

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

High School for Law, Advocacy and Community Justice

High School M492

122 AMSTERDAM AVENUE
MANHATTAN
NY 10023

Principal: Doreen Conwell

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Lead Reviewer: Holly Reichert

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

High School for Law, Advocacy and Community Justice is a High school with 518 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 47% Black, 45% Hispanic, 3% White, 3% Asian students and 1% other students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 40% of the students enrolled and girls account for 60%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 87.5%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well-developed.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school's purposeful use of resources focuses on continual curriculum development and strategic use of instructional time resulting in improved student outcomes. (1.3)
 - o The use of resources align to the school's goals focused on writing across content, the continued development of the school's curriculum aligned to Common Core Learning Standards, and increasing student achievement on the Comprehensive English Regents Exams. For example, the school has strategically planned its program to allow for teacher team meetings to occur daily and to provide all students in 9th and 10th grade ninety minutes of English language arts five times a week. In one meeting, teachers discussed recent student performance on an interim writing assessment and decided how they would revise the assessment to make the language clearer, shared instructional strategies for teaching the writing mini-lessons, and reviewed how they would work with students during individual conference time to provide feedback on their writing. Students commented on how individual conference time during class gives them personalized support so that they can improve. The school attributes a 17% increase from June 2011 to January 2012 in mastery level performance on the English Regents Exam to these kinds of strategic changes.
- The school's curriculum aligns to key literacy standards to ensure the academic success of a diversity of learners leading to an increase in college readiness. (1.1)
 - o Across the school, subject area curriculum is aligned horizontally and vertically to key Common Core Learning Standards in reading and writing. The school has benchmarks for each grade stating what a student needs to know and be able to do at the end of the year in each subject. The English and social studies departments have been able to enhance their curriculum by coordinating time periods in history with literature selection in English. All students have completed Common Core aligned argumentative writing tasks that shows claims supported by evidence. The focus on close reading across the curriculum is evident in all subjects across classrooms by student academic talk.
 - o The school's curriculum addresses the specific needs of a diverse population through differentiation and scaffolding. English language learners (ELL) and student with disabilities (SWD) receive the same curriculum as their general education classmates and are provided with differentiated entry points through the use of appropriate level reading materials. For example, in global studies, ELLs are provided with text that is at a level suitable for their English proficiency and that covers the challenging concepts and information in the unit. In a self-contained, special education Living Environment class, students learn the same science curriculum as other students while being supported with visual scaffolds and informational organizers that allow content concepts to be chunked and visually discreet. Students were able to access this information easily and speak to concepts quickly by referencing their notes.
- The school's instructional focus on student engagement promotes a culture of collaborative learning that fosters student analytical and critical thinking. (1.2)
 - o Being connected to and engaged in reading, writing, and thinking is a core belief about how students learn best at the school. Across classrooms, instruction

engages students in content that is connected to their lives and interests and is matched to their learning needs through multiple and varied opportunities to interact with peers. These instructional elements promote a classroom culture that builds from the known to the new and is collaborative where thinking, speaking about, and listening to other's ideas are valued. In chemistry, students were presented with a problem about a seesaw which led into a lesson on equilibrium. Students readily engaged and shared their thinking about the seesaw problem and were able to make a quick connection to the concept of equilibrium. In a 9th grade English class, students worked together in groups to identify power dynamics in *Romeo and Juliet* pulling evidence from the text to support their thinking. Following an examination of other the work of other groups, students discussed how their classmates' thinking was different from or similar to theirs and if reading other perspectives had changed their ideas. In another English class, students built on each other's thinking about whether a claim was of value and if the position presented was for or against the idea. The intentional and purposeful planning of instruction to cognitively and collaboratively engage students is evidenced by high levels of student academic writing aligned to the school's key standards.

- Teachers develop assessments aligned to the curriculum and key college-ready standards ensuring student skill and content mastery. (2.2)
 - Across the school, teachers develop and revise common formative and summative assessments that align to key standards and content concepts in each unit of study based on student data. Each assessment that is given is analyzed by teachers, and feedback is given to students so that they know what they did well and what they need to work on. This feedback is given to the students in writing and delineated by standards and skills. Using item analysis, teachers track student performance progress from interim assessments to the unit exam. For example, in math teachers organize and analyze data from assessments in two forms: performance by student and class throughout a unit by Common Core Learning Standards, and class performance in each standard correlated to skills for a unit. This allows teachers to reteach standards and retest as well as revise assessments when needed. One example of this shows an increase in student performance on literal equations across three algebra classes from 43.4% to 73.4% following instructional adjustments.
- The school's supportive and collaborative environment promotes opportunities for students to be responsible for their learning to guide their success. (1.4)
 - The school provides a cohesive, social emotional and academic support system as well as programs that engage students. Guidance runs gender-specific empowerment groups that focus on student expression and support as well as special in-class lessons and academic advisement. In addition, students mentioned incentives, trips, and the honor roll bulletin boards and stated their desires to do well. Teachers run programs such as the student newspaper and student council that provide leadership and collaborative experiences. Students spoke about how their involvement in student council has led to new programs and student-organized events including new after school clubs and annual events such as the fashion and talent shows. Students also spoke about the personalized support they receive in and out of class and how accessible staff is during the day. The 'open door policy' of staff allows access to adults for academic and social-emotional support during extended day, at lunch, and after school. For example, one student made use of the open door policy to get help from the guidance counselor to write and practice her speech when she ran for student council.

- The school's teacher teams regularly analyze student work and assessment data to monitor and revise instruction and assessments that result in improved student outcomes. (4.2)
 - Teachers meet in department grade teams daily during their circular 6 period and follow an outlined 10-day cycle to analyze student work and assessment data, revise lessons and units of study, share best practice, and write common assessments aligned to the curriculum. The purpose of this cycle of collaborative work is to systematically align practice across a grade to students' learning needs. One example of teacher team work relates to the school's goal of academic writing. Following an analysis of student writing assessment data using the school's argumentative writing rubric, team members determined that students across the grade continued to receive lower scores in the development component of the rubric. The teachers then collaboratively developed an interim assessment and lessons to address this need. As a grade, the teachers decided to reteach the standard and revise the assessment to better reflect wording the students were familiar with from the unit. This recursive approach supports student needs. The sharing of best practices allows teachers to try different strategies to move their students to the next level.
- The administration and teachers effectively monitor, evaluate, and revise instructional and organizational decisions so that students' learning is accelerated. (5.1)
 - Each inquiry team cycle provides an on-going venue for all departments to monitor and revise lessons and units based on student data and work. Daily team records are kept and administrative input allows teachers to both share concerns as well as receive immediate feedback and next steps. Coherence across the curriculum with writing argument is seen throughout the school and is a reflection of this articulated and continuous evaluation of the effectiveness of instruction and material selection.
 - Adjustments to how resources are used and decisions are made is a collaborative effort at the school. The strategic decision to provide 9th and 10th grade students with a block period of English language arts in response to students' incoming data and 9th grade credit accumulation data led to students stating that their reading and writing has greatly improved as a result of having one-on-one conferences with their teacher during class. This change in scheduling and focus on front-loading the first two years of high school with extended English language arts, has led to increases in student achievement.

What the school needs to improve

- Enhance the school's systems for evaluating professional development and collaboration to include the use of data tools so that teacher growth can be tracked and so that areas for continued development can be identified. (5.4)
 - The school follows the work of teacher teams, reviews teacher performance data, and aligns support to meet needs as trends are identified. Teams follow a defined cycle of collaborative work, record their minutes on a weekly summary sheet template, revise units and assessments, and gather and analyze student performance data. While there are specific structures in place, an explicit system for evaluation used by both the school and teacher teams is not articulated and how the school and teachers evaluate the team's effectiveness is unclear. As a result, the school may not be leveraging all opportunities to highlight successes and pinpoint next steps that will accelerate professional practice across the school.

- o The school uses student data to track performance and progress and make improvements where needed. While the use of student data by the school and teachers clearly supports the on-going development of curriculum and assessments, it is unclear how this information is used to evaluate the effectiveness of hiring, teacher evaluation, retention, and mentoring. As a result, the evaluation of the effectiveness of hiring practices, capacity-building, teacher evaluation, retention, and new teacher mentoring is not fully articulated and systematized.
- Strengthen the school's and teacher teams' systems for measuring progress on interim and annual goals that have been set for subgroups and individual students. (5.3)
 - o The school tracks its goals by attending to students' Regents data, scholarship reports, credit accumulation data, as well as classroom data coming from teachers and teacher teams. The school's goal setting structures have embedded loops for tracking progress. Students who have failed a course and are referred to extended day are monitored by the teachers and guidance staff. When students are not in attendance, do not complete the work, or continue to struggle, both teachers and guidance staff work with the student to come to a revised action plan. These action plans monitored by the guidance department are evaluated on a case by case basis and adjustments are made when progress is not evident. Teacher teams continually assess student performance and look at data over time to identify trends so that revision to curriculum and instruction can be made. While the school has systems and structures in place for monitoring and revising school wide goals and programs (e.g. PPT Intervention, extended day, teacher teams), there is not currently an interim and annual system in place for setting and tracking subgroups and individual student goals at the school and team level unless they are included in the school's articulated processes. As a result, the school and teacher teams may not be addressing all students' learning needs through explicit and trackable goals.
- Deepen the practice of providing effective feedback alongside student work analysis to continually strengthen and enhance pedagogical practice while developing a system for monitoring growth over time in order to extend professional development. (4.1)
 - o The school supports teachers' professional development by providing feedback using a research-based framework that captures pedagogical strengths, challenges, and next steps. Written feedback to teachers is provided in a narrative format which describes what was seen and outlines suggested next steps, in a checklist connected to the school's chosen framework where specific elements are rated along a continuum of practice, and with a simplified walk through observation feedback form. While there are feedback structures in place for short, frequent cycles of classroom observations, the diversity of write-ups makes it difficult to follow teacher growth over time. The school has a developing practice for intervisitation between teachers for the purpose of professional development; however, teacher peer observations and student work/data analysis utilizing the framework for reflection and feedback is not a school wide process at this time. Teachers receive feedback from supervisors that reference the school's selected research-based framework; however, the school does not have a systematic process for monitoring teacher growth connected to articulated expectations and aligned with teacher professional goals. As a result, measuring progress in teacher growth over time is not coherent and systematic limiting the school's ability to pinpoint and track growth in professional practice.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: High School for Law, Advocacy and Community Justice	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