

Quality Review Report 2009-2010

Civic Leadership Academy

High School 293

45-10 94th Street

Queens

NY 11374

Principal: Phuong Nguyen

Dates of review: May 11 - 12, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Francesca Peña

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Civic Leadership Academy is a high school with 221 students from 9 through grade 10. The school population comprises 11% Black, 76% Hispanic, 8% White, and 6% Asian students. The student body includes 15% English language learners and 6% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 92%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The Civic Leadership Academy is a small high school in its second year of operation. The principal is highly respected by all members of the school community and has made several strategic decisions to support the schools' instructional goals and as a result, 84% of students earned 10 credits or more in their first year, as evidenced by the progress report. The dynamic principal is passionate about the growing school community. Through the astute use of the school budget, which is complemented by a philosophy of distributive leadership, the principal has begun to develop instructional leaders throughout the site. Flexible, creative programming has resulted in daily common planning times so that teacher teams are able to facilitate the expanding practice of collaborative inquiry, specifically looking at student work that effectively supports accelerated language and content area understanding. Parents and faculty alike are enthusiastic about the school's high expectations, which are continually communicated to all stakeholders through a variety of media, including paper communiqués, web-based resources and personal interactions. The school makes very good use of external partners. The Child Center of New York provides funds for youth development programs and services that otherwise could not be funded by current school budget resources.

Faculty explicitly nurture a culture of trust and respect through their daily interactions with each other, students and their families, resulting in a warm, caring environment that is conducive to optimal levels of academic and personal success. Year-round calendars have been established that use assessments to monitor student progress, and track and set student goals. However, the school does not differentiate goals precisely enough for students who are in need of additional support or to further challenge high performing students. Students who have been targeted in the collaborative inquiry teacher teams as requiring additional support do not have clear academic learning goals, and additionally, these students are unable to articulate their next learning steps.

At present, the school does not provide sufficient professional development opportunities outside the school so that novice teachers gain additional content area strategies from master teachers in their field. Although some teachers are confident in data use, teachers do not consistently demonstrate the effective use of differentiated instruction to meet the specific needs of individuals and groups in their classes. Nonetheless, the leadership has developed considerable momentum for continued school improvement, and all school constituents are eager to build collaboratively upon the current year's successes.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has made strategic organizational and instructional decisions to align resources, promote a common instructional focus and support continued student achievement.
 - The school hired an F-status retired principal for two days each week to support teachers in the implementation of the school-wide Inquiry Team model to study a protocol for looking at student work. As a result, the 10th grade social studies and ELA team analyze students' thematic essays to pinpoint skills that are needed to improve student writing. Regent results have improved as students achieve higher grades on responses to essay questions.
 - Language development and literacy are an essential focus for the school as a significant proportion of its population is English language learner or former English language learner. By reviewing assessments and student work, the school identified that writing was an important skill for student success. The school hired a writing teacher and scheduled an additional writing class for all 9th and 10th grade students and as a result, students have improved their expository writing.
- Relationships among students, teachers, and school leaders are warm and respectful, resulting in an environment that is conducive to learning and supports the growth of students and adults.
 - Students appreciate that they are known by name by the principal and staff. They feel that their voice influences school-wide decisions such as an amendment to the uniform policy. The school has a student government elected by the student body. The student government meets with the principal bi-weekly to discuss issues of concern to students and to contribute their ideas to the formulation of school policies.
 - The students' requests for more after school activities were revealed via the learning environment survey. As a result, the school obtained a grant to support after school programs. This program includes a peer HIV education program and it also provides stipends to some students. Students, parents, and staff agree that the increase in after school activities has helped bond the students to the school and has been a factor in improving student attendance this year.
- Teacher teams effectively use a diverse range of tools to disaggregate and organize data so that information about trends in student performance is readily available for making curricular and instructional decisions.
 - Teachers analyze results of exams, diagnostic assessments and authentic work samples to determine instructional objectives, maximizing in-depth understanding of strengths and specific sub-skills needed for the implementation of targeted strategies across content areas. As a result, scholarship reports show a steady improvement.

- The principal holds individual scholarship conferences with every teacher to discuss student performance alongside action plans and strategies to help low performing students improve. These meetings take place after each marking period. As a result, every teacher in the inquiry team is responsible for 5 students selected from the bottom third, and work with them to improve their performance. This strategic intervention has also contributed to the schools' enhanced scholarship performance.
- The school collaborates very successfully with community-based organizations to integrate youth development services to support and accelerate students' academic and personal growth.
 - Hunter College supplies three student teachers to provide additional support in the English, global history and math classrooms, thus enabling students to engage more actively in learning. "It's like having an additional teacher in the classroom" said a 10th grader. "They also help us during lunch and after school if we need to" said another student. The assistance provided by these student teachers has helped many struggling students pass their courses and earn academic credits.
- The school implements distributive leadership structures that ensure the majority of teachers participate in collaborative inquiry aimed at improving student academic outcomes.
 - All teacher teams are guided by a lead teacher, thus promoting teacher empowerment and inclusion. Each team leader also participates in the academic council, which addresses school wide needs and acts as a liaison between the teacher team and the administration. Teachers feel included in the decision making process which affects student learning across the school. Consequently, teachers influence how school resources are allocated to maximize academic interventions and professional development aimed at improving student learning outcomes.
 - Creative programming has created a paradigm shift in collaboration. Teachers are afforded opportunities in daily common planning periods to lead in data-analysis, decision-making and professional development. The frequency of these sessions empowers teachers and is enabling them to accomplish the majority of essential tasks. Teachers are now developing improved lesson plans that are engaging more students in the learning process.
- The school uses effective systems to review and modify curricular, instructional and organizational practices to improve student learning.
 - Last years' assessments of the CTT classes indicated that students were not making adequate progress. As a result, this year, the school hired two special education teachers – one with an English and Special Education license, and the other with a Math and Special Education license. These teachers are supporting students and making the lessons more accessible to the special education students, resulting in 92% of 9th graders CTT students earning 5 credits or more during the fall semester.
 - Analysis of the math and science Regents data indicated that these teachers needed additional support in modifying the curriculum and developing unit plans from experts in these fields. The school hired an educational consulting firm to support math and science teachers. New

instructional approaches give students a context for their learning and tell them what they need to be able to do by the end of the lesson, emphasizing accountability and interaction with peers.

What the school needs to improve

- Expand rigorous classroom practices across all subjects and grades to ensure that the school's curriculum challenges all students.
 - Reflective conversations regarding data-driven differentiated instruction have emerged throughout the school during teacher team meetings. However, few teachers are implementing teaching practices that allow students multiple entry points into curricula. As a result, some students demonstrate a total disconnection from the lesson at hand and are unable to engage in the requested assignments.
 - Project-based learning is not intricately woven within the Core Knowledge program; therefore many students are not given the opportunity to appreciate cross-curricular interrelationships. Consequently, not all students are profiting from these dynamic learning opportunities.
- Deepen data processes to inform measurable and differentiated goals for students in need of additional support.
 - The school has not yet fully systematized structures to differentiate data-driven, interim goals across all subject areas and grades for student sub groups and targeted students in need of additional support. Consequently, some teachers miss the opportunity to scaffold next steps that build upon immediate strengths and weaknesses, while supporting students in mastering their long-term goals.
 - The school has learning plans that are well documented on a template; however, there are no clear templates for measuring student progress and students are not empowered to track their own successes. As a result, students are unable to clearly articulate what they have mastered or their immediate next steps.
- Extend the range of professional development activities to expose teachers to a wider range of effective teaching strategies.
 - Although the school devotes considerable time to professional development, the activities do not always meet the specific needs of all teachers, particularly as most of the staff have limited teaching experience.
- Embed periodic checkpoints that support the efficient evaluation of school-wide coherence of practices.
 - School leaders have not yet instituted a systematic tracking system to evaluate the effectiveness of teachers in monitoring of the progress of their students. As a result, some teachers are not receiving next-step support to either maintain or improve their skills in measuring student progress.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: Civic Leadership Academy	Δ	▶	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	Δ	▶	✓	+
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?			X	
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?		X		
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?			X	
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X	
Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	Δ	▶	✓	+
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			X	
2.2 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance trends?			X	
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X				
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?		X					
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			X				
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X				
Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?			X				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			X				
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?			X				
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X				
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X				
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X				
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?			X				
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed