

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Park Slope Collegiate

High School K464

**237 7th Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11215**

Principal: Jill Bloomberg

Dates of review: April 8 – 9, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Rosemary Stuart

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Park Slope Collegiate is a high school with 382 students from grade six through grade twelve. The school population comprises 38% Black, 46% Hispanic, 5% White, and 8% Asian students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 81.8%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Teachers continuously revise standards-based curriculum plans with input from the school leader to ensure tasks are rigorous so students with diverse learning needs become college and career ready. (1.1)
 - The principal provides teachers with a guide to curriculum planning which requires teachers to identify the understandings for the course, the formative and summative assessments that will be used to measure those understandings, the texts that will be used to engage learners with different skill levels, and academic vocabulary. Teachers collaboratively develop unit and lesson plans with thematic and interdisciplinary content that is aligned with the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and incorporates the instructional shifts. The principal describes these unit and lesson plans as fluid because they are revised regularly with her input and also during routine review at department team meetings. There is a school-wide focus on non-fiction reading and academic language development. A math unit map includes specialized terminology with words such as “recursive” and “amplitude.” In a unit in English Language Arts, students identify vocabulary words directly from the text they are reading. The coherent emphasis on the instructional shifts and alignment to the CCLS is exemplified by a grade 8 social studies unit on the Civil War that incorporates the college and career readiness skills of analysis, shifting perspective and purposeful reflection. The school is at the top of their peer range for college and career preparatory courses.
 - Teachers plan units and lessons that make explicit content connections to the daily lives of their students in order to challenge students with rigorous and engaging tasks. A unit in grade 11 English includes an essay which focuses on whether citizens should be held accountable for the wrongs of a nation in the context of the Emancipation. In order to connect the learning to the present, the lesson plan includes a discussion of the drone strikes in Afghanistan that generated lively discourse in the class. Another lesson plan has a real-life focus on the current ethical issues surrounding the use of humans in psychological research. A grade 6 poetry lesson focusing on popular song lyrics has text versions of the songs in both English and Spanish. The coherent inclusion of rigorous and timely topics ensures that all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, are engaged in challenging tasks requiring higher order thinking skills.
- School goals are advanced through the strategic use of resources and programming which provide opportunities for students and teachers to partner in the learning process leading to college and career. (1.3)
 - In order to create ninety minutes of dedicated time for grade and department team meetings every week, the school modified the students’ weekly program to shorten instructional time on one day and lengthen the instructional periods and the school day on the remaining four days. In addition to weekly team meetings, teachers also volunteer to meet weekly in cross-grade and cross-department teams to study and pilot the development

of challenging tasks and curriculum innovations, such as Kathie Nunley's *Layered Curriculum*. This study group uses protocols to examine student work to design tasks that are more rigorous and challenging. The principal programs a consultant from the Urban Memory Project to work with selected teachers to improve instruction through the development of the Brooklyn history course, in which students research and write on topics that reflect their diverse community, a long-term goal of the school. This course is noted in the progress report as having college preparatory certification. Teachers say they have a strong sense of collective responsibility for the progress of all students in the school. When teachers realized that heterogeneously programming students in the ninth grade based solely on scores on eighth grade standardized assessments was not resulting in balanced class groupings, they asked the principal to reprogram the grade. Students were reprogrammed resulting in more active engagement and participation for all students. The majority of teachers are programmed in Integrated Co-Teaching teams to provide differentiated instruction to all students with particular emphasis on students with disabilities and English language learners. In addition to informing programming decisions, the teachers take on leadership roles to advise the principal on hiring decisions based on how well candidates fit into the culture of the school. The school has a dedicated college guidance counselor who works with the teachers and the students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, to coach and monitor the college application and acceptance process. Two students in the school received full college scholarships from the Posse Foundation this year. The communication and structured collaboration among the staff further the goals of the school in preparing students for college and career.

- The strong belief in an inclusive culture that permeates the school results in the provision of a wide range of social and emotional supports that reinforce positive academic and personal growth for all students. (1.4)
 - The principal has been a staunch advocate for the belief that the school should support a diverse student population with non-screened admission and ensure equity in college readiness and opportunities for all students in non-tracked, heterogeneous classes. Parents and students stated that this shared belief attracted them to the school. A parent noted that the principal is “passionate about cultural diversity.” A purposeful decision not to have deans so that the teachers themselves monitor and model expected behavior has resulted in the principal spending less time now than in previous years dealing with behavior issues. Teachers volunteer to serve on a team that focus on involving students in improving their own academic and social behavior. In addition to one-on-one interactions, the high school has a student council where students have input regarding school events. Recently students rallied support for a successful proposal to a local City Councilmember to renovate the plaza in front of the school. Every student is programmed for an advisory class, called “Circle,” with a ratio of 10 students to one teacher focused on community building, and social-emotional development. Students and parents noted that these advisory classes are a safe place to deal with issues that arise at school. These classes ensure daily opportunities for students to interact with an adult who knows them well and who helps them address academic performance and attendance issues contributing to an improvement in the attendance rate from 81.8% in 2012-13 to 89.4% so far this year. There are guidance counselors for both the middle and high school and a dedicated college guidance counselor to focus

students from all grades on college readiness and planning. The constant attention to the social and emotional needs of the students supports them as they attend to their academic growth as well leading to a culture of learning.

- Teachers create and communicate grading policies across grades and content areas and use the results of assessments to adjust instruction, revise curricula and inform students how to improve their academic progress. (2.2)
 - Across middle and high school grades, the posted grading policies weight performance-based assessments such as participation in a poetry slam or the annual play much more heavily than results on timed tests. This is in alignment with the school belief that standardized tests do not always give the best information about what students really know. Teachers plan and create assessment tasks reflecting the skills and content in the curriculum, for example, creating a poster demonstrating understanding of aquarium chemistry. For a task that involved creating a book about the periodic table of elements, the rubric required students to monitor their own progress in completing the assignment and indicated it would count for credit in both science and English. A guide to understanding report cards states that the formative assessments “are not used to establish grades except in situations when they provide clear evidence of mastery.” Teachers and students use the Engrade online grade book, which is aligned to the units of study in the curricula and the grading policy, to track assignments, report on assessments, and inform students of their academic progress. Progress reports are issued to students several weeks prior to the end of the marking period so that students know what they need to do to improve their course performance.
 - Students in all core classes maintain a portfolio of their own summaries of the lesson aims as an ongoing check for understanding that is reviewed by the teachers and is part of their overall grade. In a group interview, students said they use these summaries to help them study and prepare for quizzes and tests. Teachers use exit slips and daily notes on individual performance to track how well students understand the content of the lessons. In one lesson, the teacher was awarding points to students for participation or for helping other students in their small group work. The teacher said the point system motivates the students to share their thinking, and helps to determine the need for re-teaching. In another class the teacher was noting the names of students according to their level of understanding on an in-class assignment. As a result of these checks for understanding during lessons, teachers are able to redirect student thinking and revise lesson plans and tasks for future instruction, thus meeting the needs of all learners.

What the school needs to improve

- Provide additional supports to students across all grades to supplement the existing high levels of engagement so that even more students take personal responsibility for their own learning. (1.2)
 - The majority of teachers utilize strategies intended to support student engagement in rigorous tasks and meaningful class discussion. In a global history class, students were working in small mixed-ability groups to compare and contrast the middle Ages with the Renaissance, using photographs of art work and texts about the economy and the culture. In a

senior English class, an English language learner student was reading *Macbeth* in both the original text and a modern English version so that he could access the text and participate in class discussions. High levels of student ownership of their learning are evident in the Peer Enabled Restructured Classrooms (PERC) where students who are preparing to retake a math or science Regents exam in order to improve their scores review the material in special classes and then serve as Teaching Assistant Scholars (TAS) for a class preparing to take the same Regents exam for the first time. Another strategy to improve student achievement on Regents exams is the cross-disciplinary curriculum developed by English and social studies teachers along with the Atlantic Theater Company. Students were revising a script for a play they would perform about immigrants in the United States based on *West Side Story*. One student wrote that modern Americans need to thank his ancestors who came here from other countries for all we have now. This grade-wide curriculum has resulted in marked improvement on the U.S. History Regents exam. The percent of peer range results for this exam grew from 17% in 2008-09 to 53% in 2012-13. These strategies in use in the high school classes are partnered with high levels of engagement and enthusiasm among the students. This was also the case in a middle school English language arts class where students were analyzing songs as poems in English and Spanish translations so that all students were able to discuss their songs with their partners and with the entire class. In another middle school class, however, some students were not as actively engaged during an extended discussion between the teacher and one student. A few students in yet another middle school class were not prepared to complete the assignment because they had not brought the required materials with them. While the level of engagement and access to the curriculum is high in the majority of lessons in the school, the lack of student ownership of learning in a few middle school classrooms allows some students to lose opportunities to excel.

- Leverage the current involvement of parents, teachers, and students in the process of tracking school improvement goals and in analyzing data to refine short- and long-term goals leading to accelerated student achievement. (3.1)
 - The principal sets specific school goals, outlined in the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) which are rooted in the strong belief that engaging students in heterogeneous, inclusive classrooms with rigorous CCLS-aligned curricula, will prepare all students for success in college. Achieving the goals is furthered by action plans and organizational decisions that students, teachers and parents understand, support and are able to discuss. The principal maintains a constant focus on the efforts of teachers and staff to meet these goals by frequent presence in classrooms to observe and suggest needed changes to practices. One explicit goal is to improve high school credit accumulation which the principal monitors through daily interaction with students, whose social and academic needs she knows well. The college guidance counselor and advisory teachers also monitor progress to graduation for students in all grades. Parents take proactive measures to be involved in school improvement efforts, including initiating a steering committee of parents, teachers, and students, which meets regularly and is currently involved in revising and updating the mission statement of the school. Some of the activities of this group, such as recruiting applicants, are not explicitly goal-oriented or tracked, thus there are missed opportunities to effectively harness the full potential of the entire school community.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Park Slope Collegiate	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 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards?			X				
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the 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 supports 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 those expectations?			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 student 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 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection?			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