

Quality Review Report

2009-2010

Benjamin N. Cardozo High School

High School 415

57- 00 223rd Street

Queens

NY 11356

Principal: Gerald Martori

Dates of review: March 2 – 4, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Jeffrey Soloff

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Benjamin N. Cardozo is a high school with 4032 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 18% Black, 17% Hispanic, 18% White, and 46% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 7% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 91.6%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Cardozo High School is a large school with a strong academic focus that provides students with a rigorous, varied curriculum as well as a large number of extracurricular opportunities that include clubs and athletic teams. The extremely positive culture and the excellent, caring relationship between students and teachers makes the school a respected institution of learning. Many teachers provide tutoring opportunities beyond contractual limits because they “want to make a difference.” A student stated, “It’s a large school that acts like a small school.” Partnerships with external organizations extend academic and social experiences for students and staff.

The principal and his cabinet analyze a wide range of data so that they have a concrete understanding of the needs of all students. The school leaders analyze cohort data and adjustments to the instructional program make services to students more effective. The needs of at-risk students as well as high achievers are met through the special programs and advanced placement courses that are offered.

Department teams and a core inquiry team have begun to analyze data, share lesson plans, and conduct intervisitations so that teachers can inform practice to better meet the needs of all students. The principal states that only about one-third of the teachers consistently differentiate instruction to meet the learning needs of all students. Measurable and differentiated learning goals for all subgroups have yet to be established, nor has a system to monitor, measure and evaluate the progress of students in those subgroups been developed.

Although the school communicates with parents through teacher phone contacts and a website, it does not provide parents with information about the progress of their child during marking periods. In addition, neither parents nor students can articulate the next steps for academic improvement.

Strategic decisions have led to a successful infusion of technology into the instructional program. Smartboards, installed in over half of the classrooms, are used regularly by teachers to expand lessons and increase student engagement as evidenced by students solving problems and leading discussions using Smartboards. The decision to increase the number of Collaborate Team Teaching classes is aimed at improving the special education graduation rate.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- A rigorous curriculum aligned to and far exceeding State guidelines offers a wide range of courses to prepare students for college admission. (1.1)
 - A broad curriculum that includes the DaVinci mathematics program, a law program and a dance program meets the needs of students at all achievement levels. A large number of advanced placement and college courses afford students an opportunity to work at a college level. The school's college level library provides an extensive array of print and multi-media materials for all students. The school's rigorous graduation standards require students to take a four-year sequence in English, mathematics, science, social studies and foreign language. These requirements improve students' chances of getting into the college of their choice.
 - The school has created two special programs. In its efforts to further meet the needs of all students. In the Growth Program specially selected teachers work with 15 at-risk students to motivate them to, achieve, become successful and stay in school. The Gateway Program targets black males with potential but are underachieving. This program is designed to assist these students in reaching their full potential.
- The school's positive academic culture features a safe and nurturing environment in which school staff provide a high level of academic and personal support for all students. (1.4)
 - Despite being a large school, parents, teachers and students describe it as a "family with a big heart." Students benefit from close-knit relationships with teachers and counselors who are concerned about each student's academic and social progress. Soft music, rather than bells, signifies the end of each period; this helps to create the calm mood in the building.
 - Students from diverse backgrounds thrive in the school's academic environment. Students are actively engaged in their learning in classrooms that employ technology daily as evidenced by the high number of teachers and students using Smartboards as a teaching tool.
- Through the regular use of a wide range of relevant data, the school has an understanding of the performance and progress of students, by cohort and subject, which informs instruction and organizational adjustments. (2.1)
 - School leaders use ARIS, Regents and High School Scheduling and Transcripts to determine a clear picture of strengths and areas in need of improvement. This analysis leads to program adjustments and the creation of new programs such as the Gateway and Growth Programs that are aimed at meeting the needs of all students.
 - The administrative cabinet closely examines four year and six-year cohort data to evaluate the effectiveness of organizational and instructional

decisions. This data is used to select subgroups such as students with insufficient credits and ELS students who failed the English language arts Regents for study by the inquiry teams so that strategies can be developed to increase student outcomes..

- Teachers collaborate using an inquiry approach to analyze data, examine student work, plan together, and visit each other's classrooms to share ideas through a common desire to improve student-learning outcomes. (4.2)
 - Most teachers engage in structured collaboration on departmental inquiry teams that meet three times per month to examine student work and design instructional strategies aimed at increasing student achievement.
 - A core inquiry team with three sub-teams focuses on low performing students with insufficient credit accumulation, English language learners who failed the English Regents and economically disadvantaged students who failed the English Regents. This team studies curriculum, lesson design, teacher practice, teacher assignment and student grouping in order to make recommendations for increased student outcomes.
- The school has partnerships with community-based organizations to provide students and teachers with services for academic, social and emotional needs. (4.4)
 - The school's external partnerships support the instructional program by providing additional learning experiences for students. Members of the Bumble Bee Club teach foreign languages to students at a nearby elementary school. This program raises the self-esteem and gives the students experience as teachers.
 - The Public Education Needs Civic Involvement in Education Program provides support and resources to the staff about improving public communication with regard to attracting more high achieving students to the school. A consultant works with administrators and teachers to improve their public relations skills.
- School leaders make informed and effective data based organizational decisions that align with school instructional goals and support efforts toward improved student learning outcomes. (3.1,1.3)
 - School leaders use data effectively to make purposeful decisions in student programming, the deployment of personnel and allocation of resources so that students are exposed to a large variety of courses, clubs and sports teams that provide opportunities for every student. More than half of the classrooms (55) have Smartboards, which are an integral part of the instructional program.
 - The school's goals of increased differentiation, data drive instruction and more teacher collaboration are clearly linked to accelerating student learning. The increase in Collaborative Team Teachers reduces the student to teacher ratio and provides more individual and small group assistance for students in an effort to raise their achievement levels.

What the school needs to improve

- Promote consistency in differentiation based on data so that lesson planning reflects purposeful groupings, students are challenged and tasks accommodate different learning styles to maximize student learning. (1.2)
 - There is evidence of differentiation in some classes but it is not yet an embedded practice in the school. Often, generic assignments are given which results in missed opportunities for some students to make progress.
 - Although students are engaged in lessons, these lessons do not always reflect multiple entry points, support or extend successful learning for all students. In some classes, students with a wide range of ability were working on the same assignment thereby limiting their learning experience.
- Strengthen interim reporting systems throughout the school so that all students and families can reflect on the level of student performance, monitor progress and understand clear next steps for academic improvement. (2.4)
 - There are limited structures in place that communicate student progress to parents prior to the distribution of report cards. The school does not send interim progress reports to parents between marking periods thereby limiting the parents' knowledge of student progress and their ability to assist their children in deficient areas.
- Establish greater consistency and include students in setting short- and long-term goals that are shared with parents and increase parental involvement in decision-making.
 - Although parents are aware of the school's high academic standards, they have limited knowledge of their child's academic goals. This limits the involvement of parents in the educational process. A parent stated that she "did not know her son's goals for the year."
 - Interviews with students revealed a lack of knowledge about their learning goals thereby inhibiting their ability to focus on areas that need improvement.
- Establish measurable and differentiated learning goals for all subgroups and develop a system to rigorously monitor and evaluate progress toward those goals so that adjustments to instruction can be made in a timely manner,
 - The creation of individualized interim goals and benchmarks across subject areas for targeted students in order to effectively measure and evaluate student progress is not yet an embedded practice in the school. Students are unable to articulate their next learning steps thereby limiting their knowledge of what they need to do to improve.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: Benjamin N. Cardozo High School	△	➤	✓	+
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>	△	➤	✓	+
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>	△	➤	✓	+
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