

# Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**Pathways College Preparatory School:  
A College Board School**

**Middle-High School Q259**

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

**Principal: Kimberly Mitchell**

**Dates of review: December 13 - 14, 2012**

**Lead Reviewer: Michael L. Schurek**

## **Part 1: The school context**

### **Information about the school**

Pathways College Preparatory School: A College Board School is a middle-high school with 555 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 94% Black, 3% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 90.0%.

### **Overall Evaluation**

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal and staff work as a unified team to create a calm and respectful environment for learning to take place and students appreciate the good level of support they receive for their personal and academic development. (1.4)
  - The school anchors positive culture building through its core values belief system of respect, responsibility, resilience, reading and running. Numerous town hall meetings celebrate student improvement, citizenship and honors achievement. A peer mediation program enables students to get assistance in resolving conflicts and Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies (PBIS) include a ticket economy system to reward students for making positive choices. Students report very high levels of student voice through advisory and open-door administrative policies resulting in the adoption of numerous ideas proposed by students such as homecoming, the creation of a debate team, volleyball team and Spanish club. These practices have resulted in decreased suspension and occurrence reporting rates as compared to this time last year.

Teachers conduct advisory sessions each week for groups of 15 - 18 students who they support in regular goal setting and reflection sessions to ensure that the academic and personal needs of all students are being addressed. One student related a recent experience in which staff phoned her, as well as many others, immediately after Hurricane Sandy because of their proximity to the coast to find if students and their families were safe or needed help. Consequently students report high levels of adult support and feel that "the teachers have our backs".

- The school maintains a culture for learning that expects students to follow a path of college and career readiness and provides feedback to help families assist students in reaching these expectations. (3.4)
  - Students report that whether they enter the school in grade 6 or in a later grade, they are immediately indoctrinated into a culture that expects them to follow a path for college and career readiness. Middle school some students take advanced placement courses and sit for State regents exams in grade 8 and 60% of graduating high school students leave the school with credit towards college graduation requirements. The use of an on-line grading system enables parents to know their child's daily attendance, behavior, participation and performance. This focus is steadily increasing college preparedness levels, yielding elevated numbers of students attending four-year colleges instead of two-year colleges over the past four years.
  - Teacher grade teams routinely use their advisory session feedback to discuss progress students are making regarding their paths towards college and career readiness. Advisors present difficult "cases" to team members to brainstorm ideas and supports to assist students in moving to the next level. For instance, a student might receive targeted teacher tutoring or receive after-school academic and guidance supports through programs provided by organizations such as the Sports and Arts in Schools foundation to accelerate student progress. As a result, the

school's 6-month and 18-month postsecondary enrollment rates far exceed both peer and city school comparisons earning them close to full credit in this area on their 2011-12 Progress Report.

- The school is enhancing grading policies and assessment practices across subject areas to capture data that communicates student performance trends in order to track student progress and inform instruction. (2.2)
  - The school uses Acuity predictive and diagnostic assessment data across grades to determine student progress towards goals established for English language arts and math. In addition, running record measurements are administered periodically in the middle school to track student reading level performance that leads to flexibly grouping students during instruction. Teacher department teams in science and social studies are in the process of developing common assessments based on past Regents exams to item analyze past question frequency and guide instruction in these areas to improve student performance, thereby moving the school towards common assessment consistency.
  - Many teachers use exit slips to check for understanding at the end of lessons while other teachers use questioning and resulting student feedback to assess comprehension of lesson objectives. Rubrics are used across subjects for projects and summative assessments and some students report the opportunity to self-assess using rubrics, templates and checklists, helping the school to develop grading policies that analyze learning, positioning them to adjust instructional practices.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Promote greater consistency in differentiated instruction so that lesson planning reflects purposeful groupings, tasks accommodate different learning styles and questioning extends thinking to maximize learning. (1.2)
  - While the school espouses a philosophy of student centered classrooms utilizing the workshop model instruction, multiple entry points are not consistently provided across classrooms to ensure that all learners are engaged in higher level tasks. For instance, some collaborative team teaching classes regularly require all students to perform the exact same processes for completing tasks while the teachers circulate around the room providing assistance as needed. This practice does not provide modified tasks to meet students at their entry point contributing to the average drop of 30% for the lowest third students earning 10 or more credits in each of their first three years of high school and low student progress grades in the middle school for English language arts and math.
  - The school implements two frameworks to determine teacher effectiveness; one by Charlotte Danielson and the other by Robyn Jackson, to inform and develop pedagogical practices both addressing teacher questioning techniques. However, some teachers ask questions that require low levels of thinking, and often sufficient wait time was not provided for students to respond. In addition, few opportunities for students to engage in peer to peer discussion were provided. This

prevents students from engaging in meaningful discussion to express and expand their thinking. As a result, student discussions reflect uneven levels of engagement and participation across classrooms.

- Accelerate the process of aligning the school's curricula to State standards and Citywide Instructional Expectations to ensure that all students make progress in their learning. (1.1)

The school emphasizes Cornell note-taking and annotation skills across subjects to help students make predictions and inferences, both areas of concern according to student extended-response data. Teachers, school leaders and Network consultants are in the process of using the Atlas Rubicon Database and the Understanding by Design (UBD) template to design curriculum maps and units of study that integrate the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) into units of study and the Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE) instructional shifts in all content areas. Last year's units of study, which were conducted in all four content areas, are being refined by vertical department teacher teams to ensure that the needs of all learners are addressed to close the achievement gap.

- Current curricula and academic tasks do not consistently provide accommodations or supports for English language learners and students with disabilities. Units of study do not specify teaching strategies or student supports to meet the needs of these students. Teacher teams report that it is up to each teacher to develop these modifications for their students. Thus, not all lessons reflect planning to adjust instruction accordingly to meet the needs of all learners. This prevents both the school and teachers from planning academic tasks that engage a diversity of learners in a consistent manner to assure progress in learning.
- Strengthen observation practices by increasing frequency and providing feedback that is fully aligned to a research-based common teaching framework to elevate school-wide instructional practices. (4.1)
  - While the school plans a yearly total of 5 to 6 combined informal and formal observations for each teacher, to date, teachers have received only 1 observation, making it difficult for school leaders to determine areas in need of improvement and fully support teacher development in a timely manner. Feedback provided to teachers mentions strengths, challenges and next steps utilizing language from the two chosen frameworks. However, the framework ratings are not shared with teachers after these visits, thus thwarting efforts to clearly communicate to teachers their abilities as measured along the continuum of expectations for the targeted competency areas. As a result, observation practices are not yet fully connected to a research-based common teaching framework and teachers are not provided with the feedback needed to reflect on their practices and hone their skills to raise pedagogical capacity.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

Pathways College Preparatory School: A College Board School					UD	D	P	WD
<b>Overall QR Score</b>						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 <b>inquiry approach</b> 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	