

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Secondary School for Law

Middle High School 462

**237 Seventh Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11215**

Principal: Oneatha Swinton

Dates of review: May 3 - 4, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Anita Skop

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Secondary School for Law is a middle-high school with 473 students from grade 7 through grade 12. The school population comprises 62% Black, 30% Hispanic, 6% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 44% of the students enrolled and girls account for 56%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 86.7%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Under the guidance of the principal, the school has changed its culture to consistently reflect positive attitudes and a belief in student success that supports all teachers and enhances the growth of all students. (1.4)
 - All members of the school community proudly reference the change in the culture that has taken place at the school. Halls are now calm and empty as students eagerly attend classes. The deans interact individually with students as “cool” role models and quasi-guidance counselors who monitor and support both healthy eating and expectations of college attendance. As a result, students describe their school as a place where fights are rare and suspensions have dropped by 70% since 2010.
 - The school weekly advisory program ensures that all students are well known to one adult, who repeatedly reviews and oversees the progress of each student both academically and socially through the use of the school’s electronic grading and tracking system. This enables the advisors to connect with students instantly as needs arise. In addition, the attendance coordinator and guidance counselor work as a team and address absences with daily phone outreach, and targeted interventions. Students with attendance issues have been selected to participate in enrichment opportunities that motivate them to come to school, as well as extra guidance support and frequent advisory check-ins. Consequently, parents indicate that their children want to come to school and even school safety officers participate as members of the school family, leading to an increase in attendance of 2.2% thus far this year.
- School leaders and staff routinely and effectively analyze student data from a variety of perspectives to assess progress over time and address identified trends and needs. (2.1)
 - Data analysis of a wide range of summative, formative, and classroom level data provides the school with a clear picture of school, teacher, and student needs. Student pass levels, evaluated six times a year, ARIS progress toward graduation reports, and daily information on homework in the school’s electronic grading system, provide a continuous flow of data that is scrutinized and used to define goals and target teacher support. Working with Progress Report information, Regents and mock Regents’ scores, item analysis, and student-writing evaluations, led the school to identify needs in the area of geography skills and text evidenced writing. Consequently, the school completely restructured instruction for Global History to include a greater focus on mapping and geography, a portfolio defense project, and staffing changes. As a result, there has been significant improvement on multiple-choice responses on the mock Regents and rubric-based writing has demonstrated an increase in content knowledge and student stamina.
- A strong commitment to college and career readiness has led the school to develop quality partnerships and internal capacity that provides solid support for students’ social-emotional and academic needs. (4.4)

- As a result of the change in culture, that now targets college and career readiness as a priority for all students, the school has instituted college advisory supports for students and staff professional development that assures that all are prepared to face these greater levels of expectation. Additionally, school deans conduct professional development sessions for teachers on handling behavioral issues. Parent workshops, individual college counseling sessions, a student mentoring program, college fairs, work with a college advisor, and a required college advisory class for all seniors, deepens student access to post secondary education and provides support for the application process. Further, the school has developed partnerships aligned to both the legal focus of the school and schoolwide academic goals, with the Red Hook Justice Center, Project Reach Youth (PRY), Fordham Law School, and several New York Law firms. Thus students have been provided with both social-emotional and academic preparation that enhances both post secondary expectations and needed academic skills.
- The school's administration reflectively utilizes resources to target school-wide goals, ensuring that student achievement is the top priority. (1.3)
 - Carefully reflecting on data that defines school-wide and student needs, the administration has strategically targeted resources to address these needs and thereby reach school-wide goals. The administration has used the Circular Six option focusing on the sixth preparation period as an additional period for collaborative teacher planning, and has restructured the school week through a School Based Option that provides specific meeting times each Wednesday. These changes have enabled teacher teams to meet several times a week to examine student work and adjust practices to meet observed needs. This has raised the level of the instruction to more closely align with the demands of the Common Core Learning Standards. In addition, the school has established advanced placement classes in five content areas, identified and provided targeted students with an individualized, intensive credit recovery program, and developed a partnership that provides free in-home tutoring for greater academic support. This tactical use of resources had led to a cohesive team based approach that aligns to school-wide goals. Further, teacher development of more extensive written assignments across the content areas has resulted in higher quality student work products, and greater opportunities for teachers to directly define and address student needs.
- Teachers and teacher teams collect, evaluate, and share data in real time on an ongoing basis with all members of the school community. (2.2)
 - The school has established clear expectations through cohesive classroom structures such as writing protocols and rubrics, and provided uniform venues for teachers to evaluate student work, in order to align student writing and class work to school-wide goals. Teacher teams and individual teachers routinely develop classroom level assessments in all content areas and utilize rubric appraised writing to serves as a source of feedback on instruction. This capacity is further enhanced through the use of the school's electronic grading protocol, which provides subgroup, class, and content area reports in real time. After reflecting on data from classroom writing and Regents' results, a Humanities team was formed to

dig more deeply into both English language arts and Global History instruction, and define needs as per the Common Core Learning Standards. As a result, the teacher team identified student subgroup trends and individual student needs, leading to adjustments in instructional decisions that have already positively impacted student achievement in Global Studies.

What the school needs to improve

- Deepen the alignment of questioning to the Common Core Learning Standards, so that higher order thinking is consistent school-wide. (1.1)
 - School leaders, in collaboration with their faculty, have worked reflectively to align the curricula to the rigorous demands of the Common Core Learning Standards and have integrated identified, content specific tasks for all students, surfacing gaps, and developing instructional strategies to address these needs. In addition, they have aligned school-wide expectations to the defined college and career readiness standards. However, the tasks routinely implemented across all classrooms and in all content areas are not universally rigorous for all students and subgroups. In a classroom with students with disabilities, the student chemistry experiment involved creating a supersaturated solution. Though the topic was appropriate, the concepts covered in the creation of the crystals did not align to the depth required at the high school Regents level. As a result, students are not routinely exposed to challenging and demanding tasks, limiting student growth.
- Enhance the quality of pedagogy across classrooms to ensure that all students are actively engaged in challenging, student-centered work. (1.2)
 - The school has developed a clearly defined set of practices that are visible in all classrooms and reflect a cohesive belief system grounded in the use of the workshop model to enhance student learning. All classrooms utilize a writing protocol and rubric based assessments, as well as an essential question, an aim and a brief do now, so that students are engaged in general levels of thinking. Further, the school has embraced the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) concept and is working to provide a range of entry points for students. Nevertheless, teacher questioning, including the development of strong essential questions, does not uniformly require higher order thinking. For this reason, students are not routinely pressed to reach deeper levels of understanding, negatively impacting their progress.
- Intensify the level of expectation for instruction to better reflect the rigorous demands of citywide expectations to enhance pedagogy. (4.1)
 - The school uses a research-based framework and short cycles of formal and informal observations to identify teacher strengths and needs, and provide support for all teachers, especially those new to teaching. The framework has been transparently shared with the staff, and protocols are established that permit the administration to provide feedback to teachers in line with the rubric. Even so, the rubric has been used to narrowly focus on the environment for most of the year, hindering reflection on the more intense areas of pedagogy. Therefore, expectations for teachers

have not been as thoroughly defined, limiting opportunities for enhanced teaching and student development.

- Clearly establish uniform classroom goal setting protocols that include interim goals and lead to long-term planning that is uniformly defined and monitored. (3.2)
 - Teachers regularly reflect on the progress of individual students and set long-term class or team goals, such as passing the Regents and/or success on specific assignments. Furthermore, they provide various levels of support to groups of students within their class. However, structured protocols that identify interim goals at clearly defined intervals are not yet consistently established in all classes and all content areas. In addition, team and classroom level goals, though intended to improve instruction have not yet accomplished this goal in all classes. This is evidenced by somewhat limited student understanding as to what skills will enable them to reach their long-term goals and inconsistent group assignments. Hence, student achievement though increasing is not yet sufficiently accelerated.
- Enhance the structures used to evaluate instructional practices to deepen the degree of reflection and enhance the level of rigor in all classrooms. (5.1)
 - School leaders' consistent use of data and assessments of student work enables them to reflect on the outcomes and successes of organizational decisions and the use of resources. Team meetings, electronic tracking systems, and cabinet meetings, which now include teacher leaders, routinely provide these opportunities, as well. In addition, schoolwide protocols have been established within all classrooms, such as the use of rubrics, a writing protocol, and a greater alignment of the curriculum to the Common Core Learning Standards. As of yet, however, these structures have not generated a sufficiently strong impact on the level of instruction in all classrooms and for all students. Consequently, pedagogy in self-contained classes is not yet as robust as that seen in advanced classes, limiting a vital area of student growth.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Secondary School for Law	UD	D	P	WD
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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 as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			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
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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 Align assessments to curriculum, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use grading policies and tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends to inform instruction and curriculum?			X	
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students progress toward school and class expectations?			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>	UD	D	P	WD
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 staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?			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>	UD	D	P	WD
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, guidance/advisement support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?				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>	UD	D	P	WD
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, with particular attention to the CCLS?		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	

Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed