

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Sunset Park High School

15K667

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Brooklyn

NY 11232

Principal: Corinne Vinal

Dates of review: March 5 - 6, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Aimee Horowitz

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Sunset Park is a high school with 980 students from ninth through grade twelve. The school population comprises 8% Black, 81% Hispanic, 7% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 15% English language learners and 23% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 89%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Differentiation of instruction consistently enables all students to engage in high levels of discussion while accessing rich learning experiences that are challenging and meet their defined needs. (1.2)
 - To ensure that students across all classrooms are meeting standards and provide them with targeted instruction, teachers tier and scaffold instruction through the use of teacher created activity guides. Guides include leveled texts, prompts, visuals, graphic organizers, and leveled questions. Students are flexibly grouped based on assessment and other data enabling each student, including students with disabilities (SWDs) and English language learners (ELLs), to access the lesson using scaffolded tasks, writing prompts, visuals and other entry points, engage in critical thinking, and successfully achieve the learning objective. This has resulted in a 75% pass rate on the English language arts (ELA) Regents with 48% of students with disabilities and 22% of ELL students passing.
 - Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) aligned inquiry based tasks provide students with multiple opportunities to engage in learning including creating and responding to one another's critical thinking questions, student-to-student using a Student Ambassador's protocol, using textual evidence to support a claim and refute a counterclaim, and writing, and revising over extended time periods. Students draft assignments, peer edit and tune one other's work, and assess and reflect on their own work and process of learning. For example, following a Socratic seminar, students' written reflections evidenced assessment of their own performance, and their learning. As a result, students develop meaningful work products and strong ownership of their learning.
- The principal's informed, purposeful, and highly effective organizational decisions across all aspects of the school, facilitate growth in student and adult learning. (1.3)
 - Daily team meetings provide teachers time to analyze student and teacher work, serve as critical friends while tuning their own practice and strategies, collaboratively plan, create, and revise curriculum maps, and work in teams ensuring that curriculum maps are scaffolded across grades. The principal meets weekly with her instructional team to address concerns, share best practices, assess progress towards community and school goals, and re-assess professional development needs. As a result of elevated instructional practices, school wide rubrics evidence student work products reflect improved organization in writing, improved use of evidence to support claims and refute counterclaims, and increased scholarship.
 - Intentionally designing the school with Small Learning Communities (SLC), each with a dedicated academic and guidance team, coupled with teachers who strategically team teach and loop with students, decreases total teacher load while fostering accountability for student growth and

achievement of school wide goals. The SLC structure ensures that teachers know the “whole child” and make decisions based on that knowledge. Knowing each of their student’s strengths and challenges, enables teachers to set personalized learning goals for students, and target instruction to meet their individualized needs. Consequently 93.5% of students earned 10+ credits in their freshmen year and 88.3% of students earned 10+ credits in their sophomore year.

- The school’s highly focused efforts have resulted in a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment that supports students’ academic and social emotional growth and a positive culture of trust and community collaboration. (1.4)
 - The school’s advisory pairs a social worker with a teacher to support students’ academic and social emotional learning. Advisory, coupled with the school’s organization into SLCs results in students and families reporting that each student is well known by their advisor, their community assistant principal, and by their teachers. Parents receive communication from the school if their child is absent. For students in need of additional support, academics, social emotional progress, and attendance data is analyzed via a “Student at a Glance” protocol. Based on this, the team develops and implements action plans to support the student. Students state, “We trust our advisors, we can share with them and they know us well.” Teacher advisors and social workers collaborate to ensure that students are setting goals resulting in all students, including those in the school’s lowest third, earning credits at almost the same rate. For example, 93.5% of students in their first year earned 10+ credits while 88.3% of students in the lowest third earned 10+ credits. The school environment is safe and conducive to for learning, as further evidenced by decreases in incidents and suspensions.
- Ongoing checks for understanding, formative, interim and summative assessment data are consistently used to analyze student performance and target instruction to students’ needs, accelerating growth. (2.2)
 - Teacher teams have created and embedded common baseline, formative, interim, and performance tasks into the curriculum to measure students’ academic growth. Together with summative data, these assessments and school wide rubrics are used to analyze progress and provide meaningful and actionable feedback on student performance at the classroom level so that instruction can be adjusted and targeted to meet students’ needs. As a result of Regents item analysis, written assessments in the form of thematic and document based essays requiring students to glean relevant information, take and support a position, and refute a counterclaim, were embedded into the global history curriculum. Consequently, greater numbers of students are writing well organized essays incorporating evidence from documents as well as constructing thematic essays and passing percentages on all Regents exams have increased with each phased in grade.
 - Across classrooms, teachers assess understanding through skillful questioning, turn and talks with share outs, exit slips, and student self-assessment of learning, consistently making adjustments as a result of this data. Teachers track performance in specific areas as students work independently and in small groups, sharing this information with students

during conferences, through rubrics, and as they circulate among groups. As a result, students are aware of their next learning steps and state, “Teachers look at our work, look at our strengths and weaknesses and tailor our lessons to that. Teachers have different levels of work to meet our needs. They help us make progress.” Teachers’ consistent checks for understanding and use of data to make “on the spot” adjustments to lessons have led to improved writing as evidenced by 75% of students passing the ELA Regents and increased scores on reading and writing assessments across the curriculum.

- Strategically frequent and focused observation feedback using a research based framework drives goal setting and professional development and has elevated teacher practice. (4.1)
 - The principal, assistant principals, lead teachers, coaches, and peers engage in frequent focused classroom observations providing actionable feedback aligned to a research based rubric. This supports coherence in the professional goals teachers set in conjunction with the principal around assessment, questioning, and discussion techniques as well as the analysis of student work. All teachers incorporate specific strategies into their lessons to engage students in higher order thinking. Examples include students generating and responding to student generated questions, drawing conclusions from a body of evidence, translating from verbal to algebraic, making predictions and inferences, recognizing patterns, and creating visual representations. Inter-visitations are conducted using a protocol and are shared at team meetings. Hence, teachers share a common understanding of engaging, rigorous, inquiry based instruction to raise student achievement.
 - Feedback to teachers notes actionable next steps with specific attention to assessing student learning, ensuring students understand what they are learning and why, and strategies to engage students in critical thinking. “Students should be able to articulate not only what they are learning, but how and why they are learning” is an example of specific feedback given to a community of teachers following inter-visitations with colleagues and the principal. This targeted feedback ensures that students develop true ownership of their learning. Observations and conversations consistently focus on teachers’ progress towards meeting individual and school-wide goals resulting in their professional growth.
- Teachers regularly plan collaboratively, provide feedback to one another around teacher practice, and analyze student work resulting in improved pedagogy and student outcomes. (4.2)
 - At daily team meetings, SLC teachers present their unit and lesson plans along with student work, provide feedback to their colleagues, and analyze student work to improve instruction and increase student learning. Teams have designed assessments to measure student progress with regard to thematic essay writing and the argumentation skills necessary as per the CCLS. As a result of their analysis of teacher practice and student work, the 10th grade team used “thinking prompts” in all classes to aid students in using ample evidence to support arguments. While their most recent assessment indicated improvement, the team noticed that certain subgroups still have difficulty analyzing information

and connecting it to their thesis. Thus, teachers are now using “thinking maps” to facilitate improvement in analysis and making connections. Consequently, students have additional entry points to support their learning and teacher as seeing progress with their most struggling students.

- Strategically differentiated professional development and inter-visitations have led to revised pedagogical practices and increased student outcomes. (4.3)
 - Faculty, including principal and assistant principals, consistently discuss their practice with peers. They collaboratively plan and revise curriculum maps, unit plans, daily lessons, tasks, projects, and assessments. A teacher inter-visitation structure facilitates the full sharing of teacher practice, reflection, growth, and the study of student work resulting in teachers teaming to revise practices to improve student outcomes.
 - Professional learning opportunities based on need support those new to the profession, facilitate leadership development, ensure all teachers understand how to create and engage students in CCLS tasks, and are well aligned to the school’s goals. Existing team leaders mentor new leaders, coaches support SLC leaders, and teachers participate in facilitative leadership training, enabling them to effectively lead team meetings in conjunction with community leaders. In addition, coaches support individual teachers’ targeted needs to build coherence. All staff are involved in professional learning around CCLS as well as using real time assessments and questioning. Thus, teachers consistently reflect on and revise their practices to increase learning outcomes.

What the school needs to improve

- Increase opportunities for students to conduct authentic research to further engage them in rigorous inquiry based CCLS tasks and higher order thinking. (1.1)
 - The school’s curricula engages students in rigorous inquiry based CCLS aligned tasks that facilitate evidence based discourse, extended responses, well reasoned claims, and constructing knowledge. However, rigorous academic tasks engaging students in authentic research are not yet consistently embedded across the curriculum, thus preventing some students from demonstrating their highest levels of thinking and writing.
- Continue building upon a process to better enable parents to understand student performance on CCLS tasks. (2.4)
 - Though the school engages families in using tools to understand student achievement including ARIS and an online grading program, invites them to student demonstrations of learning, and engages them in reciprocal conversations about student performance, parents do not fully understand the CCLS or their students’ performance on CCLS tasks, thus hindering their ability to support next steps in student learning. Further, the school does not track family use of the grading system, limiting its ability to ascertain whether a majority of families use it and find it helpful in understanding student performance.

- Strengthen partnerships to provide students with more authentic real world learning experiences that are connected to their academics accelerating their academic and personal learning. (4.4 WD)
 - The school's partnership with Center for Family Life, advisors, guidance and college counselors are highly effective in supporting students' social-emotional and academic development as well as advisement for college. Students and families articulate that students are becoming post-secondary ready and are college bound. However, the lack of numerous partnerships with community organizations and cultural institutions somewhat limits students' opportunities for additional authentic real world learning experiences connected to their academics and post-secondary interests.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Sunset Park High School	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