

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Secondary School for Law

School designation K462

**237 7th Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11215**

Principal: Oneatha Swinton

**Dates of review: May 9-10, 2013
Lead Reviewer: Tamika Matheson**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Secondary School for Law is a secondary school with 415 students from grade 8 through grade 12. The school population comprises 63% Black, 29% Hispanic, 5% White and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 44% of the students enrolled and girls account for 56%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011-2012 was 88%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Across grades and content areas, teachers design engaging and coherent curricula aligned to Common Core Learning Standards emphasizing the instructional shifts to meet the needs of diverse learners. (1.1)
 - The school purposefully aligns curricula to key standards across content areas with a focus on literacy, constructing arguments and reasoning. Performance tasks, lessons and units of study are integrated with Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and aligned to school-wide instructional goals in all core content areas. A review of curriculum maps and lesson plans show the school focus on the instructional shifts in literacy and mathematics, including writing with evidence, citing text-based evidence to support claims, written explanation of mathematical reasoning. Across grades and content areas tasks scaffold higher order questions and skill development to support all students including students with disabilities (SWD) and English language learners (ELL) to produce meaningful work in groups and individually, resulting in demanding curricula that promotes college and career readiness and is accessible to all students.
 - Teacher teams analyze formative and summative student performance data including Regents examination item analysis, bench-line and periodic assessments, mock regents and performance based tasks. In collaboration with network team, teachers designed and administered performance tasks to gauge student ability. Teachers then used student work to revise tasks. During this process, teachers noted that students needed support with using evidence to write claims and counter claims. As a result, English teachers created tasks focused on using non-fiction texts and articles to take positions. Furthermore, the math team analyzed ARIS data and Automate the School (ATS) REDS report to identify achievement gaps and to plan and revise curricula, specifically for the remainder of the school year and Saturday intervention classes. Additionally, all math teachers use Delta Math, an interactive internet-based program, to assign practice questions, tutorials and to monitor student mastery of targeted skills and topics. As a result, all learners including select subgroups are actively and cognitively engaged as observed during class visits.
- Teachers across classrooms embrace a set of beliefs and practices of how students learn best that results in meaningful student work products and thoughtful discussions. (1.2)
 - School leaders and teachers adhere to the school's "4Cs of Law": Coherence, Collaboration, Challenge and Choice which are applied to all levels of school improvement efforts and instructional planning, specifically areas for improvement identified during the 2011-2012 Quality Review. The school selected Danielson as its research-based tool to inform teacher pedagogy and classroom instruction. This year the school focused on competencies for designing coherent instruction, using questioning and discussion techniques and using assessment in instruction. Across classrooms and grades teachers use a lesson plan template that encompasses differentiation, questioning and assessment, aligned to common core standards. Additionally, teachers in

most classes use the workshop model and multiple entry points to scaffold learning with the use of grouping, questioning, graphic organizers, translated documents, technology and varied level texts to engage all learners in higher order thinking skills. For example, in Advanced Placement Spanish students wrote essays using a rubric and class discussions of literary excerpts, Columbian art, photographs and videos. In math classes, students maintained portfolios of their work and teachers incorporated technology and modeled problems for students. Furthermore, 50% of teachers improved a minimum of one level on Competency 3b, and as per the school's Special Education Delivery reports, there is an increase in number of SWD moving from more restrictive environments (MRE) to least restrictive environments (LRE) including self-contained, Integrated Co-teaching (ICT) and (SETTS) students. For example, 39 students were enrolled in MRE in 2011 to 22 students enrolled in MRE this year and 47 students were enrolled in LRE in 2010 to 39 students enrolled in LRE this year. In 2011-2012, 1.6% of students with disabilities moved from LRE classes to general education classes. School leaders and teachers attribute this movement to the effectiveness of targeted strategies, such as questioning and discussion and opportunities for real world application to accelerate learning for SWD. For example, students in one class working in groups read speeches and answered questions to prepare for class discussion and students in a math class applied the Pythagorean Theorem to determine unknown sides of real world problems thus producing meaningful work products.

- School leaders make strategic organizational decisions to forge partnerships, structure student and teacher time, and resources, aligned to the academic needs of students and school-wide goals to improve student outcomes. (1.3)
 - The school establishes partnerships and allocates resources to bolster academic and youth development programs. In partnership with Hunter College, the school is piloting the Peer Enabled Restructured Classroom (PERC) with math teachers and teaching assistant scholars (TAS). TAS students passed the Algebra Regents, but have yet to meet the college ready threshold score of 80. TAS students learn various teaching strategies in a separate class, reviews and gives feedback on lesson plans and co-teach 9th grade Algebra classes. As a result, TAS students are academically supporting their peers, strengthening their mathematical skills and developing leadership skills. TAS students also retake the Algebra Regents at the end of the year. The school plans to expand the PERC program to Living Environment. Another partnership with Paul Hastings Law firm supports the school's law theme. Throughout the year students at each grade level are provided opportunities to work with lawyers in preparing arguments for mock trials as observed during class visits. The school also invests resources in expanding course offerings by increasing the number of Advanced Placement and Art classes offered at the school, as well as College Now opportunities. Additionally, through partnerships with Project Reach Youth (PRY) and iMentor partnership the school provides a forum for students to address contemporary adolescent issues while making it possible for students to receive mentoring from college students and attend college tours. Subsequently, student responses on the last school survey reflect a shift regarding academic expectations. The percentage of students who completed an essay or research project using multiple sources of information increased from 76% (2011) to 82% (2012) and the percentage of students who used evidence to defend an opinion or idea increased from 67% (2011) to 78% (2012). Thus, the school's ability to align partnerships and resources to the

academic and social needs of students, results in students creating meaningful work products like mini-math lessons and law briefs and engaging in high-interest relevant programs.

- The administrative team and instructional leaders collaboratively work to identify school goals and to develop a school improvement plan. The school is focused on strengthening teams, improving instruction and assessment practices to promote improved student outcomes. School leaders and faculty meet regularly as administrative team, department and grade level teams to engage in professional development. The instructional study team consisting of teachers and administrators also meets weekly to discuss Danielson and strategies to facilitate turnkey training around the Framework. Additionally, the network provides training to teachers on higher order questioning and engagement to augment student achievement. To aid in improving instruction, the school uses a teacher effectiveness coach to support the administrative team and participates in ongoing professional development, on-site and off-site, provided by the network to develop curricula and to create and norm performance tasks. Furthermore, every Wednesday time is carved out of faculty meeting time for teacher teams to engage in professional development. As discussed during teacher team meetings and reflected by the school's professional development calendar, teacher teams meet regularly to analyze student data and to look at student work to target areas of weakness. Consequently, teachers are aware of learning needs and deliberately plan and engage students in challenging tasks. Thus, student performance on assessments is improving and graduation rates increased from 75% in 2011 to 81% in 2012, in comparison to citywide graduation rates of 65.5% (2011) and 64.7% (2012).
- Decisions at the team and classroom levels are informed by a variety of assessments, rubrics and data strands used to evaluate student learning and to monitor student progress. (2.2)
 - Teachers use a variety of assessment data including mock Regents results, periodic assessments, performance-based tasks, Regents item analysis and rubrics to adjust curricula and gauge proficiency of students in all subject areas. In English and social studies classes teachers identified essay writing as a challenge. English and social studies teachers evaluated performance tasks and student work. Students were provided actionable feedback based on rubrics to revise and improve their work. Exemplary student work displayed on bulletin boards showcase student progress in crafting essays with the use of evidence to support claims and the feedback provided by the rubric, thus, resulting in improved writing and comprehension skills in English and social studies across grade levels. Additionally, teachers check for understanding throughout the lesson during student practice or application and with the use of techniques such as “thumbs up, thumbs down,” “traffic light-stop, yield, go” in Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classes and student self-assessment checklists to monitor student learning. As a result, teachers are equipped to make changes to instruction to meet the needs of students.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that systems and structures to communicate high expectations connected to academic progress toward college and career readiness provide ongoing and detailed feedback to students and parents. (3.4)
 - The school is expanding the number of college level courses and opportunities available to students. Students attended college tours and the assistant principal escorted grade 10 through grade 12 students to participate in on-site College Now class registration. This year 15 students attended College Now classes at New York City Tech (CUNY). Additionally, some students take advantage of after-school programs (ex. Project Reach Youth) that organize college tours and prepare students for the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) exam. The school also creates opportunities to strengthen parent engagement with parent workshops and the use of Skedula, an online grading system, but parents lack the deep understanding of how to support their children to prepare for the next level. Therefore, while the school has increased exposure and access to college and career readiness opportunities students and families are not fully aware of expectations for college and career readiness and where they stand to meet those expectations. Although the school plans to hire a parent coordinator within the next two years to increase parent participation and communication, the school is not yet gained traction to successfully partner with parents regarding aforementioned expectations.
 - Teachers and staff consistently communicate high expectations to students in class by engaging students in rigorous tasks, holding them accountable for writing claims with the use of evidence and by having students take responsibility for their own learning. Students explained that many teachers inconsistently maximize the use of and do not regularly update Skedula. Thus, teachers provide frequent written and quality feedback via rubrics and notes, but have yet to provide timely and detailed overall progress via Skedula which is accessible to parents and students online to prepare students for the next level. As a result, students cannot take full ownership of their learning and progress monitoring through Skedula.
- Continue the use of a research-based framework to engage the school community in frequent observations to improve teacher practice, to support teacher development and impact student learning. (4.1)
 - School leaders support teachers at various stages of their careers via professional development (PD) opportunities facilitated by administrators, the teacher effectiveness coach, the network and external options. Furthermore, school leaders make deliberate decisions to design and manage professional development as noted in the PD calendar. Consequently, school leaders conduct frequent cycles of observations using Danielson's Framework data to drive professional development. School leaders provide teachers with feedback such as "introduce accountable talk rubric in your class to better foster more targeted talk among students," "Develop ways to differentiate lessons and their instructional materials and resources so that activities and materials support individual student needs" and "...focus on including writing skills which will make students "College Ready." Teachers are engaged in professional development and receive frequent feedback aligned to Danielson. As this practice is not yet firmly embedded in the school's practice, next steps are not yet strategically aligned to student needs.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Secondary School for Law	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score			X				
Instructional Core							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula, including the arts, physical and health education, 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 that is informed by a research-based, common teaching framework and is aligned to curricula, engaging and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?			X				
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels?			X				
School Culture							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X				
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve them?			X				
Systems for Improvement							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet students' learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?				X			
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X				
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching with a research-based, common teaching framework 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				
5.1 Evaluate the quality of school- level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?			X				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed