

# Quality Review Report 2013-2014

**Civic Leadership Academy**

**High School 24Q293**

**45-10 94TH STREET  
QUEENS  
NY, 11373**

**Principal: PHUONG NGUYEN**

**Dates of review: Dec 10 - 11, 2013**

**Lead Reviewer: Charles Simic**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Civic Leadership Academy is a High School with 447 students from grades 9 through 12. The school population comprises 7% Black, 80% Hispanic, 4% White, and 7% Asian students. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 20% special education students. Boys account for 44% of the students enrolled and girls account for 56%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 88.7%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Curricula, purposefully aligned to key standards and instructional shifts, offer a wide range of rigorous learning opportunities that promote college readiness. (1.1)
  - Units are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) at professional development and teacher team meetings. Content teachers meet weekly and use materials provided from state and city agencies to integrate instructional shifts into the curricula. Units and lessons are developed across grades and content areas such that coherence and vertical alignment are ensured from grades 9 through 12. For example, in all ELA classes students are engaged in deep reading strategies that are made more rigorous as students move from one grade to the next. The principal explained that the students now see the text differently, comprehending the writing from multiple perspectives and are more accountable to using text to derive understanding. This focused curriculum development process has resulted in an increase in the number of classes across grades and subject areas that have CCLS aligned instruction.
  - Teachers use student work to plan and refine curricula, units and lessons so that more students including English language learners and special education students are cognitively engaged at high levels of thinking. For example, using student work from a mini-lesson on geometric proofs, teachers spent time following a protocol to surface gaps in what was intended to be learned and what learning was evident in the work products. After analysis, teachers discussed what changes needed to be made to have greater student outcomes. Changes were proposed for next year's curriculum such as rewording the directions provided to students. Immediate shifts included providing additional vocabulary reinforcement activities to students. As a result of this work, all students have greater access to curricula that is infused with cognitively engaging, rigorous tasks.
- The principal makes deliberate organizational decisions and uses resources to support the school's instructional goals as well as address the learning needs of staff and students to improve student outcomes. (1.3)
  - The principal articulates a clearly devised plan that connects directly to school-wide goals when determining how school money is spent. Targeted alignment of financial investments has had an impact on the quality of instruction that students receive and student work products. For example, teachers working with a consultant, Kim Marshall, have changed math instruction such that students now learn through argument and manipulation of expressions as they increase their reasoning skills. This shift from memorizing how to solve mathematical problems to reasoning abstractly and quantitatively to derive the correct answer connects to the school's goal to increase the rigor of instruction students receive. Such use of resources has increased the rigor of activities that students engage in.
  - Hiring decisions and teacher assignments are determined early in the year using a process based on instructional priorities. In January, students' grades and performance on state exams are used to decide what courses will be needed over the summer. During the summer, further refinements are made to teaching assignments as support staffing needs are clarified. Course offerings are determined using data from teacher and student surveys, a review of student transcripts, and an analysis of student work products. Student's schedules are individually planned. Teacher programs are strategically developed to have the greatest possible impact by meeting

the needs of all learners and subgroups such as English language learners and special education students. For example, when a teacher determines that a student needs additional assistance to pass a Regents exam in June, the student is scheduled for a support class in addition to that core class. Support classes are guaranteed for the five State Regents exams required for graduation. Teacher programs are adjusted to ensure availability of these classes. Students that are struggling academically are provided mentoring time with peers and devise an improvement plan for their most challenging subjects. The most experienced teachers teach students that are in the greatest need of support and provided additional time after school to these targeted students ensuring progress to graduation. All students are individual programmed into courses that have been designed to provide additional assistance to pass missing exams or further develop reading at the college level. Teacher interviewing includes demonstration lessons that require student evaluations of the candidate's effectiveness and follow-up meetings with the principal to ensure that hires match the school's needs and culture. Such thorough hiring practices and strategic teacher assignments and individualized student programming result in an increase in the quality of instruction that students experience.

- School leaders and staff communicate high expectations to parents and students and provide supports that promote higher-level student achievement. (3.4)
  - The principal, through goal-setting meetings, faculty conferences, department meetings and individual conversations with teachers, communicates a high focus on improving instruction using the Danielson Framework for Teaching. The school has prioritized components 1e, 3b and 3c of the Framework believing them to be the greatest drivers for improvement. The school has developed a system where each teacher creates specific goals targeting personal and department areas for improvement connected to these priorities. Through frequent meetings with peers, coaches and school leadership teachers are provided timely communication and support toward attaining these goals. Accountability is shared between school leadership and teachers through scholarship meetings six times a year during which the impact this work is having on student achievement is assessed. Teachers communicate that their meetings with the principal and peers support them effectively to meet these goals. The result is that the staff is mutually accountable toward providing meaningful supports to one another as instruction is made more rigorous for all students.
  - Parents indicate that teachers, guidance counselors and administrators direct them to resources for academic and personal support. Such resources include school based seminars on the instructional shifts present within the Common Core Learning Standards and how parents can provide homework help. In addition, parents and students are provided with information about the college application process and financial aid through workshops and newsletters. Furthermore parents are provided with information about how their child is progressing toward college acceptance through phone calls with the guidance counselors and the school's on-line gradebook called Jupiter Grades. Students shared that they appreciate the school's concentration on college acceptance and see the effect this focus is having in a variety of different areas including more rigorous classroom discussions, student use of peer tutoring, college trips to a greater variety of schools and the expectations that students have for themselves and their peers. Consequently, parents and students receive varied forms of communication from the school around what is expected from students to be college ready.

- The school provides actionable feedback to teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching to meet pedagogical needs and inform instructional changes that improve student outcomes. (4.1)
  - Differentiated teacher support is provided based on classroom observations, analysis of student work, and scholarship data. School administrators meet weekly to match specific supports offered at the school to individual teacher need producing individualize teacher action plans. Varied supports include: matching newer teachers to experienced teacher mentors during planning time, instructional coaches from school's community based organization - New Visions, off-site educational conferences, use of educational consultants, videos of effective teaching techniques, and a professional library of books and articles. Feedback to teachers outlines next steps for teachers on what supports to access and how to use supports provided to improve instruction and increase student outcomes. Lesson plans and corresponding student work is analyzed to find the impact that provided supports have on the work teachers are doing to improve instruction. In reviewing observation reports, feedback consistently provided teachers with actionable, specific recommendations improvement around high leverage areas. In addition to the observations that are recorded onto Advance, "snapshots" are conducted every two weeks providing each teacher with added support that is separate from their formal evaluation process. A teacher new to the school stated that working with the principal and her mentor teacher on writing scaffolds using student work and lesson study analysis has dramatically improved student engagement in her class for the most struggling students. As a result of this work teacher feedback and corresponding supports have been refined over time to ensure that student work products improve.
  - Teachers and administrators collaboratively create teacher, department and school-wide goals early in the school year framed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Goals are reviewed and progress toward their attainment is measured during teacher conferences with school leaders and department meetings using teacher artifacts and student data such as unit plans, assessment tasks and student writing. Teachers meet weekly to develop a common understanding of what effectively aligned Danielson informed teaching looks. These meetings are focused on designing coherent instruction, improving communication with students and the use of questioning and discussion techniques (Danielson framework for teaching components 1e, 3a and 3b). Next steps are discussed, planned and implemented. During a visit to a department meeting all teachers communicated that the professional development they are receiving is varied and effectively supports the changes they are making in the classroom and that this work is increasing the quality of student work being produced.

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

- Build on the articulated set of beliefs on how students learn best to ensure that all students are afforded the supports needed to produce meaningful work. (1.2)
  - Some lessons observed included teaching strategies that provide multiple entry points into the curricula; for example, modified texts, varied vocabulary supports and high quality questions. High levels of thinking and active engagement are most evident in these classrooms that provide high quality and strategic supports. Individual students are provided supports outside the classroom to help them achieve but classrooms often lack interventions to drive instruction to the most rigorous levels of student understanding. For example in both a global studies class and an eleventh grade English

language arts class students were unable to provide evidence to support claims during classroom discussions. Specific support strategies for English language learners and special education students are not evident in some classrooms hindering the engagement of all students.

- Across some classrooms, students are encouraged to participate in discussions and debate using evidence to support their ideas. Question stems are used by teachers and students to facilitate and create fluency during these discussions. While expectations and supports are building increased student participation, instruction is predominantly teacher centered, thus providing students with limited experiences to extend their own thinking or challenge assumptions. In five classes observed, teachers verbalized their analysis of student efforts and made connections for the class with little student input. For example, in a chemistry class the teacher provided the analysis of an atomic model rather than students. As a result high level thinking and student-centered discussion, where the teacher steps out of the central, mediating role has yet to be realized.
- Deepen actionable feedback provided to students using rubrics with specific areas for growth so that they are fully aware of the work they must do to achieve expected outcomes. (2.2)
  - Rubrics are used for many of the assignments by teachers and students to assess their work and the work of their peers. However feedback provided to students using these rubrics was often generic and nonspecific. Actionable next steps required to improve work products were not present. For example, on a student's persuasive essay assignment rubric values were indicated but specific changes a student could make to improve were missing. This practice lacks a deep analysis of student learning and in turn negatively impacting the quality of student revisions and future instructional decisions made by the teacher. Because this practice is not yet fully utilized, students are not always aware of how to improve.
  - Use of ongoing checks for understanding during instruction is inconsistent across classrooms. Some common strategies used during instruction to monitor student understanding are teacher questioning, exit tickets, observations and individual or group explanations but checks for understanding are not frequently used throughout lessons. Because these practices are not more fully implemented, student and teachers are not always aware of what or how to make timely and effective adjustments to the lessons to meet individual student learning needs.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Civic Leadership Academy	UD	D	P	WD			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>				
<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?			<b>X</b>				
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?		<b>X</b>					
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?		<b>X</b>					
<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?			<b>X</b>				
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations?				<b>X</b>			
<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?				<b>X</b>			
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?			<b>X</b>				
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?			<b>X</b>				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			<b>X</b>				
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?			<b>X</b>				
<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>