

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Daniel Carter Beard

Junior High 189

**144-80 BARCLAY AVENUE
QUEENS
NY, 11355**

Principal: Cindy Diaz-Burgos

Dates of review: December 10 - 11, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Danielle DiMango

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Daniel Carter Beard is a middle school with 813 students from 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 4% Black, 26% Hispanic, 4% White, and 66% Asian students. The student body includes 29% English language learners and 8% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 97.2%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

What the school does well

- School leaders and staff have made informed curricular decisions and infused key standards into units of study and tasks that impact student learning. (1.1)
 - Teacher teams worked closely with school leaders and network support staff to unpack the Common Core learning standards and build aligned curricula in each content area. Design of English language arts is based on the incorporation of the instructional shifts and key standards to meet the specific needs of the learners in the school. Each unit of study has learning targets with "I can" statements to allow for careful planning of tasks and goal setting. In math, teachers designed curriculum using resources from various sources and infused the shifts and standards into tasks and maps. In science, the coherent thread throughout is the call for students to develop scientific processes and a deep understanding of content through the inquiry process and argumentative writing using text-based evidence. In social studies, the school's textbooks are supplemented with teacher created materials to support the completion of performance tasks aligned to literacy skills. Students study history around the influence of geographical factors and the impact of values, ideology, religion, and politics and policy on historical development. All curricula maps contain entry points for English language learners and struggling students that include textbooks and web-based programs that scaffold content and progressively increase students' reading and math levels to ensure exposure to grade level text and content. As a result of consistent implementation of a common core aligned curriculum, students continue to show gains on the school Progress Report in English language arts and math and the school is closing achievement gaps for all subgroups.
- The principal effectively utilizes resources and strategically structures staff and student time to support pedagogical development impacting the learning needs of students. (1.3)
 - The principal is strategic in her use of budget, outside resources, partnerships, and technology in order to support the vision of the school. iPads purchased for all teachers allow for monitoring and real time access to student data thereby supporting the implementation of assessment practices. Additionally, staff, students, and parents, communicate through Skedula, a web-based data management system that provides real time data around student progress. The school uses other tech based programs such as Read 180 and IXL to support student learning in both reading and math. The principal also seeks out available grants to support the work of the school and this year was awarded a Teacher Incentive Fund federal grant to support teacher leadership and a school wide movement towards highly effective teachers as well as a partially funded NEXIS lab where students take virtual classes in technology and Spanish. Finally, the school works to develop strong partnerships with community organizations, such as Flushing Town Hall, Musical Theater, Little Doctors, Morgan book projects, the local police precinct, and Ivy keys. As a result of these efforts, teachers have a variety of outside resources to better support student learning and tools to provide all students access to rich educational experiences leading to improved student outcomes.
 - The school program is structured to allow teachers to meet at least once a week by grade and also by subject area. Teachers are using this time to look for learning trends of the students they share or trends revealed within

the curricula decisions made through evaluating student responses to tasks. Staff time is also structured to allow for peer instructional coaches to provide professional development around a variety of topics such as curricular and instructional needs through gaining a better understanding of the Danielson Framework. As a result, teachers are aligning the curricular work they are engaged in more effectively to the needs of their students supporting student growth.

- The school community fosters a respectful, supportive, and inclusive learning culture, where students play an active role in their academic and social emotional growth. (1.4)
 - High expectations around school safety, building and participating in community, and taking pride in your school and in your work, are communicated by the principal and supported by staff and students. Additionally, it is evident from staff and students alike that an important core value is openness to diversity and a welcoming of all cultures. One student referred to the school as “a mosaic”. A translation team trains students to support their peers who speak languages other than English, a student run peer mediation and student government exists so students can go to resolve conflicts and student elected government representatives meet with the principal to discuss school policy and to make recommendations for new programs. The principal also has an organized system that allows students to recommend initiatives within the school. Students are required to write detailed proposals, including a proposed budget and hiring options. Some programs brought about by this culture include school volleyball and basketball teams, a cooking club and grade-based entrepreneurship projects where students, if their proposals are accepted, are provided with funds to purchase equipment and materials to sell. Finally, the school offers American Sign Language to their students to provide another outlet for English and non-English speaking students to communicate with one another. This theory of building and fostering a safe and inclusive climate and a sense of belonging and ownership is the foundation that allows for student participation and interaction in their learning, encourages students to come to school, and supports consistent growth in student progress through exposure to a variety of college and career readiness skills.
 - Each year the school gives a social assessment to ensure that the whole child is known and students are appropriately matched to both teachers and classes to establish peer and adult relationships within the school. Additionally it is a priority for the principal and her staff to get to know the families of the students who attend their school and to connect them to resources both within and outside of the school community. The principal has strong systems to support positive student attendance within the school. Every day school attendance rates are compiled and phone calls are made home and school visits conducted if necessary. The principal and her staff meet often with both parents and students of chronic absentees to educate families of the importance of attendance in school. Additionally, the principal is willing to offer programs and other supports such as tai chi in the mornings as an incentive in order to increase attendance and decrease lateness. This work coupled with a focus on positive school climate has led to a 97% attendance rate in the school.
- School leaders are engaging in frequent observation cycles, providing feedback, and next steps that support teacher development. (4.1)
 - School leaders visit classrooms on a daily basis and have incorporated time to deliver verbal feedback aligned to pedagogical strengths and weaknesses and the Danielson framework. The principal and assistant principals have normed

their understanding of the targeted domains and provide applicable written feedback and next steps through the Advance systems. Teachers appreciate the face-to-face discussions that are part of the school's learning culture and they can clearly articulate how the feedback they receive translates into strengthening their pedagogy. In conversations with one teacher, she demonstrated how feedback from her assistant principal has led to more effective assessment practices and consistent checks for student understanding during lessons. These systems are leading to focused improvements in instructional practice elevating teacher reflection and student performance.

- Tiered systems of professional development exist within the school. The principal works very closely with her network to offer school based supports around the Common Core learning standards, the instructional shifts and the Citywide expectations for school improvement. Additionally, during face-to-face feedback sessions, school leaders work with teachers to design individualized goals and have aligned professional development plans. Finally there is a culture of distributive leadership through the Teacher Incentive Fund grant that allows high performing teacher leaders to serve as peer instructional coaches, offer support and professional development, engage in intervisitations, and offer feedback and establish model classrooms to demonstrate best practices. As a result of this work, teachers have embraced a common understanding of instructional expectations within a shared framework elevating instructional quality throughout the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Further elevate teaching strategies so that alignment to curriculum increases student engagement in appropriately challenging tasks and provide entry points to support student ownership of their learning. (1.2)
 - Although the principal states that students learn best through multiple opportunities to engage in rigorous discussions and by planning for opportunities for student-to-student participation and ownership of their learning, there was limited evidence of these practices in classrooms. In many of the classrooms visited, although students sat in groupings, interactions and questions were between teacher and student. Additionally, there was misalignment between teaching practices and key standards and school wide areas of focus. For example, the use of academic vocabulary was addressed in many classrooms. However, planning and delivery of instruction did not allow for opportunities for multiple reading and listening of vocabulary in the context of content areas and with the exception of choral repetition of words, students were not called upon to demonstrate word knowledge in speaking or writing. As a result of the disconnect between curriculum and instruction, there is a lack of rigor in task expectations in some classrooms, limiting students ability to build conceptual understanding at high levels anchored in the standards and instructional shifts and to further accelerate their own progress and work products.
 - There was evidence in some classrooms that demonstrated design of multiple entry points such as translated tasks, textbooks with tiered reading levels, scaffolded questions during group work and guided reading groups. However, not all teachers are consistent in the use of multiple entry points to guide students to meet the high expectations of tasks. Additionally, although use of high leverage questions is a school wide area of focus, teachers are not yet employing questioning skills that lead to high levels of student engagement nor do they provide full opportunities for students to engage in deep discussion of content. As a result, in some classrooms, students are not challenged to think at higher levels,

impacting student ability to work to their fullest potential and student ownership of their learning.

- Deepen the work of unifying assessments with curricula to effectively gauge student learning and the impact of instructional decisions so students receive actionable feedback rooted in the standards to improve student work products. (2.2)
 - Although the school has rubrics and checklists that students and teachers use to evaluate work products, some assessments do not align to curricula expectations or skills required of the standards. Additionally, some students were unable to articulate the content and expectations of these assessment tools and how they can use them to guide improvements, self-monitor their progress, and determine next learning steps. Therefore, both students and teachers are not gaining accurate feedback around student performance and are missing data necessary to take actionable next steps towards accurately meeting the standards.
 - Although all teachers are using some form of assessment practices to measure student understanding of curricula, they are currently not consistent within and across grades. For example, some teachers are using check lists while others are using rubrics to measure the same skills. Additionally, teachers are using varied pre- and post-unit assessment practices in the same grade and content areas. These inconsistent practices limit high leverage data analysis and ongoing conversations within and across grades regarding curricular and instructional gaps and student progress in order to determine next learning steps.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Daniel Carter Beard	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
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