

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**Pathways College Preparatory School:
A College Board School
Middle-High School 259**

**109-89 204 Street
Queens
NY 11412**

Principal: Kimberly Mitchell

**Dates of review: May 14 - 15, 2012
Lead Reviewer: Juan Mendez**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Pathways College Preparatory School: A College Board School is a middle-high school with 546 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 92% Black, 3% Hispanic, 1% White, 2% Asian students, and 1% other students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 94.9%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders gather and analyze a substantial amount of information on student learning outcomes in order to make critical decisions on specified areas of need. (2.1)
 - o Both qualitative and quantitative data is strategically used to discern emergent trends. The analysis of the English language arts (ELA) Regents revealed a 5% decrease in students meeting proficiency. This prompted ELA teachers to request basal readers to align instruction with the need to teach reading and associated skills. The administration's reliance on data has also led to "Data Walks," which are opportunities for teachers to view summative and periodic data, so that goals can be based on clearly identifiable patterns.
 - o The efficiency of classroom practice is weighed through the disaggregation and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data. Whereas qualitative data consists of feedback around student behavior and classroom performance, quantitative data focuses on scholarship reports. School leaders have made organizational decisions to increase levels of classroom management and coherence around writing instruction. The outcome of this effort has led to moderate increases on the Comprehensive English Regents examination.
- School leaders align curricula to key Common Core Learning Standards to promote college readiness for all students. (1.1)
 - o The school prides itself on providing rigorous Common Core curricula in all subjects and grade levels. Teachers use the Atlas Rubicon Database, a school-designed repository of teacher designed curriculum maps and units of study, for ongoing assistance in lesson planning. The school's strategic alignment of curricula to select standards has been systematized by the teaching of the argumentative essay across all grade and subject areas in order to establish college readiness skills. In math classes, students use higher order skills to access word problems connected to real life situations. In order to allow students to more effectively access curricula, teachers incorporate I-Zone software into lessons to immerse students in computer-based learning. For example, group projects are assigned that provide students with opportunities to use computers to learn complex material and teach it to their peers. Overall, the instructional emphasis on select Common Core Standards has led to a 5% increase in the college readiness index.
- Across grades and content areas, teachers demonstrate a set of beliefs about teaching and learning that results in routinely engaging and rigorous learning experiences. (1.2)
 - o Teachers share a belief in motivating students to learn by getting to know every student and by helping students develop an appreciation of life skills and literacy. *Never Work Harder than Your Students* by Robyn Jackson helps to frame this notion. The aforementioned text is part of a research based program that helps teachers develop strategies that allow students to grow and reach high levels of expectation. This approach has resulted in the use of strategies such as the workshop model to allow students sufficient time to access both content and skills.

- o Teachers plan lessons with the Understanding by Design model, which frames instructional units. Differentiated activities are designed based on student readiness, and support that is provided for student with disabilities (SWD) and English language learners (ELLs) includes the distribution of written material highlighting more comprehensive steps related to classroom content. Teachers speak highly of these changes, which are evidenced in a proliferation of exemplary student work.
- School leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support school goals and initiatives. (1.3)
 - o School leaders use an abundance of resources to assist the faculty in meeting the Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) goal related to middle school literacy that calls for a “10% increase in level 3’s and 4’s on the State ELA exam by June 2012.” A literacy coach helps to build upon instructional practices by providing professional development to address concerns on student performance on State assessments. Furthermore, the increased use of educational enrichment programs such as Wilson Language Training has led to more students becoming fluent and independent readers. Over the past year, the number of students with disabilities who score between levels 2 and 4 on the grade 8 ELA State assessment has surged by 13%.
 - o The administration structures all teacher teams to meet on a weekly basis and use structured time to expand school-wide academic initiatives. Conversations at these meetings center on levels of student engagement. One teacher pointed out, “A focus for the entire school is annotation.” Thus, teacher teams evaluate student work based on annotation or the close reading of texts, which aligns with a Common Core shift in English Language Arts (ELA).
- Department teams use on-going assessment techniques to track student progress and align rubrics in order to adjust instruction accordingly. (2.2)
 - o Department teams have designed rubrics to assist students in monitoring their own performance. These rubrics are aligned to the argumentative essay, a key Common Core Standard. As a result, classroom methodologies and written feedback on student responses have been modified, and an increased use of academic vocabulary is evident in student work.
 - o The ongoing implementation of modified assessment practices allows teachers frequent opportunities to check for understanding. For instance, the use of approaches such as “exit tickets” and “thumbs up / thumbs down” has been instrumental in gauging student comprehension before teachers advance to more rigorous segments of classroom instruction. Periodic assessment data shows increases on ELA and math scores between January 2011 and January 2012, which affirms the benefits brought about by these newly institutionalized practices.
- School leaders provide teachers with frequent and effective feedback aligned to a research based rubric and a carefully calculated professional development plan, resulting in improved instructional practices. (4.1)
 - o School leaders implement two frameworks, one by Charlotte Danielson and the other by Robyn Jackson, to observe classrooms regularly. Low inference feedback is provided that relates to strengths and challenges faced by individual teachers, leading to the development and implementation of teacher goals. This

cyclical system has enabled teachers to continuously find ways to improve their practice.

- o The school has a professional development action plan for continuous and targeted staff development over the course of the year. The school provides onsite professional development, led by administrators, teachers, and a literacy coach. Teachers are also sent offsite to hone select skills. Additionally, PD 360°, an on-demand and online system, is used by over 90% of the staff. These structures have helped school leaders build teacher capacity through the creation of rubrics to actively engage students and set clear expectations.

What the school needs to improve

- Deepen the work of teacher teams to align with school goals so instructional practices are even more meaningful and focused on areas where sub-groups of students require support. (3.2)
 - o The school supports literacy in a variety of ways; however, teacher teams frequently focus on uncovering best practices that do not consider all student subgroups. Their work appears to center on the average and outspoken student. Teacher teams observed discussed student behavior and student work, but goals for struggling students in subgroups were not fully or clearly disseminated. One student from a sub-group remarked that “Sometimes, I have difficulty answering a State test question.” This lack of team emphasis on suitably recalibrating instructional practices to support the needs of all students is substantiated by the fact that over half of students in grade 8 are unable to meet the proficiency standard on the English language arts (ELA) or math State assessments.
- Further integrate a culture that is favorable to learning and addresses the academic and social developmental needs of the students. (1.4)
 - o Safety is a priority at this school, but students who commit infractions continue to elevate the suspension rate. The school is attentive to this matter as indicated in the CEP goal, which articulates the desire for “a 20% decrease in the percentage of level 4+ infractions.” However, the number of minor suspensions has increased over the past year, and suspension rates for level 4+ infractions remain unchanged. Currently, administrators are in the process of revisiting the protocols, structures, and policies, to improve the school learning environment.
- Enhance present systems for more timely monitoring of student progress so that appropriate adjustments are made to policies and practices to ensure continued academic growth. (2.4)
 - o Even though the school has been hard at work reinforcing partnerships with families, students’ growth has been marginally impacted. The school provides parents with student updates at monthly parent teacher association and school leadership team (SLT) meetings, and progress reports are distributed every six weeks. However, some parents expressed concern about the manner in which they receive timely information about their children’s academic progress. Consequently, parents are looking for additional opportunities, aside from the SLT, to assist the school in providing a more transparent means of communication. Parents stated, “Sometimes teachers do not respond to email. Communication is poor.” This has yielded a degree of parental unease about the school’s capacity to monitor student progress.

- Upgrade the work of teacher teams in the analysis of student work to ensure that instructional decisions at the team and classroom level are geared to directly improve student achievement. (4.2)
 - o Current inquiry work utilizes a six to eight week cycle of data collection in order to provide student support, but the parameters of this inquiry approach have yielded generic warm and cool teacher feedback in regard to a limited number of students. Although the work of inquiry teams has led to ongoing adjustments in instruction, these teams have not produced significant changes across all grades and subject areas. As a result, high school Regents' assessment scores on Integrated Mathematics I and Global History and Geography Regents examinations have sagged. The principal commented that, "We are still looking for solutions."

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Pathways College Preparatory School: A College Board 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				
1..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