

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

DeWitt Clinton High School

High School 10X440

**100 West Mosholu Parkway South
Bronx
NY 10468**

Principal: Santiago Taveras

**Dates of review: Nov 13-15, 2013
Lead Reviewer: Veronica Yurcik**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

DeWitt Clinton High School is a high school with 2,746 students from grade 9 through 12. The school population comprises 29% Black, 62% Hispanic, 3% Other, and 7% Asian students. The student body includes 21.7% English language learners and 13.9% 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 79.6%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

What the school does well

- Intensive work on building positive school culture has established a safe and respectful learning environment that promotes the academic and personal growth of students and staff. (1.4)
 - Recognizing that a significant decline in standings had tarnished the school's once renowned reputation and was contributing to low morale, the principal carefully examined concerns identified in the School Survey regarding safety, discipline, and engagement. Using this data, he redefined overall standards, emphasizing school culture as the driving vehicle for school improvement. To make the school entrance more welcoming, the principal personally greets students as they enter the building each morning. He removed police barricades that were used to line-up students outside and replaced a police insignia in the scanning area with a colorful poster of the school logo. Both students and parents express appreciation for these changes and the timely opening of doors each morning. As one student described, "It is way better, you get right in now." The principal describes "a huge difference" in the way staff members address students as a result of training on de-escalation and an emphasis on youth development. Teachers speak about a greatly improved environment and clear standards that have made students more "enthusiastic" and "positive about the school" noting that "students know the principal" and "want him to know them." Students acknowledge that they have a voice through a revitalized student council, small group "chats" with the principal, and mostly because the principal requested and responded to letters they wrote on what they liked about their school and what change they wanted. Teachers note that students cherish the letters they have received from the principal with many keeping their letters in their notebooks. In addition, students contribute to what is posted on several new monitors in the front lobby that display current student photos and highlight school history and events. The addition of regular assemblies, a pep rally, and a Halloween celebration where staff report "students were beautifully behaved" have improved school spirit. A student explained that the "atmosphere is more positive so people want to be more positive." As a result of these numerous changes, principal suspensions have been reduced by 89% to date as compared to the same time period last year, hall passings are peaceful, and interactions between students and teachers are respectful. Staff members explain that "we are all taking a part in running the school," and that "kids feel responsible for what happens in the building." They describe a "paradigm shift" and the development of a vision that has established a "sense of hope" and the goal of making De Witt Clinton "the school of choice for families in the Bronx." Consequently, this revitalization has created a positive school climate that nurtures students' academic and social-emotional learning as well as fostering a healthy work environment for adult learning, which has enabled the establishment of new collaborative learning experiences for students and staff, which they acknowledge as valuable in improving their own learning.
 - The entire student body is divided into groups, each assigned to an individual guidance counselor who meets with his/her group once a month through scheduled class visits, as well as through assemblies and/or individual meetings. When asked who they trust, students name counselors as trusted advisors. An assistant principal helps counselors

to examine metrics to support increased credit accumulation and graduation rate, thereby allowing counselors to identify and target students in need of additional attention. In addition, the principal meets monthly with counselors to examine progress and counselors schedule end-of-marking period student/principal meetings for those students who did not fare well academically. Daily updates from deans enable counselors to intervene in a timely manner to support students. Community-based organizations such as counseling, drug awareness and family support agencies participate in attendance team meetings to maximize coordination of services to students and their families. Additionally, 61% of students have registered to use school-based clinics that offer on-site medical, dental and mental health services. Furthermore, the principal hired a consultant to help the school improve attendance through more astute analysis of cohort data. As a result of the focus on student development and implemented structures, a watchful eye is kept on students to ensure individual needs are recognized and the school has seen an increase of more than 2% in its attendance rates as compared to the same time period last year.

- Administration uses resources strategically to support development of teaching and learning that raise students' engagement in their academic studies. (1.3)
 - Faced with an enormous budget deficit, the principal focused on leveraging practices, personnel, space and School Improvement Grant (SIG) funds tactically to support long-term goals. He dismantled a school program that placed all at-risk students together on one floor, integrating students among the entire school instead, removing the social stigma of separation. He reoriented deans to become a school climate and culture team and appointed selected aides to monitor hallways to establish positive supporting relationships with students, thus significantly improving the learning environment for all students and on-time arrival to classes. The principal created a parent and teacher room enabling a dedicated work space for each constituency for sustained collaboration. He used SIG funds to work with a vendor to provide a comprehensive system to establish a regular professional development program for supervisors and staff and to establish a team of trained lead teachers, as well as ordering interactive boards and computers for classrooms lacking technology supports. The principal also mandated a school-wide instructional focus on Common Core Learning Standards' (CCLS) shifts for textual evidence and vocabulary which embedded use of these shifts across content areas in daily instruction heightening literacy development foci. As a result of these newly created orientations, all constituencies acknowledge a constancy of purpose in supporting student learning which has enabled students to engage in more meaningful work. One example is in the school-wide adoption of a literacy strategy entitled "graffiti" where students interact with text by writing summaries, identifying main ideas and citing wonderings and questions, making them active learners as they assume greater responsibility for their own learning, comprehending complex non-fiction text and poetry that were previously out of their reach.
 - Inclusive scheduling of all teachers for professional development and workgroup teams for inquiry study supports the school's focus in adopting CCLS and improving pedagogy to increase cognitive engagement and challenge for all students. Teachers meet at least once weekly to learn about instructional strategies for English language

learners and students with disabilities, how to implement academic language strategies and college and career readiness competencies, embed CCLS shifts and tasks, and to assess both student learning and their own pedagogy, establishing a coherence of effort. As a result, students are receiving more consistent instruction across the school, especially in terms of textual analysis allowing them to grapple with more complex texts. When grading the new Measures of Student Learning (MoSL) performance tasks, teachers were pleasantly surprised to see that students had adopted taught strategies and annotated text on their own to comprehend the assessment readings.

- Teachers' professional collaborative study supports shared leadership and accountability for improvement of teaching and learning. (4.2)
 - Teachers across the school receive training in inquiry process and participate in various teams to make sense of CCLS shifts and identify strategies to support student learning. For example, a science team brainstormed ideas for assisting students with disabilities in learning new vocabulary, ultimately deciding to require students to use study cards and graphic organizers to define words, use them in context, and make connections. A social studies team analyzed the written work of a beginner level English language learner to determine possible points of entry to further his comprehension, and English as a second language teachers shared lesson planning strategies and debated use of abridged versus original texts. Newly appointed teacher workgroup facilitators attend leadership, data, assessment and pedagogy training so that they can assume leadership with peers to guide inquiry. In addition, these new leaders participate in implementation meetings with supervisors to receive and give feedback and to participate in decision-making about the status of school improvement. Thus, an inquiry model to improve student learning outcomes and improve pedagogy is developing across the school, increasingly supported by new teacher leaders who the principal empowers to be key decision-makers.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen curriculum development to ensure closer alignment to the CCLS so that all students have opportunities to engage in cognitively challenging tasks that prepare them for college and careers. (1.1)
 - Although departments, over time, have been engaged in creating curriculum maps and revising units of study to reflect CCLS, inconsistencies exist in the interpretation of core expectations and the integration of CCLS shifts and practices. English and social studies department curriculum maps show evidence of work in identifying key skills and vocabulary, essential questions that reflect varying levels of Webb's Depth of knowledge, strategies for differentiation, CCLS related standards and formative and summative assessments. Science maps vary by discipline, some are scope and sequence documents, some list skills that are matched to content and CCLS including supporting strategies and others include essential questions and content and process standards. English maps focus on fiction books but do not cite the non-fiction work for the year and math curricula do not reflect integration of CCLS standards for mathematical practice. Overall, maps tend to match standards to activities, not always making an explicit link to the full expectations of the CCLS. Thus, curricula does not always align

closely with CCLS and the lack of coherence across subjects and grades interferes with all students' being exposed to demanding tasks that promote college and career readiness. Additionally, although maps indicate specific planning to engage a variety of students in academic tasks through adoption of instructional strategies for differentiation, specific emphasis on planning for meeting needs of English language learners and students with disabilities, as well as using student work to inform practice are newer skills that are being emphasized in this year's professional development and thus are still a growing skill set.

- Improve formative assessment and analysis so that they more effectively lead to regular, targeted adjustments that support all students' mastery of standards. (2.2)
 - The inauguration of MoSL assessments and teacher work groups focusing on students in the lowest third of academic performance promotes the use of common assessments to adjust curricula and instruction. Science, social studies and English departments administer common assessments. However, analysis of these assessments varies across departments. The social studies department conducted an item analysis on the U.S. History baseline exam and determined that students struggle with current events questions. As a result, teachers developed a specific review curriculum that led to students achieving improved U.S. History Regents scores. However, although the science department has common assessments, subject teachers do not conduct any comparative analyses. Thus, opportunities are not consistently harnessed to determine progress across grades and subjects, thereby impairing timely and targeted adjustments to curricula and instruction.
 - Although practices such as teacher circulation and checking of group work and exit tickets are used, close monitoring of student work was not consistent. Additionally, rubrics, while in use, are used mostly by teachers. Students state that they receive feedback from grades and comments on essays but offer little specific detail. Recent adoption of literacy strategies that require students to summarize and question, and lesson planning that focuses on question development is improving teachers' ability to monitor learning, however variability across classrooms reduces potential effective adjustments school-wide to improve comprehension and accelerate learning.
- Leverage existing work utilizing the school's framework for teaching to establish a closer match between beliefs and pedagogical practice in order to cultivate critical thinking opportunities that engage all students. (1.2)
 - Professional learning on the Danielson framework for teaching coupled with the principal's emphasis on student learning through collaborative engagement and better questioning is influencing pedagogy. Students state that things are different this year "with more group work," noting that teachers "used to give you a worksheet" but now they are "more active" and that "teachers are more accountable," explaining that teachers are "talking to us". However, although teachers across the school focus on improving pedagogy around questioning and engaging

students through collaborative learning, purposeful grouping across classrooms is not yet established and use of higher level questioning varies. Consequently, not all students are afforded opportunities to explore rich questions and collaborate meaningfully with peers, resulting in unevenness in quality of work products and engagement across the school.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: DeWitt Clinton High School	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