Quality Review Report

2013-2014

George Washington Carver

High School 272

143-10 Springfield Boulevard
Queens
NY 11413

Principal: Dr. Janice M. Sutton

Dates of review: February 10 – 11, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Juan Mendez

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

George Washington Carver is a high school with 505 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 72% Black, 13% Hispanic, 2% White, 10% Asian and 3% other students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 9% special education students. Girls account for 53% of the students enrolled and boys account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 90.4% based on the Progress Report.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal's expectations for delivery of standards-based curricula results in teacher-developed instructional units with progress monitoring checkpoints to garner improved student performance. (1.1)

    - Teachers have taken the initiative to modify newly released curricula from EngageNY.org as well as The Common Core Classroom, a New York City Department of Education webpage. This process of task development ensures alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) while allowing teachers the individual autonomy to integrate instructional shifts. Newly adapted complex problem solving approaches are represented in recent edits to the school's burgeoning mathematics curriculum. These ongoing efforts to build curricular coherence directly correlate with ongoing efforts to spiral skills across grade levels through vertical alignment. Rigorous academic vocabulary is also accentuated in the school's curricula. For instance, literary elements in English are coupled with language that stems from argumentative discourse. Words such as "position" and "counterclaim" are embedded in the curricula to promote ideas linked to persuasion, thus further preparing students for college and careers.

    - School leadership and teachers use progress monitoring checkpoints and student data to adjust curricula and school wide instructional practices. The Tri-State Collaborative criterion-based rubrics are used by teachers as evaluative tools to assess the quality of both lessons and performance tasks. The principal shared curricular revisions that embody the quality expectations set forth in the Tri-State Collaborative review process. These curricular revisions placed greater reliance on text-dependent questions and close reading activities and were prompted by a recent increase in enrollment of students with disabilities. In addition, the school monitors students' data and adjusts curricula by creating multiple entry points to make learning accessible for all students. The school's graduation rate for English language learners and special education students, as indicated in the 2012-2013 New York City Progress Report shows a 4.3% increase from the previous year.

- School leaders strategically organize resources and time that supports the school's instructional goals to increase student outcomes. (1.3)

    - School leaders systematically use resources to make instructional goals more transparent and attainable through ambitious initiatives. For example, one mathematics goal states that, "By June 2014, students from the 2010 Cohort will demonstrate progress towards mathematics as measured by a 20% increase in students scoring 80% and above on all math Regents exams." A partnership with Metamorphosis ensures that mathematics teachers are coached skillfully to improve instruction and student learning. The administration has allocated additional resources to further support math instruction by hiring a math coach. To that end, a mathematics teacher, who is being coached, shared that his goal is "improving questioning and discussion techniques to increase student

fluency with mathematical applications." Resources such as Aventa Learning help to leverage technological opportunities for students to achieve mastery and success in a blended learning environment. To further support the school's goals, the administration purchased Skedula/Pupil Path to allow teachers to more effectively track student progress. The strategic use of these resources and partnerships has propelled the passing percentage on the Integrated Algebra I Regents Exam to move from 24.3% in January 2013 to 50.7% in January 2014.

  - School leaders structure dedicated teacher time so all teachers can meet on a daily basis to address curriculum, instruction, and assessments. Furthermore, teachers approved a School-based option (SBO) to approve common planning time for teachers each day. This allocation of teacher time provides ongoing opportunities for constituents to conduct teacher training. Professional development aligned to school goals during a common planning period that occurs daily. During this time, we observed grade level inquiry teams analyzing interim data and examining student essays in alignment with the school's 2013-2014 Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) goal that claims, "By June 2014, students from the 2010 cohort will demonstrate progress towards achieving college and career readiness standards in English language arts as measured by 10% increase in students scoring at 75% and above on the English language arts Regents as compared with the 2009 cohort." As a result, between January 2013 and January 2014, scores on the Comprehensive English Regents Examination increased by 24.6%.

- Teachers use common assessments and rubrics to analyze student progress, inform instructional adjustments, and provide feedback that yields greater student achievement. (2.2)

  - School leaders and teachers customize rubrics to ensure alignment with revamped curricula. For example, English language arts teachers integrate CCLS rubrics received at ELA Institutes to set clear expectations for students and allow opportunities to self-assess their learning. One teacher remarked that, "The CFN achievement coach conducted a demonstration lesson in my English classroom to model how these rubrics can be used with my students as both reflective and evaluative tools." This emphasis on student metacognition permits teachers to check for understanding with a twofold purpose: teachers determine what students know, and students focus on key instructional shifts included in the rubrics, such as "citing strong and thorough evidence from the text." Newer rubrics are being implemented to further align with common assessments, such as the New York City ELA Performance Assessment. Teachers, therefore, are able to provide targeted feedback that centers on critical CCLS concepts such as conventions, where language progressive skills are addressed. As a result of pointed feedback aligned to rigorous standards, student scholarship in all grades has increased from 86.1% in January 2013 to 87.32% in January 2014.

- Teachers benefit from an observation process that is grounded in the Danielson Framework and supports the implementation and development of effective instructional techniques. (4.1)

- School leaders enable teachers to grow professionally by providing concrete feedback aligned to the Danielson Framework through frequent cycles of short observations. Feedback memorialized in observation reports consists of strong emphasis on the inclusion of what the principal cites as, “research-based instructional strategies that challenge students’ cognitive processes in an effort to meet high expectations.” Administrators hone their attention to student work during observations to determine apropos levels of student cognition and teachers’ next steps. For instance, feedback on several observation forms encouraged teachers to “use formative assessment techniques to assess the degree of every student’s understanding during the lesson.” Furthermore, the school has developed a system that bridges the gap between teacher performance and professional development by addressing individual teachers’ needs. For example, school leaders create a professional development plan that is precipitated by emergent trends uncovered during observations. This plan identifies emphasis on higher order thinking skills, student engagement, and questioning and discussion techniques as areas the school has addressed. This plan is enacted by teachers and administrators, and has led to improved teacher ratings on the Danielson competency 3b, questioning and discussion techniques.

What the school needs to improve

- Build a shared understanding of effective instructional practice that accommodates different learning styles, thus increasing thinking and learning for all students. (1.2)

  - The school wide belief for student engagement is evident by how teachers use group work as opportunities for students to interact with each other while being engaged in the learning process. Although group work is utilized across classrooms, student interaction is limited. The Danielson Framework describes this approach as ‘Developing’ teaching practice. This categorization is comprised by the tendency to teach to the “whole group,” and how different ability levels are infrequently considered in student grouping and the instructional process. Striking similarities characterized by this competency were all-apparent in some of the content area classrooms. The principal commented that instruction in these classrooms was not aligned to the school’s instructional expectation since “the pacing was too quick and students needed to discuss their results as a group as well as a class.” In another class, groups were given the same focus questions to work on and learning styles were typically not adhered to. Consequently, over the past two years, the average score on the Global History Regents has remained at 66%. Moreover, inconsistency of instructional practices aligned to the school wide beliefs on how students’ learn best impede efforts to increase achievement for all students.

  - Teachers look to promote students’ thinking and learning through higher order questioning. However, low level Depth of Knowledge (DOK) questioning is evident across classrooms. Students are often asked to define vocabulary terms as either culminating activities or anticipatory sets. For example, in a classroom observed, the teacher featured a do now that required students to “Write the words given and their meanings in your notebook.” Although this anticipatory set allows students to

ultimately see the relationship among word families and the prefix ‘pro,’ students’ engagement was not consistent. Moreover, research-based vocabulary approaches, such as the Frayer model, were infrequently used. Although multiple entry points have recently been emphasized in the school’s curricula, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approaches are noticeably lacking. This was evident in other classrooms, where teachers asked students in groups to write definitions of vocabulary words as a culminating activity. This level one task on the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) chart promoted neither higher-order thinking nor collaboration. The extension of the activity was merely a review. Hence, partly due to limited student engagement and uneven extension of student thought processes, the Living Environment Regents has declined by 9% over the past year.

- Expand the use of advisory programs to further develop personal learning plans for all students that promotes high levels of achievement and social-emotional development. (1.4)

    - School leaders have instituted a new advisory program that promotes personalized attendance supports. This advisory program meets one period per week. However, while this consultation has contributed to improved student attendance by a fraction of a point, student voice is intermittently addressed. For instance, student voice is not being recognized in constant complaints that call for greater levels of student engagement in classrooms. For example, parents note, “Teachers need to provide opportunities for students to be engaged. In one class, my child doesn’t do well because the class is boring.” In addition, seniors claim that their requests have been ignored for years: “We want clubs. We have only three. Teachers do not want to volunteer and we’ve said this over and over again.” Consequently, the school’s raw score on its 2012-2013 Learning Environment survey has decreased by 14% where students rate the extent by which teachers make them excited about learning.

    - The school community is beginning to find ways to align professional development with family outreach. Connect with Kids leads the school’s monthly professional development and typically targets parent engagement around bullying and other aspects of socio-emotional growth. However, one parent points out that, “This business with college and careers has to be improved. These are black and Latino students. How about college seminars?” Another parent added, “My kid has no books. He says he uses a class set. I want to be involved in school activities the same way I’m involved right now.” While the school continues to research and implement programs to enhance students’ development, there is still much work to be done. Consequently, this discrepancy in promoting high levels of student achievement has led to ineffective student behaviors among second year students. As a result, the percentage of second year students earning 10 or more credits has fallen by 16.7%.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: George Washington Carver 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