

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Secondary School for Journalism

High School K463

**237 7th Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11215**

Principal: Eileen Coppola

**Date of review: April 24, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Jo Ann Benoit**

The School Context

The Secondary School for Journalism is a high school with 285 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 46% Black, 38% Hispanic, 6% White, 8% Asian students and 2% other. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 21% special education students. Boys account for 41% of the students enrolled and girls account for 59%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 83.7%.

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	Proficient
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	Proficient

Area of Celebration

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, professional collaborations during which they analyze data and student work and ensure the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. There are opportunities for staff to build leadership skills and give input into instructional decisions.

Impact

The focused work during those professional collaborations helps strengthen teachers' instructional capacity and student progress towards goals. Further, teachers have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers look at student work and data to make curricular decisions around next steps. During the teacher team meeting observed teachers looked at students' work around them developing a controlling idea about loneliness using *Of Mice and Men*. The teachers' focus was to assess what students were able to do and what they struggled with as well as calibrate their ratings using a rubric they were developing and refining for school use on Argument Writing. The plan is to scale it up so all teachers will have a common document to use to evaluate and support student writing collaboratively.
- Teachers meet weekly in department meetings and for faculty professional development sessions to promote the implementation of the Common Core and strengthen teacher practice. During teacher teams, teachers focus on the school's goals around strengthening questioning techniques and using data to inform instruction. Teachers also meet to develop curricula aligned to the Common Core using Engage NY among other resources.
- Teachers have various opportunities to lead and contribute to the decisions made at the school to impact learning. Teacher lead different teams for example teachers in the programming team ensure students who were not properly credited for courses taken are given the proper credits as well as proper programming for future course offerings. Teachers also lead the work of the attendance, discipline and special education teams among others. They help inform the professional development plan and support one another in the classroom.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices and strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula and student work products and discussions reflect uneven levels of student participation.

Impact

Across classrooms, teacher practice is beginning to engage diverse learners in challenging tasks and discussions that result in meaningful work products.

Supporting Evidence

- In some classrooms, students were engaged in rigorous work and demonstrated higher order thinking skills. In a government class, students were working collaboratively to define and support one of two points of view, that of the federalists and that of the anti-federalists. As group members, they were to support one another in understanding the texts assigned and ultimately these positions and the relevant arguments for each. In a physics class, students were using the scientific method to study the simple motion of a pendulum. They were engaged in hands on work. They were also using grade level reference sheets and other materials to demonstrate their thinking.
- Students' levels of engagement varied leading to uneven levels of student thinking and participation. In an English class, the teacher was facilitating a whole group conversation. While there were only 13 students in the class, not all students participated. In another class while students were involved in preparing for their journalism presentations, their work varied greatly because of a lack of directions. Some seemed to have understood and planned appropriately to finish the task on time while others who started at the same time did not have many of the information they would need to complete the project on time. When asked, they were not able to say what they needed and how they would go about getting it to be successful.
- There was a lack of multiple entry points to provide all students, including English language learners and student with disabilities, access to the curricula and tasks across classrooms. In a math classroom, students were given their data, cheat sheet and next steps by the teacher rather than allowed to demonstrate their thinking by analyzing the test results themselves and identify their own next steps. Students were waiting on the teacher to share that information with them before resubmitting their answers for extra credit. In another class, students were made to watch a video for about 10 minutes without interruption. Few students took notes, yet all were asked to fill out their graphic organizer after the clip. Many had blank graphic organizers even after the directions were given. There was a lack of consistent effective teaching practices across classrooms to support student engagement in higher-order thinking skills and high levels of students thinking.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core, integrating the instructional shifts, and make purposeful decisions to build coherence. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

Curricula and academic tasks build coherence and offer rigorous, grade level work to students' that in turn promotes college and career readiness for all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and faculty have aligned curricula and academic tasks to the Common Core, the content standards and the instructional shifts. Teachers focus on the use of complex texts, a mix of fiction and non-fiction reading, higher order questions, class discussion opportunities such as Socratic seminars, and the use of text based evidence. Teachers use Engage NY materials to guide their lesson and assessment development.
- The school is working to build coherence through resources and practices developed collaboratively. The New Vision Inquiry team at the school, comprising of the principal, assistant principal and teachers, have developed an argument writing rubric. This rubric will be used to assess essays across the grades, enabling common evaluation practices for argument writing. Teachers also work collaboratively planning ways they differentiate writing assessments. These have been in the form of personal essays, newspaper articles and narrative writings among others. These differentiated assessments have been put in place to increase the opportunities for participation in assessment for English language learners and students with disabilities. The principal has shared a lesson plan template with the staff to help bring coherence in the work as well.
- Planning practices do not yet differentiate for all students whereas extensions and supports are captured in plans. Specific scaffolds which help students demonstrate their thinking and be cognitively engaged across the vast majority of classrooms help are not captured in a coherent way across grades.

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use and create assessments and rubrics that provide limited feedback to teachers and students. The school understands the importance of designing assessment practices that will generate meaningful data and next steps to engage both students and teachers in meaningful self-reflective work. However, teaching practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

There is a lack of evidence of assessments that provide meaningful actionable feedback to students and teachers being used to make effective adjustments to meet the needs of all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Structures are being developed to provide actionable feedback to teachers and students. The school has adopted Skedula as an online platform and uniform place for students and teachers to go to for information around attendance, and student achievement data. Because it has recently been rolled out, data in Skedula is not regularly updated. The school is also developing a special education tracker to better support students with disabilities as it will assist with data collection and data analysis. This too is a tool that is not fully in the implementation phase.
- Teachers listed many ways they checked for understanding including with exit slips, opportunities for students to revise work and with class discussions. However, these practices are not yet implemented across classrooms, limiting teachers' opportunities to make effective adjustments to meet the needs of all learners and giving actionable feedback.
- Across classrooms, teaching practices inconsistently reflected the use of checks for understanding and student self-assessment. Some teachers use exit slips but this is not a common practice. There was evidence of student self-assessment in the plans revised but not across the classrooms visited.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the staff. They are developing and strengthening systems of accountability for those expectations as well as offering ongoing feedback and opportunities for families to partner with the school and for teachers to effectively offer guidance and advisement to students.

Impact

Efforts to develop and strengthen the expectations that are connected to a path to college and career for students are beginning to enable stakeholders, including staff and families, to support student progress towards these expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders share high expectations with the staff and students and are developing supports for all to meet those expectations. School leaders have offered professional development around how to evaluate student transcripts to support teachers with advisory expectations, on classroom displays and planning to support with the classroom environment. Five teachers are being trained in restorative justice practices in order to lead that initiative the following year. Students received a welcome letter from the school leader delineating the expectations to students and families as well as a template to be filled out by students and parents stating students' goal for a Regents or Advance Regents diploma. Other structures are being worked on to make the expectations clear and attainable for all.
- The school communicates with families through phone calls, mail, meetings, email, school events and Skedula. Parents are not yet familiar with Skedula but hope to receive support with the system. One parent explained that when his child needs additional help, he is able to meet with the teacher or teachers share websites with families to support students' progress.
- Teachers are helping to support students in understanding the expectations and their next steps. Students spoke about the changes they've experienced at the school and explained that they've received the most supports for life after high school this year. Some spoke about the work not being as rigorous as they expected and are looking forward to the addition of Advanced Placement courses in the future. Students explained that teachers help clarify the expectations in classrooms but they reinforce them unevenly. With additional work, the school will be able to offer ongoing and detailed feedback to students that prepare them for the next level.