



# Quality Review Report

## 2013-2014

**Pathways College Preparatory School**

**29Q259**

**109-89 204<sup>th</sup> Street**

**Queens**

**NY 11412**

**Principal: Kimberly Mitchell**

**Dates of review: May 15, 2014**

**Lead Reviewer: Catherine M. Powis**

## **Part 1: The school context**

### **Information about the school**

Pathways College Preparatory School is a middle/high school with 563 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 91% Black, 4% Hispanic, 2% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 90.40%.

### **Overall Evaluation**

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- School leaders collaborate with teachers in feedback loops that encompass classroom observation data and analysis of learning outcomes, to promote professional growth. (4.1)
  - The principal and three assistant principals coordinate their efforts to conduct frequent cycles of observations, followed by both verbal and written actionable feedback to teachers. The Danielson Framework for Teaching provides both school leaders and teachers with a common language for identifying the elements of good teacher practices to be embedded in instruction in all classrooms. While the school is focusing on Domain 1 (Planning and Preparation) and Domain 3 (Instruction), trends gleaned from Advance teacher observation data show a need for teacher support in specific competencies: designing coherent instruction, using questioning and discussion techniques, and using assessment in instruction. Written reports highlight detailed feedback in these competencies, including next steps, such as references to *Engage NY*, use of the Common Core Library, and one-on-one support in creating lesson plans. Conversations with individual teachers to clarify their next steps, include a review of class data, student work samples, failure rate, and suggestions for support to specific students, especially those who have promotion-in-doubt status. As a result of these feedback structures and supports, teachers, including new teachers, have shown growth in their pedagogy, as evidenced by ratings along the Danielson continuum.
- A commitment to school improvement is reflected in a list of school-wide goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community. (3.1)
  - The principal, in collaboration with the School Leadership Team, (SLT) developed school-wide goals as a direct response to the most recent Progress Report data for middle and high school. For example, one goal is to attain a 5% increase the number of students in grades 9 to 11 who receive 10+ credits, thereby increasing credit accumulation from 71% to 76% by August 2014. Another goal focuses on the middle school, where progress in grades 6 to 8, as measured by June 2014 State assessments, is expected to yield a 3% increase, when compared to peer and citywide groups. Credit accumulation and running records data are reviewed to determine progress towards these goals. Other related school goals support social-emotional growth, through continuous improvements to the advisory program and coursework, such as the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) elective, through which students learn college and career readiness skills. Furthermore, parents state that their voice is valued at monthly SLT meetings and have impacted plans to upgrade the school facility, resulting in a new fitness center, dance studio, computer room, and soon-to-be new library, thus encouraging the middle school students to remain at Pathways for high school. Students are engaged in the goal-setting process by attending some meetings to weigh in on decisions regarding coursework offerings that support school-wide goals. These efforts result in a commitment by all stakeholders towards school improvement and progress towards goal attainment.

- All stakeholders work diligently to create a respectful and inclusive setting that provides academic and personal supports to promote students' success. (1.4)
  - Students' well being and success are at the core of the school's Advisory system, providing one 45 minute period every Monday and an additional 8 minutes on Tuesdays through Fridays for check-ins. Advisors are teachers as well as guidance counselors so during advisory periods, teachers stay abreast of their advisees' academic performance, goal setting, and attendance, as well as support them in developing time management and organizational skills. Students are quick to share how their advisor supports them at each grade level, beginning in sixth grade with becoming acclimated to a new school and ending in twelfth grade with a concentration on preparing college applications, personal statements, and researching tuition and scholarships. One student described the advisory as a, "Family away from family", when explaining how supported she feels by both advisor and peers. In addition to advisory support, the school is divided into three houses (Promise House – grades 6 -8; College bound House 9- 10; University Row 11 – 12), with each house responsible for building school spirit and celebrating their students' achievements several times throughout the year. For example, the middle school English language arts team coordinates a town hall meeting after each marking period, to distribute achievement certificates to students as recognition for progress and performance in various areas, such as improvement in grades, behavior, and attendance. To encourage school spirit, students wear uniforms of the school colors, with some shirts depicting the slogan *R3 +2: Respect, Responsibility, Resilience, Reading, and Running*. Furthermore, student voice is evident in opportunities for school level decision-making, such as proposing and launching clubs, sponsoring fundraisers, and planning senior activities via the creation of a student committee. These structures build a culture that is conducive to learning and supportive of students' varied social-emotional learning needs. As a result, 64% of eighth grade students plan to remain at the school for the ninth grade, compared to 50% last year. Additionally, the Online Occurrence Reporting System shows that incidents and infractions have decreased over last year.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Improve pedagogy across classrooms by ensuring high quality questioning, rigorous tasks, and multiple entry points that consistently provide all students with opportunities to engage in student discussions that maximize learning. (1.2)
  - The school believes that students learn best through a workshop model that allows for guided practice and independent and/or group work, thus making content and skills accessible to all learners. In some classrooms teachers incorporate the instructional shifts that are the school's focus this year, such as annotating text, outlining, and drawing conclusions from text-based evidence. In a grade 7 classroom, students were highly engaged in discussing textual evidence to understand how the characters support the theme of the novel, *A Long Walk to Water*. However, in other classrooms, especially at the high school level, many students were disengaged in the assigned task which, at times, lacked rigor. Furthermore,

accountable talk protocols and stems for student discussion are not consistently evident. Additionally, in a global history and a living environment class, students worked in groups on tasks that were not grade appropriate or cognitively demanding and many students showed little or no interest in completing them. Several students resorted to copying from another student or not completing the assignment at all. In some classrooms, such as geometry, where the warm up assignment was rigorous with connections to real world application, for twenty minutes some motivated students dived into solving the problem and calling out answers, when prompted by the teacher, while many others struggled and eventually gave up and became disengaged. Furthermore, the use of data to inform lesson planning that takes into account the academic diversity of students is not uniformly practiced. Consequently, most lessons include the same or similar activities for all groups and individual students, with little or no student-to-student dialogue. Thus, the lack of teaching strategies that provide multiple entry points into the curricula and opportunities for students to be able to discuss what they are learning through thoughtful dialogue that fosters high levels of thinking and understanding, results in student work products that do not consistently reflect critical thinking and understanding of content, concepts and skill sets.

- Ensure that all teachers use common assessments to effectively adjust curricula and instruction that meets the learning needs of all students. (2.2)
  - School leaders use data such as scholarship data, credit accumulation, cohort progress towards graduation, and Regents data in the high school, to provide feedback on students' progress. At the middle school level, Fountas and Pinnell running records are administered three times per year to assess progress in independent reading levels, while Performance Series is used in math as a diagnostic assessment at the beginning of the year. In the principal's office, charts are displayed showing the progress of individual students, with seniors charted as being "on path", "off path", or "almost on path" to achieve specific diploma requirements. However, common assessments, such as performance tasks, are not yet consistently analyzed at the classroom or team level, as a progress monitoring tool across content areas for subgroups. Consequently, teams and individual teachers do not gather and analyze sufficient data streams to consistently differentiate instruction, adjust curriculum, or implement instructional strategies that lift students' comprehension levels across classrooms. Furthermore, rubric development and use in providing actionable feedback to students are not consistent across subjects and grades. For example, while some samples of student work provide detailed teacher feedback that is aligned to a task-specific rubric, other work offers little or no substantive feedback. These inconsistencies lead to students not knowing or being able to articulate next steps to improve their work. Moreover, across classrooms the use of purposeful strategies to regularly check for students' understanding is not consistent, so by the end of a lesson, not all students achieve the learning objective, or are given an opportunity during the lesson for teacher and/or peer intervention. As a result, not all students' learning needs are met via timely adjustments to curriculum and instruction that are consistently implemented to improve students' performance, based on data that accurately reflects their learning needs.

- Strengthen Common Core content to ensure curricula that challenge students to develop higher order thinking skills through rigorous academic tasks and activities that promote college and career readiness. (1.1)
  - Teachers are beginning to use a digital platform, Atlas Rubicon, as an organization tool to develop curriculum maps for each subject from grades 6 through 12, in alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). School leaders and teachers are making some purposeful choices about emphasizing skills such as annotating text, outlining, writing a “gist”, and stating and supporting a claim with evidence, which is evident in lesson plans and some curriculum maps. Also, some teachers are thoughtful in making purposeful modifications to the newly purchased curricula in the middle school: Expeditionary Learning for English language arts, while math teachers are supplementing the new CMP3 curriculum. Nevertheless, a review of unit maps shows a lack of coherence in building standards-based content and skills, such as writing across subjects. Also, some units of study are not yet developed, such as in social studies and science where unit maps were not available upon request for review. Furthermore, teacher teams have not fully established a process for developing academic tasks that align to the cognitive demands of the CCLS, with assessing and norming the rigor of academic tasks against research-based measures such as the Depth of Knowledge matrix and unit of study rubrics, not yet being purposeful and consistent. In turn, in some unit plans, tasks require lower level recall and therefore do not adequately provide for the engagement of all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, in higher-order thinking. Consequently, student work from the units does not always match the intended outcomes of the grade level and /or subject standards. As a result of this misalignment, student work, especially for special education students, does not demonstrate evidence of extended thinking that pushes all students to their next level, so there are missed opportunities to maximize students’ progress in credit accumulation and college and career readiness.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Pathways College Preparatory School	UD	D	P	WD			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>		X					
<b>Instructional Core</b>							
<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					
<b>School Culture</b>							
<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				
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>							
<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					
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>