



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning**

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Boys and Girls High School

High School K455

**1700 Fulton Street
Brooklyn
NY 11213**

Principal: Michael Wiltshire

**Date of review: March 12, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Michael Alcott**

The School Context

Boys and Girls High School is a high school with 648 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 88% Black, 8% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students and 1% American Indian or Alaskan Native. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 26% special education students. Boys account for 65% of the students enrolled and girls account for 35%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 72.4%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
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	Additional Findings	Developing
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	Focus	Developing
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	Additional Findings	Developing
School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	Additional Findings	Developing
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	Celebration	Developing

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

The majority of teachers and teacher teams have begun engaging in the practice of professional collaborations and strategic inquiry work to share practice and analyze assessment data and student work.

Impact

The work of the teams is loosely connected to achievement of school goals and has limited impact on improving teacher practice and closing achievement gaps.

Supporting Evidence

- The ninth grade inquiry team has identified a group of students and is focusing on identifying gaps in order to develop strategies to improve writing skills and make curricular and instructional decisions to close those gaps. The students were identified based on specific criteria, including having good attendance, being outside the school's defined "sphere of success" and representing a cross section of students including English language learners and students with disabilities. These model practices are in the early stages and progress toward improving instructional practices and student performance are not yet evident. The inquiry practices of this model team have yet to be shared with or emulated by other teacher teams in the school.
- Teachers participate in the professional development (PD) team to inform the PD calendar for the year. After conducting a survey of teachers, the team determined that teachers want to learn more about the elements of the Danielson Framework, identifying the learning objectives, and incorporating writing across all content areas.
- Some teachers work alone, rather than collaborate on teams, to analyze assessment data and track their students' progress.
- A few teachers voluntarily participate in inter-visitations within and outside of the school. These inter-visitations have included teachers from Boys and Girls High School going to another high school to observe how teachers write and incorporate learning objectives into their lessons.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are beginning to reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching, but teaching strategies do not yet consistently reflect those beliefs. Not all teaching strategies provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact

Student engagement in challenging tasks is limited and discussions reflect uneven levels of higher-order thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders promote, and most teachers are aware of, the belief that students learn best when they are provided as much individual attention as possible, when they are given time on task, and when they understand why they are learning.
- In one ninth grade English class, the learning objective was clearly delineated and explicitly stated and linked to the lesson by the teacher so that students understood the purpose of the lesson. Such clear alignment of the pedagogy to the school's stated focus on ensuring students know why they are learning was observed in only two out of eight classes visited.
- In the majority of classes observed, students were engaged in whole class activities, with a few examples of differentiation or individualized attention. For example, in one class, students were working in groups to write about images of life during the Depression. Each group had different images and was assigned different themes to discuss, such as female identity, or law and justice. However, in another class, students were assigned to watch a video on conducting a frog dissection lab with little or no support from the teacher. In the United States History and Government class, instruction was teacher-centered and directed at the whole class. An English language learner explained that he finds the work especially difficult because of his limited English skills and that he is given the embedded support of a bilingual teacher only in his English class.
- While PD has taken place on identifying learning objectives, not all elements of teacher practice, such as effective questioning and discussion strategies, align to the Danielson Framework. In the majority of classes, teacher questions were of low cognitive challenge, were asked in rapid succession, and discussion was teacher-to-student. In a ninth grade math class, the teacher used questioning to elicit processes. Teacher questions included "What is the process we go through to solve the problem?" "Where does the x go?" "How do we write the equation?" In a self-contained math class, the teacher asked, "What is that side called?" "What side is opposite?" "What do you do next?" "So what will be next?" In practice problems in both of these classes, students used trigonometric ratios to solve angle-side problems, but were never asked to explain their thinking. With the exception of the biology class, where students did a turn and talk, and a ninth grade English class in which students had group discussions, questions and answers were between student and teacher.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

The school is in the process of building consistency in the alignment of curricula and academic tasks to reflect integration of the Common Core Learning Standards and providing access to more rigorous tasks for all learners.

Impact

Curricular and academic tasks reflect uneven levels of rigor, inconsistently allowing access for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- ELA teachers are building familiarity with EngageNY modules and incorporating instructional shifts in the ninth grade, including explicit content-based writing strategies across core subject areas. This instruction is planned to prepare students for the new Common Core Regents exam. For example, the learning objective in a grade 9 English class, stated as “I can identify strong and appropriate evidence to support my claims about characters and their developments,” is directly aligned to Common Core Learning Standards for grade 9 reading.
- Apart from one ninth grade English class, alignment of lesson plans and tasks to the Common Core Standards is loose and inconsistent. For example, the tenth grade English unit on rites of passage requires students to make a claim, support it with evidence, identify the counterclaim and support that as well with evidence. Students are not, however, asked to distinguish the claim from the counterclaim, which differentiates the ninth grade standard from the standard for the preceding grade. Moreover, the objective for a lesson plan in that unit was intended to align to informational reading standards. However, the actual objective of the lesson and the task was designed so that students would make connections between multiple texts for the purpose of judging rites of passage as positive or negative in order to categorize them accordingly. The informational reading standard, in contrast, requires students to provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.
- Forty students have been identified in the tenth grade to take the Regents Exam in English in order to give these students access to more rigorous curricula through advanced placement courses.
- In the upper grades, the school is making a purposeful decision to plan curriculum and instruction in all content areas aligned to the requirements of the Regents exams that these students will be taking.
- Some unit and lesson plans include multiple entry points for learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities. Teachers do not always plan to group students according to their assessments of learning in previous lessons so that all learners have access to the curricula and task. Similarly, in some lesson plans there was no differentiation in the design of tasks.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

The school is shifting its practice to use more common assessments that are aligned to the Common Core and increasing teacher consistency in grading policies. Teachers' assessment practices in some classes reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

Assessments provide limited actionable feedback to students and teachers to address learning gaps through adjustments to curriculum and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- The new principal recognized there was a disparity between course passing rates and Regents exam passing rates, and took steps to align the two by counting the Regents exam score as one-third of the course final grade. As a result of this alignment, course passing rates declined, but Regents passing rates increased.
- In an analysis of Regents open-ended response questions, the school recognized significant gaps in student writing. As a result, the school made a decision to teach explicit writing strategies in the ninth grade. Despite this finding, teachers in the Saturday Academy administer only the multiple choice portion of past Regents' exams. There were few opportunities for students to practice extended writing responses.
- In the English department, an analysis of student work on the Common Core aligned Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) assessment led to increased focus on argumentative essay writing. In math, on the other hand, MOSL results were not used to inform adjustments to curriculum and instruction.
- Some teachers were inconsistent in their use of checks for understanding during the lesson. The principal has identified two priorities for classroom assessment practices. First, teachers are expected to begin class with an assessment of student learning the prior day; and second, teachers are expected to use exit slips tied to the learning target or aim of the lesson. With the exception of one class whose teacher is a member of the ninth grade inquiry team, neither of these practices was observed in classes.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate expectations for teaching and learning, provide training to support those expectations, and are developing systems of accountability. The school is in the process of aligning those expectations to college and career readiness.

Impact

A transparent culture of high expectations for professional learning and teaching is beginning to provide increased supports to teachers and hold staff members accountable for effectively implementing effective teaching practices that will improve college and career readiness for students.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders have been purposeful in prioritizing expectations connected to a path to high school graduation and consistently communicate those expectations to staff and are supporting those expectations with ongoing training of staff. The expectations for learning and professionalism are communicated through professional development, observation conferences, and modeling by school leaders. The principal modelled lesson delivery based on clear learning objectives and assistant principals are modelling how to develop common course mid-term and final assessments.
- The principal meets with teachers whose classes have low passing rates after each marking period to discuss scholarship data, identify trends in student performance and determine a plan for additional support.
- The school changed programming so that all students benefit from sharing classes with higher achieving peers and all students have access to higher-level curriculum, such as Advanced Placement courses. In interviews with parents and students the vast majority accepted and understood the reason for the change.
- The principal met mid-year with parents to communicate his vision for increasing student achievement. The school communicates with families about attendance and academic progress through PupilPath but does not closely track teacher or parent usage. The school also makes daily wake-up phone calls to families, thus communicating the importance of being in school every day on time.