Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Leadership and Public Service

High School 425

90 Trinity Place
Manhattan
NY, 10006

Principal: Philip Santos

Dates of review: April 2 - 3, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Veronica Yurcik

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Leadership and Public Service is a high school with 685 students from grade 9 through 12. The school population comprises 27% Black, 61% Hispanic, 4% White, 5% Asian students, and 3% other students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 45% of the students enrolled and girls account for 55%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 79.9%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Strategic administrative decisions establish conditions that promote students' engagement in meaningful learning opportunities that support long-term goals for raising student achievement. (1.3)

    - The principal's describes his decision-making platform to advance students' academic achievement as being propelled by his guiding belief in distributive counseling, cognitive engagement, and school partnerships. All students are programmed into small group advisories, known as leadership classes, to which designated faculty advisors communicate the school's instructional focus, monitor student progress, and provide targeted tutoring. Teachers describe the advisories as having made "a world of difference" making students "feel connected" as well as "accountable to each other", as students support peers' success in learning. To reinforce teachers' understanding of Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and to elevate pedagogical skills, the principal hired a new lead teacher to work with staff on strengthening pedagogy around the instructional core. Additionally, the principal designated selected teachers to participate in off-site network-conducted CCLS professional development and to lead learning on-site through facilitation of classroom inter-visitations and creation of centers of learning in classroom labs. To create coherence intra- and inter- departments, the principal appointed department chairs and developed team protocols for department and grade level teams. Grade level teams assess student outcomes through analysis of lesson plans and student work, and department teams develop curriculum and academic tasks to support CCLS and the school's instructional foci, resulting in pedagogy shifts in classrooms. Students acknowledge that there are "big changes" in their classrooms in respect to learning new comprehension strategies and discussion protocols. Situated in lower Manhattan, the school harnesses a wealth of local and State resources to form effective partnerships that support student learning and engagement in meaningful learning opportunities. Four major corporate partners provide opportunities for students to participate in professional conferences at partner locations and to receive on-site tutoring support. Students' business plans crafted through support of Goldman Sachs and Junior Achievement merited finalist standing in last year's NASDAQ competition. Partnerships with The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Theater Development Fund facilitate student internships and mentorships by a Pulitzer Prize playwright. Students in period costume participate in yearly commemorations of colonial citizens through a partnership with the historic Trinity Church. Partnerships with Syracuse University, Touro College, and Pace University, give eleventh and twelfth grade students' access to college courses at either no fee or at subsidized rates, enabled the securing of mentors for tenth graders, support college application and financial aid assistance, tutoring, and summer internships. One student characterized a college course in entrepreneurship as "actually useful to life" crediting the experience to improving his writing skills and influencing him to minor in business at college. Overall, strategic use of resources and teamwork support long-term goals and involve students in meaningful work that is improving students' academic outcomes. Four-year graduation rates increased by 9.1% last year and are projected to rise another 4.5 % by August of this year to 74%.

- A school culture built upon service to students' results in a trusting and peaceful environment that supports the personal and academic growth of students and staff. (1.4)
    - Driven by a theory of action that students who are cared for and challenged to do high-level academic work will be well prepared for assuming the rigors of leadership and public service, the school has been proactive and creative in maximizing resources for youth development. Through personal communication with students and staff, and the use of survey data, the school recognized a need to increase student voice. Thus, to provide a safe place for students to share their thinking, and to ensure that every student is known well by an adult, the school initiated an advisory program known as "The Principles for Leadership" to personalize student services that impact positive outcomes. One female student described how her life had gone "downhill" and how she felt "trapped" until her leadership teacher "helped me get back on track." A special education student said that the only reason he was passing was because of his leadership teacher who was "like his parent at school". Under the supervision of the school social worker, 90 students receive additional attention from six social worker interns either from New York University, Hunter, and Lehman colleges. Also, another 150 students benefit from having mentors through university affiliations and/or from tutoring offered by volunteer employees from within the schools' business partnerships. In collaboration with New York City Department of Education Office of Safety and Youth Development, the school formed student groups known as "Ladies Lounge" and "Man Cave" in order to better support and address gender specific student concerns. Additionally, the principal credits the close work of his guidance counselors and social worker in developing comprehensive responses to students' high-crisis needs. Teachers, in turn, voluntarily offer their unassigned periods to students who need assistance. As a student explained, "If you need help you can go to any teacher." One student spoke about the art teacher encouraging him to do better, stating "she believes in me," noting that while he was not initially successful in a self-portrait drawing assignment, he knows that with support "I will get better." Students attribute these various supports to helping them understand that it is important to "be on time," "apply yourself," "attend class every day," "prove your work ethic," and "know what you are learning," attesting to the positive impact of the school's support. With adults focused on helping students and students appreciative of that support, classroom interactions are positive and respectful. Additionally, the school establishes student-requested clubs and provides a full arts program honoring students' interests. Students thrive in the school's award winning music, art, and theater programs, and in after-school programs and clubs attesting to the school's focus on the whole child. Teachers buoyed by improvements in culture and school direction speak positively about their school and students. They are working cooperatively with administration to improve school-wide student attendance and further student voice through adoption of a restorative justice approach to discipline. During the past year, the school saw an 85% reduction in level five behavior incidents. Additionally, the city school survey rating scores for academic expectations, communication, engagement, and safety and respect have increased yearly in each of these categories for the past three consecutive years.

- Thoughtful use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching promotes professional reflection and elevates pedagogical skills (4.1)
    - To increase teachers' understanding and buy-in of the new State mandated teacher observation system, the principal and assistant principals conducted over 100 informal observations during September and October, allowing

teachers to decide whether or not the assessed ratings should be included in their official data observation record. In this manner, trust was established for the process, as teachers had additional time to learn the rubric continuum and engage in discussions with supervisors regarding feedback. The principal describes the Danielson framework as having been "a wonderful platform" for these conversations resulting in a "transparency" around efficacy, purpose, and value in use of the rubric to improve pedagogy. Within a few months, as a result of this process, an additional 10 teachers amended their observation option choice to include frequent observations. Teachers new to the profession praise the support they receive through very frequent supervisory visits and the collegial assistance specifically arranged for them. They note that such support has helped them reflect on authenticity of planned lessons and work to improve pedagogical strategies that increase student engagement. To ensure the frequency and strategic scheduling of observations, and on-going evaluation of observation data, the principal sets a weekly target and meets twice a week with supervisors to discuss observations. He attributes the school's timely record of on-track observations and evolving improvement in targeted feedback to these practices. Additionally, supervisors have adopted a protocol for written feedback that states a positive practice observed, a goal for the next observation, which is worded relative to one particular rubric component, a scheduled date for a face-to-face debrief, and as needed directives to meet with specific support personnel or teams and/or visit specific colleagues' classrooms to view prescribed practices. Furthermore, grade-level teams conduct full staff professional development on Danielson domains and teachers inter-visit among colleagues' classrooms regularly, focusing purposefully on specific evidence for the targeted rubric component presented at that month's professional development session. Thus, both supervisors and teacher peers support the development of effective teaching with frequent cycles of observation embracing the school's framework for teaching around providing accurate and explicit feedback supportive of short- and long-term professional goals, resulting in recorded teachers' improvement on the pedagogical continuum of development as defined by the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

- Explicit goals drive school improvement efforts and reflect a coherent vision that is embraced by all constituencies. (3.1)

    - As articulated in the school's mission statement, the principal describes an overall vision of school improvement focused on establishing a challenging and supportive high school experience that develops students as leaders who are conscientious, creative, and fully prepared to participate in the competitive global arena. The principal, now in his third year, created a five year plan, each with a unique focus to influence, inspire, and build staff capacity for accelerating positive student outcomes. In conjunction with the school's core values of leadership, empathy, accountability, and non-violence, a theory of action is defined, driving school efforts toward the long-term goal of 90% of graduates achieving college and career ready standards. The school's Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) reflects a pragmatic approach in recognizing data-identified needs used to craft interim and annual goals that support a long-term outlook within the comprehensive multi-year action plan. As a result, focused work on teacher team development, distributive leadership, tiered intervention, and development of individualized educational plans for all students, has been put in place to support students' academic growth and improved pedagogy. Leadership involves constituencies effectively through outreach surveys and frequent written communication reiterating instructional foci and mission, garnering both input into and support for school-wide initiatives. The school's union representative states that "This

place inspires me to work," noting that the principal's clear communication coupled with the building of distributive leadership opportunities have created an inclusive community dedicated to fulfilling the school's vision where "People wake up and want to be here." Teachers and students embrace the school-wide instructional focus around authentic literacy and cognitive engagement, which has led to pedagogical change and increased student participation and personal responsibility. One special education student described how the school-wide practice of annotation had changed his habits about tackling vocabulary, which is helping to improve his comprehension. Parents are articulate about school goals, expressing appreciation and support for extra academic programs and partnerships that support real-life learning experiences that prepare their children for post-secondary success. Although overall parent response rates are below citywide averages on the school survey, parents who complete the survey rate the school from .3 to .6 higher points than overall citywide parent ratings in every survey category. During the current year, the school has exceeded its annual goal targets in terms of increasing parent attendance at school events, improving credit accumulation for ninth graders and students with disabilities, decreasing number of suspensions, and increasing numbers of students who meet college and career readiness standards.

What the school needs to improve

- Build upon the common focus on authentic literacy, for integrating instructional shifts more purposefully into curricula across all grades, to ensure that all learners demonstrate thinking essential to post-secondary success. (1.1)
    - A school-wide instructional focus defining authentic literacy and cognitive engagement capitalizes on key skills of the CCLS through a coherent implementation effort in the school-wide adoption of annotation and discussion protocols that improve all students' access and deeper engagement. Teachers develop academic tasks aligned to Common Core and content standards ensuring that those tasks emanate from essential questions to help students make sense of complicated concepts and to encourage deeper thinking. While the impetus on authentic literacy has promoted emphasis on the Common Core shifts of text-based evidence and argumentative writing across subject areas, implementation remains largely within individual departments' discretion. Thus, the school misses opportunities to strategically take aligned action across departments to meet the unique and diverse needs of its student body. Additionally, the principal and staff describe "a big push" on listening, speaking, reading, and writing standards that teachers have promoted through the school's instructional focus. However, while these skills are integrated into common lesson plan templates, and while the English department has codified expected performance for each skill defining mastery standards, across departments, the school has not yet fully agreed upon bottom-lines for what constitutes rigorous teaching in all subject areas, thereby potentially hindering the highest levels of student performance across the school.

- Refine pedagogy to ensure that students have elevated scaffolded support so that their engagement assumes the highest level of participation and ownership in their learning. (1.2)
    - Across classrooms, teacher's lessons reflect planning for and use of a wide variety of methods and tools that support students' access in tackling critical thinking tasks. These strategies include, tactical grouping, pair/share

activities, annotation, Smart Board utilization for display of photographs, video, and or Power Point presentations, scaffolded assignment sheets, discussion protocols, gallery walks, graphic organizers, and sentence starters. However, across the vast majority of classrooms, not all teachers have strategically differentiated the specific scaffolded tools. For example, an entire class may be presented with the same guided organizer thus limiting higher-level extensions for advanced students and missed opportunities to accentuate the learning of key skills not yet fully acquired by students with disabilities or English language learners.

- Across classrooms, students are taught and use specific accountable talk discussion protocols such as giving examples and evidence to support their answers, adding to a peer's thinking, explaining how they derived an answer, identifying relationships, asking thought-provoking questions to extend thinking, noting the importance of peer contributions, and defending a position against a different viewpoint. In a tenth grade English class, students, led by a peer facilitator, used a leadership discussion protocol to analyze how greed affected Lady Mc Beth. In a trigonometry class, students animatedly discussed problems posted on the Smart Board, questioning and offering alternative thinking while interacting with their teacher and peers to collectively derive the meaning of a function. In a ninth grade algebra class, older students led their younger peers in solving algebraic equations. In a United States history class, a student group extended their thinking moving beyond the requirements of the task when analyzing a quote by President Woodrow Wilson that "the world must be made safe for democracy" by speculating on how other historical world leaders might have viewed that statement. However, there were some classes where students, while compliantly engaged, did not have sufficient opportunity to express their thinking. For example, in a geometry class, a teacher modeled a lengthy explanation of a coordinate geometric proof while the students listened silently. In a living environment class, questions were solely directed from teacher-to-student and student-to-teacher and low-level tasks assigned such as exchanging a vocabulary builder worksheet with a peer for comment where students were confused as to what they should comment on. Thus, in some classes, the lack of opportunity for students to make meaning collectively and fully utilize accountable talk protocols limits all students from full participation and reduces their fullest ownership in learning.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Leadership and Public Service High School	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score			X	

Instructional Core

To what extent does the school regularly...	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

To what extent does the school...	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

To what extent does the school...	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