

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

William Cullen Bryant High School

Q445

**48-10 31 Avenue
Long Island City
NY 11103**

Principal: Namita Dwarka

Dates of review: December 10, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Elena Papaliberios

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

William Cullen Bryant is a high school with 2,945 students from nine through grade twelve. The school population comprises 7% Black, 49% Hispanic, 15% White, and 29% Asian students. The student body includes 18% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 83.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The organizational decisions and hiring practices are aligned with the school's instructional goals and promote improved student outcomes. (1.3)
 - The principal has made sound budgetary decisions in support of instructional programs such as a robotics class, a drama class and a full complement of sports teams where students are engaged in activities beyond the academic classroom. Partnerships such as Global Kids engage students in debate and allow them to take part in the Model United Nations program. As a result, students are supported in maintaining a high level of academic performance.
 - The school has effectively implemented four small learning communities which have staff assigned to support a specific group of students, including special education students and English language learners. The small learning communities conduct activities such as Curriculum Night and Senior Parent Night that target a specific group of students and parents. The principal has strategically placed new effective teachers in classes that support student growth and challenge students academically to compete with other schools. One of those classes is the drama class where students participate in the National Shakespeare Competition. These organizational decisions clearly support the school's academic goals and are helping to improve student outcomes.
- The principal consistently communicates high expectations to the entire school community around teaching practices and instruction with the goal of increasing opportunities for all students. (3.4)
 - The principal's motto is, "The Relentless Quest for Excellence". This is part of her vision and expectation which she shares daily with the entire school community. She seeks excellence at all levels and meets with her cabinet to discuss the instructional expectations of teachers based on the Danielson framework. Most teachers receive training on the Danielson's teaching framework and are held accountable during observations and at individual meetings. "Expectations have been raised across the school," said one of the students. Consequently, parents who would have transferred their children out of the school, now feel that the school has high expectations and they want their children to stay in this school.
 - Students know they are expected to go to college, and parents are informed about college opportunities and graduation requirements at parent meetings, and express that "the school prepares everyone for college if that is what the student wants to do". The school offers Advanced Placement courses, high level courses such as physics and calculus, and College Now courses. Students are pleased with the variety of opportunities that the school offers in course selections which will help them get into and succeed in college. A student said, "in my class we do a science-research proposal and then we work on that for three months, and that work prepares us for college. Colleges look at the courses you

have taken and when they see the honors and advanced placement courses I have taken, I will have an advantage". As a result, the school gives students broad opportunities and they are better prepared for college.

- The school has created a safe and respectful environment which is conducive to learning and where students and adults feel supported. (1.4)
 - Parents and students feel that they are safe in this school. Students describe the school as "welcoming, supportive and diverse", and as you walk throughout the school, there is evidence of mutual respect among the very ethnically diverse population of students and their teachers. Teachers know their students well and students are able to name a specific teacher or coach whom they can turn to if they need support or assistance with any academic, social or emotional concerns. Through the Leadership class and the Bryant Union students have a role and a voice in school decisions such as plans for a winter concert, coordination of school spirit days, implementation of Art, Tibetan and Arabian Clubs, and senior activities, including sweatshirt design and venues for graduation activities. Students also have a voice in choosing community service activities that they engage in. Therefore, students feel valued and supported by adults who team up to meet their needs.

What the school needs to improve

- Build consistency in the development of curriculum which incorporates key Common Core Learning Standards and tasks that lead to higher-order thinking skills across content areas. (1.1)
 - The school is beginning to align curriculum maps to the Common Core Standards, but there is inconsistency in the planning and both English language arts and math teachers are struggling with the instructional shifts. Further, while teams meet to design curriculum, planning is not effectively structured to include all teachers who are teaching the same courses and just a few teachers from each content area are able to collaborate in the planning. As a result curricula do not consistently reflect alignment with key standards and integration of the instructional shifts.
 - The school uses curriculum maps to drive instruction. However, existing curriculum units do not include questions that drive students, including English language learners who comprise almost 20% of the population, and students with disabilities, to use higher order thinking skills and complete challenging tasks. As a result all students do not benefit from curricula that incorporate rigorous tasks and emphasize higher order thinking skills across content areas.
- Strengthen teachers' pedagogical skills and practices to provide students with more challenging tasks and varied entry points into curricula. (1.2)
 - The school is using the Danielson teaching framework and they chose the areas of questioning, planning and assessments to focus on and guide

teacher practice. However, this is not reflected in most of the lessons observed at the school, leaving teachers with no feedback to increase their awareness of the chosen areas of the common teaching framework. Some of the students interviewed indicate that they are not challenged in classrooms and that the work is too easy. In addition, in a math class visited, students' questions went unanswered as they tried to understand the concept of interior and exterior angles. In a Spanish class consisting of native speakers and non-native speakers, native students were unchallenged but some non-natives were lost in the lesson. As a result, teaching practices do not reflect the school's beliefs about how students learn best and do not provide scaffolds to improve achievement by all learners.

- Increase assessment of learning practices across classrooms and expand the use of common assessments in content areas so that results are used to adjust curriculum and instruction to meet the needs of all students. (2.2)
 - Although some teachers use exit slips, the use of assessments to gauge learning is not wide-spread across the school. Few of the classes visited used a check for understanding as they proceeded with the lesson. Teachers do not effectively analyze student work to determine their students' level of understanding and progress towards goals. For example, the math team met to review student work but did not use any protocol for this process and only one teacher brought copies of student work for all the members of the team. Teachers were unclear as to what they were looking for and one teacher randomly pulled out original exam papers of three students, without providing copies or guidance as to what was the concern or issue being presented. These were not common assessments so it was unclear what students were being measured on. Teachers' comments focused on what students do not know but did not provide support for student self-assessment or feedback on how teacher practice can support students' learning. Consequently, all students do not benefit from adjustments to curriculum and instruction that are effective in meeting their needs.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: William Cullen Bryant High School	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