

# Quality Review Report 2013-2014

**Rockaway Collegiate High School**

**High School Q351**

**100-00 Beach Channel Drive  
Queens  
NY 11694**

**Principal: Robert Young Jr.**

**Dates of review: Feb 11 - 12, 2014  
Lead Reviewer: Charles Simic**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Rockaway Collegiate High School is a high school with 312 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 57% Black, 33% Hispanic, 4% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 20% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 79.9%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

### What the school does well

- School leaders and faculty create student-centered, rigorous and connected curricula that are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and are refined using student work to ensure accessibility for a variety of learners. (1.1)
  - Administration and staff ensure that shifts to more rigorous Common Core Learning Standards are incorporated into all curricula material. Curriculum maps, units and lesson plans are the products of purposeful decisions made to promote college and career readiness for all students. In each subject area, across all grades learning experiences are designed to build student inquiry using resources provided from EngageNY and New York City's Common Core Library. Content area coaches work weekly with teachers to infuse a variety of text and materials into instruction. Administrators, using a school-designed rubric, routinely review unit plans for coherence and access for all students. Scholarship and periodic assessments are used to measure the impact that changes to the curricula have on student achievement. For example, using Fall 2013 assessments, teachers identified students' ability to identify and speak about counterclaims as an important growth area across all grades if students were going to perform well on future Regents exams and college readiness indicators. To build this, teachers chose Common Core Learning Standards targets across content areas and then designed ongoing assessments based on the "Argumentative Essay" to measure progress. As a result of this work, students are provided learning experiences, materials and supports aligned to have each student meet more rigorous Common Core Learning Standards that promote college and career readiness for all students.
  - The school has developed a system to use student work to plan and refine curricula and academic tasks. All teachers meet weekly and, with the help of protocols, identify current successes and remaining challenges as progress is made toward targeted outcomes. For example, during a curriculum refinement committee meeting, teachers used daily assignments, lesson plans and corresponding student work to identify gaps in student understanding and determine changes that could be made by teachers in future lessons to address these gaps. One outcome that came from this meeting was that in a future lesson teachers would design a graphic organizer to help remediate current student confusion around what is the difference between stating a counterclaim and analyzing the merits of a counterclaim. Across classrooms visited, teacher designed activity guides used varied supports such as visuals and questioning to improve student engagement. Midyear assessment data shows that across each grade the majority of students, including English language learners and special education students, are improving their ability to write argumentative essays utilizing counterclaims. As a result of the refinements, more learners have access to curricula and tasks, thus increasing the numbers of students that are cognitively engaged.
- Organizational decisions using resources and staff time are made to support school-wide improvement efforts, leading to higher scores on writing and reading performance tasks. (1.3)
  - School leaders have hired key staff members to support the school's instructional goal to develop more rigorous lessons and greater

alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards. All teachers review and analyze student outcomes with the support of multiple staff members and consultants to identify changes that can be made to improve student listening, speaking and writing techniques. For example, with the help of a global studies teacher promoted to a newly created mentor position, a chemistry teacher has shifted her instruction from a predominately teacher-centered approach to an approach that has students engaged in project-based inquiry. Working together with her mentor the teacher created a “Facebook” element project that has students understand the characteristics of atoms in a more precise and detailed way. The mentor helped the teacher plan out steps needed for students to complete the project and ways to infuse rigorous science concepts into the newly designed unit. In this teacher’s classes, scholarship pass rates have increased by 35% and observation reports show an increase in this teacher’s use of techniques that encourage student use of evidence from non-fiction texts. The principal added that the students are now more connected to the topics in this class and are being provided instruction that better prepares them for college. Furthermore, teacher schedules were made to ensure that every teacher is provided access to coaches on a routine basis through team meetings or common planning periods. As a result of additional resources being provided for teachers to strengthen practice, students are creating more meaningful work products.

- Teachers meet four times a week to engage in various team meetings focused on refining instruction such that all students are more engaged in challenging learning activities. Each teacher has a professional responsibility such as grade team leader, curriculum developer, KidTalk coordinator or inquiry team member. Responsibilities are aligned to the school-wide goal to improve student listening, speaking and writing skills. As the school grows to capacity, veteran teachers are strategically placed into each grade ensuring that newly hired teachers are supported by mentor teachers and all students are provided with teachers that know them well. In each grade there is a mixture of teachers with different experience and skills sets that can support one another during team meetings and planning times. As a result, the positive culture of the school is grown in thoughtful ways that maintain practices that work while improving practice with new experience from all staff. For example, curriculum maps have been refined to include Common Core Learning Standards and more standards-aligned activities, resulting in higher student outcomes on performance tasks.
- The school maintains a healthy community using professional development, family outreach and student learning experiences to create structures that ensure that each student is supported and known well by an advisor. (1.4)
  - The school maintains a culture of mutual trust and caring centered on structures to ensure that each student is know well by at least one adult who ensures that school systems support healthy attendance rates, positive social-emotional learning, and guidance toward maximizing achievement. Students spoke of advisory classes, assemblies, outreach from the principal and systems of recognition and rewards as ways that the school supports their academic and social development. Students explained with pride that they knew of at least one adult in the school that they could go to if they ever needed help with school work or personal issues. One student shared that her advisory teacher always gives her ways to improve and that she feels motivated to work on challenges. She explained that, “the teacher is currently working on helping me retake a Regents exam that I already passed just so I can

get a higher grade that makes me more competitive for college.” Another student explained that teachers at the school, “don’t give you the answers; they help you think, figure it out and see that you can do it.” During a small group meeting, students shared essays they wrote and explained how teachers supported them as they learned to provide greater details and connections to evidence from multiple sources. Advisory teachers review academic progress and create an action plan with students 6 times a year using Skedula, the schools on-line gradebook. One student shared that the action plan she developed with her advisor led her to start using school supports such as extra credit assignments, afterschool tutoring, Regents prep academies and blended learning courses to improve her grades. She explained that she is now back on-track to graduate with her peers after correcting mistakes she made the following year and learning how to be a better student. As a result of these supports, students grow academically, feel empowered to achieve, and the attendance rate has increased by 2%.

- Each year, teachers participate in summer conferences where they focus on infusing curricula with activities that build student character and resilience. During PTA meetings, parents are taught “College and Beyond” skills to support students while they are home. Incoming students participate in a two-week long summer orientation where they learn behaviors necessary to be successful, such as persistence and responsibility. During the year teachers and students in all grades attend team-building workshops to further develop and refine their collaborative learning skills and to learn ways to overcome obstacles like handling peer pressure and learning time-management skills. Students were able to explain a list of “Be Attitudes” showing how each provided them with a direction toward success. Students explained that these ideas focused their behavior at the school to help them be successful high school graduates ready for college or other post-secondary challenges. During a parent meeting, a mother shared that her son’s grade point average increased 15 points after his advisor increased meetings and communication with the family and created additional time in the student’s schedule for tutoring. Consequently, all students have experienced using strategies to overcome adversity as they learn effective and personal behaviors.
- All pedagogues consistently participate in structured professional collaborations using an inquiry approach utilizing assessment data and student work, creating leadership opportunities and improved student outcomes. (4.2)
  - All teachers are engaged in inquiry based team meetings focused on developing instruction strategies that increase the achievement of all students. Using school crafted protocols, teams meet weekly to review lesson plans and activities for ways to ensure school-wide goal attainment as well as successful implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards including the instructional shifts. One teacher explained, after reviewing lessons with his peers and receiving feedback, he now uses technology more effectively and has more resources for students to use as they learn. For example, after seeing that students needed to experience more modeling of math skills in use, specific Kahn Academy videos were identified as resources for students to use to strengthen their skills sets. Another member of this team explained that during these meetings his math coach has helped him to infuse inquiry into his lesson activities by changing the directions and types of questions he uses. His instruction now utilizes more open-ended, divergent thinking activities and questions where before he planned instruction that promoted more convergent thinking. As a result, team

teacher meetings change instruction in ways that have more students engaged in rigorous learning experiences.

- All teachers analyze student work and assessment data to generate instructional strategies with the aid of frequent meeting times, coaches and effective protocols. Teachers communicate that one outcome from these meetings is the sharing of strategies that work. The process begins with teachers in the same grade looking for gaps in what students should know and be able to do and what they currently can know and are able to show. Teachers then look more closely at student work to analyze what are the current misconceptions that are limiting students from making greater gains and then brainstorm strategies that would likely help struggling students learn the concepts and skills they are missing. When successful, teachers share the strategies with the entire faculty during whole staff professional development meetings. Teachers communicate that this process allows teachers to support each other in growing professionally to meet the needs of all our students. For example, during a 9th grade team meeting, after teachers noticed that a student was struggling with refuting claims, teachers decided that the student would benefit from an activity to analyze the argumentative essay rubric. Teachers then created plans to add a debate to a future unit and develop a graphic organizer have students better understand the components of the argumentative essay. As a result of this work, teacher practice is improving and groups of struggling students are performing better. For example, 80% of 9<sup>th</sup> graders have demonstrated increase writing skills on periodic assessments.

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

- Further develop pedagogy informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching that consistently provides multiple entry points into the curricula so that all learners are engaged appropriately in challenging tasks. (1.2)
  - Across classrooms, teachers are have aligned instruction with strategies and activities that are informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Students experience instruction that consistently asks them to work collaboratively to generate meaning. Instruction varies the use of mini-lessons, group work and individual work time. Students listen to multiple perspectives and are beginning to challenge each other's thinking in constructive ways that build depth of understanding in lessons. For example, in a Global Studies class students are working on creating a book that highlights historical events as they learn key concepts of history. Students read and edit each other's writing with the help of rubrics and teacher coaching. The project culminates with a book publishing event where students explain and show their work. However, instruction of this sort is uneven across classrooms with the highest levels of critical thinking being achieved in a few classes. For example, in some classes visited teachers lectured on a topic, leading student engagement to be low and expectations around how material would be learned and called upon later were missing. The inconsistent use of the most effective teaching strategies across the majority of classrooms hinders the rate and degree of student learning.
  - Teachers create activity guides for each class reflecting a belief that many students require support to meet lesson objectives in a meaningful way. Students and teachers communicate that the approach has helped to build a school culture that values learning and respects that individuals learn differently. However, high levels of student engagement

are not apparent in all classrooms visited. Students are provided activity guides in each class and each student completes the guide as the lesson progresses but frequently tasks can be completed without the highest levels of student thinking. At times students are not asked to explain their thinking, and rather than “working” on constructing their own meaning, students are instead watching while the teacher “works”. For example, in one co-taught classroom visited, two teachers demonstrated to the class their expectations for what the presentations that students were work on should look like. Students observed the two teachers present and then listened to the teachers analyze and explain what they did and why. During this part of the lesson students were compliant but not engaged in meaningful instruction. The lack of challenging learning experiences across the majority of classrooms hinders the development of higher order thinking skills for all students.

- Refine assessment practices to create a clear picture of the progress all students are making toward mastery to further adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels. (2.2)
  - School practices include analyzing assessment data and student work to improve instructional practices. These practices have increased the number of students that are able to meet more rigorous Common Core Learning Standards. While the practices have led to groups of struggling students receiving more varied learning supports, individualized supports have yet to be actualized in ways that help each student that is still underperforming. For example, during two separate team meetings, teachers were provided with an assessment growth comparison table. Comparing beginning and mid-year results, teachers identified which students made gains and which did not. While data could be used to determine how each student performed in 6 areas of the writing assignment, the team was unable to generate support strategies that were most appropriate for individual students. As a result, assessment practices at the school do not yet work to ensure that all students, including English language learners and special education students, demonstrate increased mastery of material.
  - Teachers frequently ask students to engage in discussions with one another to deepen understanding. In the majority of classrooms visited, students were in pairs and asked to turn and talk with their partner during the lesson. However, not all students were asked to make their thinking visible using checks for understanding. More often than not, teachers would ask passive questions such as, “Does everyone understand?” and, “Are there any questions?” to assess student understanding rather than questions to check the level of understand for each of the students in the class. This lack of the vast majority of teachers using ongoing assessment practices to capture each student’s progression towards lesson objectives diminishes the ability for all teachers to make meaningful adjustments to classroom instruction to meet all students’ learning needs.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Rockaway Collegiate 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
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