



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Fort Hamilton

High School K490

**8301 Shore Road
Brooklyn, NY 11209**

Principal: Kaye Houlihan

**Date of review: May 8, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Michael Prayor**

The School Context

Fort Hamilton is a high school with 4,246 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 5% Black, 30% Hispanic, 35% White, and 30% Asian students. The student body includes 18% English language learners and 7% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 94.5%.

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	Well Developed
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	Proficient
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	Well Developed
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	Celebration	Well Developed
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	Additional Findings	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and staff consistently communicate high expectations to students and families that are connected to a path to college and career readiness. School staff establishes a culture for learning that systematically communicates a unified set of expectations, effective feedback and guidance/advisement supports.

Impact

The schools' high expectations results in partnerships with families that are connected a path to college and career readiness and supports student progress toward expectations. Students own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- The school is organized into House structures, each with their own guidance counselor that is in constant communication with students and parents about student progress. Intervention programs such as Project Success have proven successful evidenced by indicators such as a 94% attendance rate year to date. House teams conduct case conferencing in order to ensure that students are supported and issues are addressed early on. Students and parents use Pupil Path to track progress towards expectations and communicate with teachers.
- School leaders and staff provide early experiences to students in order to communicate high academic expectations and prepare them for the next level. For example, 10th graders participate in a College Aptitude class where they research colleges, learn strategies for choosing the right college, and collaborate with guidance counselors on career advisory activities. Alumni visit the school frequently to address students regarding the challenges they face in college and how to best prepare for them.
- Conversations with parents and students demonstrate high expectations connected to college and career. Students stated that the school prepares them for college through their coursework, Advanced Placement and College Now courses and Saturday Tutoring and Regents Prep, and support from their guidance counselor. Parents stated that frequent communication with teachers and administration has increased their understanding of both the progress of their child as well as how to assist them with their academic responsibilities. They frequently mentioned that although the school is very large, it still has the advantages of a small school because all students are known well by several adults they trust.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Although across most classrooms, teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula and engage students in appropriately challenging tasks, there were a few missed opportunities for student ownership of their learning.

Impact

As a result, most students including English language learners (ELLs) and Students with disabilities (SWDs) demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teaching strategies provide multiple entry points into the curricula. For example, in a ninth grade English language arts (ELA) class, students explored the characters of Banquo and Macbeth in Act 1, Scene 2 of Shakespeare's play. In order to respond to the prompt, "I believe/do not believe that people maintain the ability to prophesy", the teacher asked students to use *because*, *but/however*, and *so/therefore* to construct their claim, counterclaim, and conclusion. Students then read the scene while listening to an audio version containing dramatic emphasis. Students then worked in groups to identify one piece of significant information or analyze text they noticed from the scene. Finally, students were provided with scaffolded questions in order to compose well-developed paragraphs.
- Across classrooms, student work products reflect high levels of student thinking and participation. In an accounting class, students examined an income statement and worked in groups to explain its purpose. Students used mathematical formulas to determine the net income and net loss for the company and explain how it affects the value of the business. Groups of students then worked together to create an income statement for a fictitious company named Global Travel Agency and presented their findings as entrepreneurs of the business.
- Teaching strategies engaged all learners, including ELLs and SWDs, with appropriately challenging tasks that demonstrate higher order thinking skills. A class of ELLs worked collaboratively, to read leveled text excerpts from *A Raisin in the Sun*. Groups of four students were assigned roles; Summarizer, Questioner, Predicator, or Clarifier. Each student was provided with a role description and sentence starters or question prompts. For example, a Summarizer paraphrases what was read in their own words and a Clarifier resolves areas of confusion or suggests strategies such as re-reading and looking for context clues in the text. This protocol resulted in a higher level of student thinking and participation.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and strategically incorporate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

As a result, school leaders and staff have created a coherent curriculum that promotes college and career readiness for all students and provides access for all students to be cognitively challenged.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of curricular documents demonstrates academic tasks are aligned to the Common Core Standards. For example, an Astronomy lesson plan asks students to complete a science writing assignment, where students read various journal article excerpts about Albert Einstein and faster-than-light travel. Some examples of prompts for their writing include, "What is the author's claim? What arguments and ideas are used to support the claim? Do you agree with this author? Explain why or why not." This also reflects the school's strategic plan to integrate the ELA instructional shifts across content areas.
- Curricula and academic tasks are planned using student data so that individual and groups of students, including ELLs, have access to the curricula. A unit plan on the genre of biographies from an English as a second language (ESL) for Beginners class states that students will compare and contrast the accomplishments of different sports heroes and use this evidence to write a biographical narrative. In order to support access to this curriculum, students have access to texts at varied lexile levels, word-to-word dictionaries, word walls, and graphic organizers to organize evidence. Students are grouped in pairs and quads according to English language proficiency based on NYSESLAT scores.
- A unit plan from a ninth grade Living Environment class demonstrates how academic tasks are planned so that individual and groups of students have access to curricula and are cognitively engaged. Students are expected to read and annotate one of three texts on biodiversity that have been modified for low, high, and ELLs and Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classes. Tasks include, leveled anticipation guides to use before reading, leveled graphic organizers in order to explain whether they agree or disagree with various quotes from the article and a description of their reasoning. The unit culminates in an argumentative essay on whether it is important to preserve biodiversity despite humans' desire to conduct research to find cures for diseases. Students have access to essay outlines to structure their writing and rubrics to assess their work along the way.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use and create assessments and rubrics that are aligned with the school's curricula and offer a clear portrait of student mastery. Teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the ongoing use of checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

As a result of these practices, teachers provide actionable and meaningful feedback to students and make effective adjustments that meet all students' learning needs and ensure students are aware of their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- The schools' curricular emphasizes collaborative learning across grades and subjects areas. Teachers use rubrics for group work across classes in order to provide actionable feedback to students. For example, in an Earth Science class students worked in groups to construct a model to represent the principle of relative dating. The teacher reviewed a *group-work grading rubric* that demonstrates that a Level 4 score consists of all members participating, providing ideas and suggestions, completing all parts of the assignment and respectful and active listening. The teacher then circulated providing actionable and meaningful feedback to groups such as, "How should the layers be oriented in your model? Discuss which layers should go first? How does this show the law of superposition?" and prompting groups with questions to increase their participation and to think critically about their models.
- Across classrooms visited, students had opportunities to self and/or peer assess in accordance with teacher created rubrics and assessments. In an 11th grade ELA class, students used a Peer Reviewer's Feedback sheet to provide and receive feedback from an assigned partner on their General Argument essays. The protocol requires them to provide "warm feedback (what was done well)", "cool feedback (where is there more work to be done?)", and score the paper based on guidelines that measure analysis, prose style, and mechanics. Students were asked to reflect on the process through prompts such as, "What was most useful to you in the feedback you received from your peer?"
- Teachers' assessment practices reflect varied use of ongoing checks for understanding to meet students' learning needs. Several different strategies were evident across the vast majority of classrooms. In one science class, during a mid-lesson checkpoint the teacher asked students to share two questions they had about the article, two points and two counterpoints. In an 11th grade ELA class, the teacher asked students to share a list of the rhetorical strategies used in a speech, which included responses such as personal anecdote, tone, and syntax. A business teacher used a tracker to document students' understanding of vocabulary terms such as expenses, incur, revenue, and depreciation.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations that promote the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards. Distributed leadership structures are embedded allowing teachers play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Impact

Professional collaborations have strengthened the instructional capacity of teachers resulting in school-wide instructional coherence and increased achievement for all learners. Effective teacher leadership has positively affected student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- During a ninth grade inquiry team meeting, teachers discussed comparisons in ELA assessment data between the fall semester and the most recent marking period. The data revealed that a subgroup of students was still struggling with reading complex texts. Teachers discussed refinements to the upcoming text that students would use to write evidence-based essays. These refinements included underlining sections of the text to aid students with determining the central idea, bolded words to signal a definition provided below the text for ELLs, and highlighted key words and phrases students could access as clues.
- Teacher engagement in structured professional collaborations results in strengthened teacher instructional capacity and school wide instructional coherence. For example, teacher team conversations demonstrated that in the fall term ninth grade ELA teachers focused on the writing of argumentative essays. After initial examination of student work revealed that students needed more explicit teaching of these skills. They collaborated with Social Studies teachers to implement opportunities for students to assess the type of evidence they select to support arguments. Students have made improvements in this skill and teams are now moving toward developing students' abilities to form rebuttals.
- Effective teacher leadership structures are embedded so that teachers play an integral role in key decisions. The school's Professional Development committee consists of a teacher representative from each department and meet twice a month to share PD needs, create and facilitate professional learning. The goal of this committee is to strengthen teacher capacity in developing students' literacy skills, providing multiple entry points for all learners, and effective implementation of Danielson's Framework for Teaching Domain 3 practices.