



Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Community School for Social Justice

High School 427

**350 Gerard Avenue
Bronx
NY 10451**

Principal: Sue-Ann Rosch

Dates of review: December 17 - 18, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Claudette Eссор

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Community School for Social Justice is a high school with 336 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 25% Black, 73% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 23% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 80.2%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Across subject areas and grades, rich curricula aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), offer all students rigorous learning experiences that require them to demonstrate critical thinking. (1.1)
 - The school is one of 28 schools approved by the New York State Education Department to graduate students through Performance Based Assessment Tasks (PBATs) in lieu of Regents exams in math, science, Global Studies, and United States history. Therefore, all teachers use backward planning and a common template to design course outlines, course syllabi, curriculum maps, and lesson plans that chart instruction and drive assessments, from grade 9 through grade 12. This supports instructional coherence across grades and content areas. For example, in the four core subjects students complete an evidence-based position paper or original experiment that involves researching a topic, making a claim, analyzing and supporting the claim, and presenting their work to a panel of adults. Further, in all English language arts classes, beginning in grade 9, teachers require all students to complete a literary essay for every major class text they read, strengthening both vertical and horizontal coherence of instruction. A review of PBATs in all classes showed projects requiring students to delve deeply into academic vocabulary in producing informational and argumentative essays, or describing problem solving steps, thereby completing tasks that reflect deep alignment with CCLS, as well as instructional shifts. Tasks from a college readiness curriculum framework, pacing calendar, and college readiness lessons and materials for each grade level, support students in developing work habits such as time and task management, collaboration with peers, completing complex multi-step projects, and independent learning. Lesson plans include carefully designed questions that target levels 3 and 4 of the Depth of Knowledge continuum, and teachers make extensive use of open-ended activities in crafting unit tasks so that all students, from struggling to higher achieving students, have multiple opportunities to demonstrate their thinking. Consequently, all students benefit from well-developed CCLS aligned curricula that place them on a path of steady and sustained progress towards college and career readiness.
- Across classrooms, teaching strategies and academic tasks provide high quality supports and extensions that immerse all students in rigorous work that foster higher-order thinking and learning. (1.2)
 - The school's belief that effective instruction actively engages all students in learner-centered activities that develop rigorous thinking and analysis skills, and prioritizes looking at student work and monitoring student progress to improve instruction, is evident in every classroom and at every grade level. Teachers utilize instructional tools such as varied graphic organizers, outlines, sorting diagrams, literature circles, and Socratic Seminars, to engage all students in demanding tasks and provide a range of entry points to inquiry-based discussions that promote

discovery and student engagement. Student work shows project-based assignments that immerse students in extensive evidence-based writing and revision, requiring demonstration via both written form and oral presentations, of acquired skills and knowledge. Additionally, lessons offer multiple opportunities, within each subject area and across grade levels, for students to learn and practice new knowledge, concepts and skills with peers and individually, through differentiated tasks, questions, and flexible groupings. For example, in a twelfth grade class, students work on their graduation-level PBAT, investigating a problem, grounding arguments in evidence, writing and revising, and crafting an oral presentation of their work. Similarly, in math classes, groups of students engage in hands-on investigations of real world applications of math concepts, all with a strong focus on evidence-based activities. By grounding instruction in an engaging, challenging PBAT-based curriculum in which students discuss and root their opinions in evidence, teachers have effectively aligned their instruction to the Danielson Framework, the school's performance-based curricula, and the school's vision of how students learn best, resulting in high quality student work products across classrooms and disciplines.

- The school has developed a highly collaborative, safe, and respectful environment within which all students receive extraordinary levels of support for their academic and social emotional learning needs. (1.4)
 - The school has trained all staff in implementing many on-going initiatives that reflect the belief that structures that provide strong support for students' academic, emotional and social emotional growth, are "powerful mechanisms for bonding students to the school community and helping them to develop the skills that they need in order to successfully navigate high school, college and life". For example, all staff members receive training relative to an advisory system called "Family Group", allowing each student to be a member of a small group that stays with the same "family members" and advisor, throughout their four years at the school. Consequently, teachers know students well and provide daily support for each student's academic, social, and emotional needs. Groups meet four times a week, building supportive relationships with advisors, who provide homework help and tutoring, and focus students' attention on goal-setting, action planning, habits of work, and the connections between habits and success, all in alignment to students' grade level academic and social emotional needs. For example, through training in designing curriculum collaboratively, the ninth grade Family Group team has implemented curriculum that has a strong focus on school norms and expectations, while eleventh and twelfth grade Family Groups focus more on college and career readiness skills. An attendance committee comprised of an assistant principal, two social workers, guidance counselor, parent coordinator, and pupil personnel secretary, meets weekly to identify students with attendance problems, conduct outreach to homes, create intervention plans, and monitor students' progress. A separate Family Group for at-risk repeating senior students, meets four days a week and is led by a social worker who monitors the students' academic progress and daily attendance, resulting in four of the seven students in this group being on track to graduate in January, and two close to being on track to graduate in June. A "Transition" family group provides similar supports for tenth and eleventh grade students who are

new to the school, with the students meeting once a week with another social worker. This Family Group structure also offers all students a voice in school improvement activities, with the principal noting that as a result of students' voice, "despite having no real gym or fields/open spaces, this semester we are offering: Judo club, Muy Thai, fitness center club, dance, flag football, boys basketball, girls basketball, and Young Runners running club". She added, "We have an after school program that has expanded despite lack of budget, with 15 different after school activities, ranging from student newspaper to dance team and from student council to Deloitte Academy, all supported by teachers who do not receive per session because we are not able to afford this". At the recommendation of student council leaders, the school also allows student leaders to work with students who are struggling with attendance and punctuality, thus strengthening support for this highly at-risk group. A partnership with College Summit engages teachers in assisting students in the college preparation and application process, making students more informed about and prepared for college life. As a result, the school has created an environment that students deem "safe, respectful and comfortable", allowing them to "grow in every way", with ready access to an adult when they have a concern or problem.

- School leaders utilize a research-based framework to build a shared understanding of instruction, with regular cycles of feedback that support all teachers in strengthening teacher pedagogy school wide. (4.1)
 - School administrators conduct frequent cycles of classroom visits and walkthroughs, applying the Danielson Framework to provide teachers and support staff with actionable feedback to promote best practices for improving instruction and teacher growth. As a member of the New York State Consortium, the school is strategic in ensuring that all teachers develop a shared understanding of "what it means to be a teacher in a Consortium school", by incorporating Danielson's Framework into professional practice and helping teachers to note the connections between the Danielson Framework and the Consortium-based instructional model. As a result of such work and follow-up meetings with administrators, teachers' next steps include support from teacher leaders who help them to align their practice to Consortium expectations and to the Danielson Framework. As part of their next steps, new and experienced teachers receive both ongoing and targeted support from teacher leaders and a network instructional coach to help improve their pedagogy. Other professional development support for new teachers includes a new teacher support group, new teacher training in the summer, workshops on discussion-based classroom instructional practices, and workshops on PBATs at Consortium conferences. Consequently, administrators use both formal and informal observations, reviews of curriculum, and analyses of student work and data, to monitor progress of teacher practice relative to applicable teacher and school-wide instructional goals. As a result, the school has deliberately created structures that, according to school staff, are highly effective in "supporting the development of teachers and making the instructional program stronger each year".

What the school needs to improve

- Expand assessment practices across all grades and content areas, incorporating greater use of ongoing real time assessments to generate data that informs timely interventions, in order to further accelerate learning for all students. (2.2)
 - Based on the school's system for graduating students through PBATs in lieu of Regents exams in math, science, Global Studies and US History, teachers use a variety of rubrics to assess students' culminating performance in math, social studies, science and English language arts. Across the school, students use these rubrics for peer- and self-assessment, and performance tasks aligned to the curriculum assess students' progress in each content area. Students in all grades complete multiple rounds of revision of their work, receiving individual feedback with goals to work on, and students complete written reflections based on the grade and feedback received. Teachers also assess students through conferencing, classwork, and the use of exit slips. These structures help to create a profile of students' mastery or lack of mastery of learning goals set for them and offer students a road map for ongoing work to achieve the goals across each discipline. In alignment with the school's grading policy that includes 20% of a student's grade being based on five daily "Habits of Work" - punctuality, focus, cooperation, organization and revision – teachers incorporate common expectations into their planning and practice, to promote student achievement. However, while the use of ongoing practices for checks for understanding lead to adjustments to instruction, these adjustments are not always timely, resulting in some students in need of clarity on their next steps during an instructional period having to wait to have their needs addressed in a future lesson. This limits teachers' ability to pinpoint and address immediate needs of individuals or groups of students via interventions to further accelerate students' learning.
- Refine goal-setting systems to include additional ways in which to engage all members of the school community in decision-making and regular progress monitoring to ensure attainment of school improvement goals. (3.1)
 - The school's instructional team and teacher teams study a wide range of summative and formative data leading to a list of goals that are communicated to the school community. Goals include, improving student attendance, increasing pass rates for English language arts Regents exams, and strengthening PBAT based curriculum and instruction, to improve college and career readiness and raise the graduation rate. According to the principal, goals for the following year are set in June, re-visited in September or early October, with progress towards the goals being monitored by teachers, department teams, and grade-level teams, during a mid-year review and via reflections on progress at the end of the school year. A goals binder shows a collection of goals at individual, grade, and department levels, and the school's Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP), self-evaluation document, and professional development binders, also provide evidence of some attention to goals during the school year. However, interviews of students and families indicated limited knowledge of school improvement goals and a lack of effective engagement of the entire school community in

broad based school decision-making, thus hindering efforts to maximize the attainment of all goals.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Community School for Social Justice	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score			X				
Instructional Core							
<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				
School Culture							
<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				
Systems for Improvement							
<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				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed