

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

City As School

High School 560

16 CLARKSON STREET
MANHATTAN
NY, 10014

Principal: Alan Cheng

Dates of review: Nov 21 - 22, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Marisol Bradbury

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

High School M560 - City As School is a High school with 631 students from 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 36% Black, 47% Hispanic, 13% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 9% special education students. Boys account for 43% of the students enrolled and girls account for 57%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 62.5%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Teachers plan academic tasks that emphasize rigorous habits and refine these tasks using student work and data in order to ensure all students have access to the curricula and are cognitively engaged (1.1)
 - As part of the Consortium school, students engage in project based learning that emphasizes rigorous habits and higher order skills. The Resource Seminar Course engages students in projects that involve data and source gathering, research, discussion, complex reading, focused writing, journaling, reflection, and presentations. As part of their internships, students submit a report that includes a full description of the residency, cover letter, research, summary of learning, individual contributions to the site, and a thank you letter to the members of the agency. Students generate projects in modern economics, public relations, justice system, fashion industry, and media among many others fields. In their respective classes, students present their projects and learning. In humanities, students write memoirs and reflection letters that reinforce revision and reflection. These tasks emphasize rigorous habits that support the work and learning at the internship sites as well as writing and reflection, so that all students, including special education students and English language learners can also demonstrate higher order skills.
 - Teachers of the seminar courses refine units of study and academic tasks based on students' self-reflection and survey analysis done by their internship site supervisors. The English language arts teachers review diagnostic exams to identify strategies to support students on skills such as conventions, connections, style, voice, thesis, and organization, resulting in new tasks and lesson plans. Members of the intervention team look at student work to identify strategies to support special education students. This practice of planning and refining curricular and tasks provides equal access into the curricula for all students.
- The Principal's strategic use of resources, partnerships, hiring, scheduling, and teacher assignments support the school's instructional goals and meet students' academic, social, and emotional needs (1.3)
 - The school has established strong partnerships with over 300 hundred nonprofit organizations and local businesses in order to provide students with experiential learning opportunities, as well as academic, and social services throughout high school and post-secondary school. The school has identified staff that works directly with these internships in order to create differentiated learning experiences for students. The partnership with Comprehensive Development Inc. (CDI), provides resources allowing the school to remain open 210 days a year, including six full sessions on Saturday and 24 days during the summer. Some of the human resources provided by CDI include one full time college and career advisor, one half-time director and one full time advisor. The staff from CDI offers services from 9:00 am to 5:30 pm for an extended day program. The school created a College and Career Office, which is managed by the CDI staff. The school just implemented the "Gateway" program for students who need additional support services and programming to enter the internship phase so that they accumulate academic credits and are prepared to succeed. The principal has

purchased smart boards, laptops and has upgraded the computer labs in order to facilitate and support the work of teachers and students. Teachers and teacher teams use the online grading systems and have access to data to further support students. Additionally, school administrators partner with social workers, foster home directors and parents to develop and implement more specific plans of support, such as individualized academic and clinical plans for students in foster homes and personalized internship experiences based on students' strengths and interests. A social worker from one of the neighboring housings stated that she meets with teachers and administrators to review the progress of the three students under her care and that all three students have re-engaged in school and the community through their internship projects. As a result of the principal's strategic use of human and financial resources and partnerships, the school is able to meaningfully support all students, including the 10 percent of students who are homeless, live in temporary housing, foster care and students returning from psychiatric and correctional facilities, in order to closing the achievement gap.

- The school designs schedules for teachers and students that are highly structured, offer choice, experiential learning, differentiation, and support. Advisors and guidance counselors work closely with students in the development of their individualized programs. The school offers a wide selection of non-traditional courses that meet state requirements and prepare students for their final portfolio assessment. For example, students who are on track to graduate participate in an internship of their choice for an eight-week cycle. During this time, students also attend 60 minute classes of their choice three days a week, some of which may include: Critical Thinking, Modern Economy, Documentary Film Making, and Health and Medicine, among many other choices. Students also participate in Advisory and Resource Seminar, which prepare them for the internship work and final projects. Special education students and those who need additional academic support and skill development are grouped in the Gateway program, which offers courses of their choice, mandated reading class, and seminar. These students attend modified internship work at the school from 1:15 pm to 5:00 pm. Additionally, special education students select the courses of their choice based on areas of strength and interest, thus providing teachers with the leverage to support other academic skills. The principal creates teacher schedules that are based on their areas of expertise and interest. In addition, time is structured for teachers to support students via advisory and resource seminar while providing opportunities for teachers to collaborate, including the CDI staff. Providing internships, offering choice, additional support to teachers, and time for them to collaborate has resulted in a community that is motivated to own the learning of students, thus improving teacher practice in engaging students in challenging projects that prepare them for college and careers.
- Structures are in place to create a supportive environment where the learning experiences strengthen the development of students' academic and personal behaviors. (1.4)
 - Structures are put in place so that students are known well by the entire staff. During orientation, the school matches students with advisors who become the primary point of contact and support until the student graduates. The advisory program consists of weekly meetings where students and their advisors review and discuss topics related to being an

effective student. Such topics include a period of school business such as course and credit updates, looking at exam and portfolio needs, general announcements, as well as job and resource opportunities. In addition, the advisory program provides a space for students to work on general skills and issues including communication skills, problem solving, health, guidance, social, and emotional concerns. The advisor, members of the attendance team, the guidance department, attendance teacher, and parent coordinator provide direct and targeted attendance support to students and their families. On a daily basis, members of the attendance team report student attendance. Outreach to homes occurs on a weekly basis. When a student displays chronic absence patterns, the advisor and team initiate an individual student attendance profile which lists the reasons for the absenteeism, patterns, outreach, other needs such as academic, social, and emotional, and a plan of support to be carried out by the adult who knows the student best. Students stated that their advisors call their home when they are absent and check on them upon their return to school. They also stated that teachers cared and helped them find the way they learn best. The Internship readiness teacher and director collaborate with the student and his internship supervisor to ensure a productive healthy learning experience. Students stated that when their internship experience is not productive, the directors make sure they receive the support needed and sometimes, they change their sites. The feedback forms submitted by the internship supervisors and students self-reflection clearly indicate students' progress throughout their residencies. These guidance and advisement structures help students feel connected to the school, which impacts their academic performance and behaviors such as work habits, dress code, attendance, punctuality, which prompt their awareness of self-growth and competencies needed to be successful in the work force.

- The school believes that students learn best through experiential and project based learning. The instructional program is a combination of highly structured internships and classroom contexts ending in a portfolio presentation. Through the internship program, students demonstrate engagement and ownership in their learning experience. The importance of attendance, punctuality, preparedness and a strong work ethic are taught in internships and are mandatory in order to earn academic credit. Both parents and students stated to have seen a significant improvement in attendance and punctuality because of the residency experience. During their project presentations, students articulate their professional, academic, and personal growth acquired throughout the term and internship. The principal has structured various forums to develop the capacity of teachers to support the internship work. For example, teachers work in their department groups to workshop project descriptions and lesson planning that support the internship expectations. The internship teachers meet weekly to review student work, behaviors, and competencies, refine lesson plans, and curricula. In the advisories, teachers help students with their power point presentations, thesis statements, research, projects, and mechanisms to be successful in their sites. Teachers and school leaders provide technology, college preparedness, and online grading system workshops for parents and their families and they are invited to attend student presentations of their portfolios. These various levels of support to teachers and workshops and communication with parents result in the adoption of effective academic and personal behaviors that are reinforced by all members of the community.

- School leaders and staff consistently communicate high academic expectations and offer feedback, guidance and advisement in order to create an accountability system and prepare students for college and careers. (3.4)
 - The principal and assistant principal consistently articulate high expectations aligned to the Danielson Framework at faculty conferences, as well as at individual and collaborative team meetings. They identified areas for improvement for each teacher and the identified patterns became the school improvement areas, including indicators: Culture for Learning (2b), Managing Student Behavior (2d), Question and Discussion (3b), Engaging Students in Learning (3c), and Assessment and Instruction (3d). Teachers receive differentiated support in strengthening their practice aligned to such indicators. Specifically, each teacher has a log of support which highlights the form, purpose, and date of support. Depending on the level of support, the forums vary, including mentoring, co-teaching, conferences, summer institute, external support, and teacher team meetings. Teachers are also grouped and trained in small teams based on the areas for improvement. The professional development calendar for the fall term includes objectives, activities, and outcomes aligned to the instructional focus. Administrators meet with teachers regularly to review and document their progress. By communicating and implementing specific instructional and professional expectations, the school creates a growth oriented professional community that believes in support and collective accountability.
 - The School leaders and staff establish lines of communication with students even prior to the beginning of school. During orientation, the staff shares the school's mission, academic programs, the portfolio process, internship expectations and support systems. They reinforce this message and provide ongoing support through an immediate partnership with an advisor, who becomes their primary point of contact and support for the years in school. In turn, advisors collaborate with teachers and guidance personnel to ensure that student programs are differentiated and match students with internships programs that offer a rigorous learning experience aligned to the student's talents and abilities while reinforcing various learning outcomes. Additionally, teachers provide ongoing feedback to students on their academic and internship progress through surveys, journal entries, conversation, research papers, self-reflection, and case conferencing. The feedback and student progress outcomes are posted on line. Teachers also survey the internship partners to obtain additional feedback on student performance, which is shared to reinforce expectations and support student growth. Students stated that they are more aware of their learning and curious about their fieldwork, colleges, and careers for the first time in their education years. These systems of differentiated support and constant feedback create a culture for learning that communicated high expectations across the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Further align teaching practices and strategies to the school's belief of how students learn best so that more students are constantly engaged in challenging tasks and demonstrate higher order thinking skills (1.2)
 - The school believes that students learn best through experiential learning that incorporates research and individualization. The internship program requires 15 to 25 hours per week at the internship sites in which

students engage in hands on real world opportunities. This learning is reinforced in the Internship Readiness class where students create projects that reflect the learning and contribution to the internship site. Learning experiences include independent reading, writing, research, journal entry, drafting, and case conferencing to discuss academic and work skills. Additionally, teachers across classrooms, employ various strategies, including grouping, questioning, share out, and choice so that students can select projects and topics for essay writing based on preferences, talents, and abilities. For example, in one humanities class, the two teachers asked students groups to select a term from a story they read, such as oppression, repression, or human agency to create a poster that included the author, a one sentence summary, a drawing of a symbol, and a list of three things that made the story effective. In a Social Studies class, the teacher asked student groups to divide the tasks and find the definitions for Stop and Frisk, NYCPD policies regarding social profile, 4th Amendment to the Constitution, and 14th Amendment to the Constitution. They also had to complete a chart with the definitions and the sources prior to discussing in their group whether they agree or disagree with Stop and Frisk. These strategies allow for grouping, independent reading and share out in their groups, however, the incorporation of real world application and connection so that students are able to see the link of concepts, themes, mathematical and scientific equations to their internship projects is only now starting to take place. Additionally, open ended questions and rich classroom discussions grounded on evidence, research, and experience is not yet evident, thus limiting improving the acceleration of student learning outcomes.

- Strengthen the use of common assessment practices in order to consistently provide actionable feedback for effective adjustments to curricula and instruction across the vast majority of classrooms. (2.2)
 - The internship readiness teachers use a rubric that emphasizes the areas critical to the internship program's success, including knowledge, skills, social attributes and college and career outcomes. Students self-assess through a survey aligned to the rubric. Teachers share disaggregated data with students and engage them in open conversations about skills and trends, followed by an individual conference about next steps. This collaborative process of analyzing findings on student performance coupled by the actionable feedback to students helps them identify the work and support needed in order to improve their performance while promoting student ownership of their learning. However, this practice has not expanded across the majority of classrooms. For example, although teachers across subjects use a common portfolio assessment tool and rubrics to assess student outcomes and conduct case conferences with students at the end of each cycle to review their academic progress, the feedback is generic as expressed in the rubric and does not consistently match the specific skills and next actionable step to acquire the learning, thus preventing students from having a clear understanding as to how to improve and make academic progress.
 - The principal and teachers consistently analyze common assessments, including the English language arts Regents' examinations, Performance Based Assessment Task (PBAT) rubrics, student attendance, and performance at the internship sites. For example, the Internship Readiness teachers administered an internship self-evaluation

assessment that incorporated the career readiness competencies, including social skills, productivity, professional responsibilities and self-direction. By disaggregating the data, teachers learned that they needed to make modifications to the upcoming lesson in order to reinforce soft skills, including “asking and receiving support from adults in the workplace”. This collaborative approach to use assessment strengthens the capacity of these teachers by reflecting on refinements to their curricula and practice as it is specifically aligned to student outcomes. Other teams use common assessments to determine student progress. For example, the English language arts team administered and analyzed data from a diagnostic exam. The findings helped frame a conversation about possible patterns and support systems to put in place across the departments. The attendance team disseminates data to continue to target the support for students who are chronically absent. Although, some teams are engaged in a sophisticated practice that produces positive results, this practice was not evident across all teams. As a result, curricular adjustments and instructional decisions that increase mastery for all students, including special education and English language students were lacking.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: High School M560 - City As 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 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	