers for a group. Other forms of support for conveying high expectations and for modeling appropriate behaviors are offered through lunchtime support groups open to students from any grade level.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics that are aligned to the curriculum and in-the-moment assessment practices such as checks for understanding and self-assessment.

Impact

Although the use of checks for understanding and rubrics have been implemented, inconsistent effective adjustments and limited feedback have resulted in not yet meeting all students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Curriculum-aligned performance rubrics are used to help teachers gauge student understanding on academic tasks. A review of some student work reflects how work products contain rubrics with grades. Some student work products contain comments in the form of glows and grows with strategies to serve as next steps for improvement. However, others only reflect comments that are not actionable such as "Need annotation," "Very well done" with grade of 94 percent; another had a score of 3 out of 3 with a comment that stated, "Demonstrates an understanding interpreting graphs of system of linear equation. Determine the relationships between the graphs and the equations of linear function." There are also specialized rubrics for bilingual students in Spanish and English, written in "I" statements that offer categories in five ranges of success, a grade, and added teacher comments for writing assignments. Students noted much of their math work is graded without a rubric. Some science projects have rubrics, some work does not. Social studies uses checklists with some feedback. Teachers reported that there is a variety of rubrics used including ones for science projects, checklists for ELA with math not having a standard rubric and using teacher comments instead. The inconsistency of rubric use across all grades and subjects results in limited feedback to students regarding guidance in their achievement.

- One of the most thorough examples of rubric use over time was a series of essays with both teacher's comments and rubric guidance. In a series of three essays, the student and teacher interacted through drafts, teacher's comments and attached rubrics from the NYS Regents ELA argument writing category. On the first essay, with a score of 75 percent and a 3 on the rubric, the teacher's comments included that the student had the structure for the argument essay but needed to analyze each quote used more thoroughly. The final essay in the series earned a 90 percent grade and a five out of six rubric score. The teacher stated that the student analyzed each quote well to introduce the claim. The student's writing improved by following the teacher's guidance and the rubric. This process was discussed by students as taking the feedback from the last essay and making sure it appears in the next in the suggested way. However, since not all work in all subjects has this level of feedback, students have limited support to improve their work.

- The most often-observed approach for checks for understanding was the teacher walking around the room and checking in with each small group or in some cases, an individual student. Limited follow-up was also observed. The ability for a student to signal for assistance or for teachers to assess quickly for those who understand versus those who do not is limited. Student self-assessments are, according to students, "kept in a separate folder" but not in all classes for all subjects. The inconsistency across classrooms leads to an inability to make effective adjustments in a timely manner.

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure the curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts which include evidence-based writing and academic vocabulary. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

Standards-based academic tasks promote coherence and college and career readiness so that a diversity of learners have access and are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- Curricular units and lesson plans aligned with Common Core standards are evident. A review of these documents reveals intentional reference to skills needed across content areas to support college and career readiness. An English Language Arts document illustrates outcomes needed to read, understand, analyze, and support arguments. They are listed in a "Staircase of Complexity" from grades six through twelve as the skills build upon each other, one grade at a time. In grade six, in the argument strand, the learning objective states, "I can explain the topic/text and take a position that can be supported by a variety of reliable sources." By grade nine, the learning objective is, "I can develop an argument using a precise claim with textual evidence to support my claim and introduce and disprove a counterclaim." By grade twelve, the statement reads, "I can develop an argument using precise claims supported by the most relevant textual evidence from multiple sources, acknowledge biases, and introduce and disprove a counterclaim with evidence that cites the limitations of my argument."

- Teachers plan and refine curriculum using department team meetings. With the assistance of their department colleagues, teachers review the task design, develop outcome-aligned rubrics to assess tasks, modify texts, and plan structures of the think-pair-share or turn and talk protocols to be used in class. Instructional focus areas include modifying texts and using student discussion protocols. An example in earth science has the learning objective as "I can describe the criteria used to classify climates, compare and contrast different climates, and answer Regents questions on the types of climates." Reading materials, graphic organizers and questions are leveled. Academic vocabulary is included. Introduction is a video about weather patterns and global warming. There are also question and answer prompts to guide small group discussions.

- Curricula is revised to accommodate language skills in English and supports needed for students with disabilities. In a global studies Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, students are grouped into strategically-placed teams that work, depending on need, with teacher and student support and independently to accomplish the same objective across the class. One group works with a teacher and uses the "3 Reads for Regents" strategy in which the teacher first reads the article aloud while students highlight unknown words that are then defined. The second read is reading the same article with a partner and students underline the main ideas. The third read is done independently, and students find evidence to support their main ideas. At the end of the class period, students have a claim with evidence. Another group works independently, with a teacher helping with refocusing, if needed. By the end, each student in this group completes a three-paragraph essay. An English as a New Language (ENL) teacher works with the third group who receive chunked documents with images to analyze. They also have a checklist of what to annotate while reading. Their end product is an outline stating their claim and evidence. The fourth group is a writing support group, in which a teacher provides sentence starters for each document. The end product is an outline stating claim and evidence.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to the curricula and beginning to reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best that is summarized by these big ideas: Four Agreements; Be Here; Be Connected; Be Real; and Be Great. Student work products and discussions are beginning to show a cohesive reflection of the core beliefs.

Impact

Uneven teaching practices result in uneven levels of student thinking and participation with student work that is not always meaningful.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's set of beliefs is that students learn best when they have multiple pathways to learning. Text modification and student-to-student discussions about relevant content-focused matters increase student participation in the lesson and support all learners to have a "voice" for and about the class content as stated by school leaders and teachers. In a global studies class for English Language Learners (ELLs), the learning objectives were a combination of content standards and English language exploration with NYS ENL standards. The students were separated into four groups based on previous data. They received supports including differentiated modified texts, with specific tasks. For example, some students were to highlight cognates and known words, while others worked on highlighting important words and ideas. At the end of the class, all students produced an annotated text, using a rubric as a guide, completed four word squares that specified vocabulary with meaning and use and four paired fluency assessments that were practiced with a partner near the same reading level. Students discussed their work-in-progress with tablemates throughout the collaborative time.

- In most observed classes, teacher talk dominated the instruction with the teacher asking questions and one student responding, while everyone else had little to do except listen. In a science class this was evident in a class discussion in a bilingual setting where the only accommodation was that the teacher said an English term in another language. Texts and science logs were not modified. Students were at times distracted or not participating. Another example was in a creative arts team class where the teacher instructed everyone as one whole group for the entire observation time. Keeping everyone together was not successful as some students grew restless waiting and disrupted the class while others were not attentive and did not participate. Structures to support student discussions such as turn and talks or think-pair-share were discussed by school leaders and teachers as evidence of student discourse and ways to support students in developing deeper understandings of concepts, vocabulary and language development, but they were not evident in most classrooms.

- Some teachers plan discussion time and others plan silent work times. In an observed class with very limited student discussion, while students were working independently and silently the teacher traveled from student to student to check in. Each student worked on the same set of problems. There was a scheduled turn-and-talk and another seven-minute "elbow partner" when students discussed with a partner a problem to solve. Other than that, the students worked independently and in silence. All discussions were led by the teacher with the teacher asking questions and one student at a time responding.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

Effective feedback and next steps from frequent cycles of classroom observations and analysis of student work and data provide teachers with support for their development. Using the teacher observation data, professional development planning and implementation occurs.

Impact

Schoolwide instructional practices as in leveled texts and student-to-student discussions are emphasized with shared practice supported through intervisitations.

Supporting Evidence

- Observation reports from school leaders reflect low-inference notes and include relevant examples of student and teacher actions as well as specific feedback to support teacher growth. A teacher was working on student engagement and ownership. An evaluator gave, as next steps after a formal observation, that the teacher needed to have students evaluate each other's final piece and have the students display their work in stations or 'parking lots' that would allow for more students to give feedback in smaller groups at a time. In another instance, feedback to a teacher who has a specialized background was was advised that there are various effective strategies that teachers can utilize in lesson plans for grouping students and modifying texts for English Language Learners (ELLs). A suggestion was also made to have teacher take part in intervisitations when these strategies are in use so they can see what modified texts put into action and see what strategic grouping should look like.

- School leaders stated that there is an instructional focus on student-to-student discussions that was referred to many times in feedback found in observation reports. The think-pair-share protocol was referred to: "Connect for students what the T-P-S is designed to help them with and say that to them, so they can get something out of it for themselves." Although students went through the steps, they did not engage in the topic. Therefore, "fully engage' would have looked like more active discussion at the closing of the lesson. In another example, "Next steps: Have students begin to have student-to-student discussions in their groups. They have showcased the ability to have accountable talk and give productive feedback to their peers."

- School leaders look at *Advance* observation reports, aggregate reports and anecdotal evidence from department leads and the Peer Collaborative Coach to determine professional development (PD) focus areas. School leaders align schoolwide yearly focus with observations to provide more support in Monday PD or elsewhere. This data also affects differentiated PD time on Mondays. For example, the *Advance* rating for using questioning and discussion techniques at the end of school year 2016-2017 was 2.56. The PD schedule was designed with three Monday sessions focused on that area under the heading "Giving students greater access to content through Q & D techniques," and with intervisitations between teachers with strategies tried out in the classrooms. At the next Monday session teachers presented the Q&D trials on student engagement and learning. The last session provided time for department team meetings with a focus on lesson reviews through the lens of questioning and discussions. The impact of this work was a rise in rating in using questioning and discussion to 2.62 by April, according to and *Advance* report.

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

Findings

Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work while distributed leadership structures are in place including for teachers enrolled in the Teacher Leadership program.

Impact

The professional collaborations result in improved teacher practice and progress toward goals for groups of students. Teachers have opportunities to build leadership capacity and have a voice in key decisions.

Supporting Evidence

- The school is a member of the Transfer School Institute (TSI) specifically in the Speaking and Listening Pilot and working on think-pair-share (TPS) as a structure that encourages and guides student interactive discussions in order to gain a better understanding of content. In minutes from their meetings, the team reflected on the data they are collecting to develop a deeper understanding of the process called Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA). During the observed teacher team meeting, teachers used the tuning protocol for a TPS lesson. The objective was analyzing the TPS lesson and the resulting student work. A teacher presented the context of the lesson and team members looked at student work products. Teachers recorded their findings in a note-taking tool as they engaged in discussions about the work. Based on the protocol, teachers identified in what ways the student work was a result of the TPS portion of the lesson, and how it helped or hindered what the students produced. Teachers looked at the lesson plan and student work through the lenses of framing the activity, prompting the think (engagement); structuring the share, assessment and Impact of lesson and TPS. They then shared their feedback in the form of glows or warm feedback, followed with questions or more reflective feedback. The session ended with the presenting teacher asking questions. The team attempted to improve the initial lesson with more suggestions in order to create higher quality student work.

- Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work in planned regular sessions that result in improved teacher practice and progress toward goals for groups of children. Teachers confirmed during the teacher meeting that they benefit from working together in a collaborative learning team that shares expertise and problem-solving. According to the 2016-17 School Quality Snapshot, 91 percent of teachers responded positively to questions about collaborative teachers. As a result, the school benefits from the teacher teams and their collaborations in the area of instruction and data analysis.

- Distributed leadership is evidenced in teachers as Instructional Lead Teachers who work with teachers as instructional supports. They are also enrolled in the Teacher Leadership Program with three more teachers enrolled this year. Teachers also develop their leadership capacity by co-teaching with and mentoring other teachers.