Department of Education
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

High School for Civil Rights

High School K504

400 Pennsylvania Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11207

Principal: Michael Steele

Date of review: April 21, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Musa Ali Shama

The School Context

High School for Civil Rights is a high school with 326 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 74% Black, 23% Hispanic, 1% White, and 0% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys account for 57% of the students enrolled and girls account for 42%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 75.0%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
To what extent does the school…	**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		
To what extent does the school…	**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**	**Developing**
Systems for Improvement		
To what extent does the school…	**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**	**Developing**

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Developing

Findings
School leaders communicate high expectations to the entire school community and systems for supporting staff, students, and families emerging. Feedback systems are in the process of development to ensure to parents have a clear understanding of their child's progress towards college and career readiness.

Impact
Systems of accountability are developing to ensure staff meeting the school's expectations and systems of communications with families are being refined.

Supporting Evidence

- Efforts to communicate expectations to families and students are exhibited though the monthly newsletters sent to parents. Information regarding Saturday and after-school tutoring is sent home routinely. Presentations on college readiness have been conducted at Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings. Parents have access to PupilPath student data management system to check their child's grades and a parent stated that a teacher has contacted them through the system to inform them on their child's progress.

- To expose students to college level course work, a partnership with Medgar Evers College and Kingsborough Community College has been established so students can participate in College Now programs. Students take part in the All Stars Breakfast to Success program where students receive supports and motivation connected to setting expectations to attend college. College readiness workshops are conducted to explain the college application process through various presenters. Although there was a bulletin board dedicated to raising college awareness, which included listing the college application process and targeted workshops, students' responses revealed that there was inconsistent communication to all students regarding a path to college and careers.

- The principal stated that he uses professional development meetings to communicate his expectations to faculty and that observation data is utilized to develop professional development agendas. Advance data revealed questioning and assessment as areas for additional teacher support and professional development. The principal stated that "he expects teachers to be prepared and that they are following the Danielson Framework for Teaching, and paying attention to the rubric." However, the professional development calendar and professional development agendas reviewed highlighted curriculum alignment, grade level teams, Common Core Learning Standards and Team meeting as the meetings that were taking place. The calendar showed no evidence of training tied into a systems of teacher accountability supported or connected to the Danielson Framework.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing

Findings
Teaching practices informed by Danielson Framework for Teaching are becoming aligned to curricula and reflected a belief that students learn best when working in groups or teams. Student work products and discussions practices are in development.

Impact
Although students were grouped in the classrooms visited, student work products and discussions reflected uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, students were seated in groups and teachers facilitated group work with various levels of success. For example, in an English language arts class, students were analyzing texts and providing textual evidence by sharing their identification of an important detail regarding the main character, setting, or conflict. The teacher used accountable talk as a strategy to develop students to student discussion around analyzing the use evidence from the text. However, in an Integrated Co-Teaching Algebra class students sat in pairs but were not working through problems collaboratively but rather individually. Students who were observed working without a partner, were not prompted to engage with others in the class.

- In a Civil Rights elective class, students were engaged in a lesson regarding “What tactics did Martin Luther King, Jr. use to oppose segregation?” The lesson began with students analyzing the meaning of a quote from Martin Luther Kings’ *Letter from Birmingham Jail.* After a few minutes, the teacher asked students what their thoughts were, a student answered, followed by two additional students. The teacher followed up with his thoughts to their responses before transitioning to another part of the lesson. With fourteen students in the class, only three students actively demonstrated and shared their thinking regarding this lesson. In an elective law class, students were engaged in a lesson with the Aim; “How can we compare and contrast Tort Law in relation to Criminal Law?” The teacher provided students with various scenarios and questions for Plaintiffs and Defendants. As the lesson proceeded, the conversation was from student to teacher with only 3 students actively responding to the teacher. With limited discussion, students were not able to demonstrate a clear understanding of the key terms or contrast material that was being studied.

- In a health class with the aim; “How can we develop Cardio Respiratory Fitness?” students were sitting loosely in groups and filling out a worksheet related to structural kinesiology. As the teacher posed the question “How can we develop cardio respiratory?” students called out answers, with the teacher validating an answer and continuing to explain it further. This resulted in a teacher centered lesson with the instructor doing most of the talking. The students did not actively engage in the lesson or have the opportunity to use the academic language to demonstrate their understanding of the Respiratory System.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Developing

Findings
Curricula and academic tasks reflected planning to provide student access to curricula but inconsistently emphasized rigorous habits and higher-order skills.

Impact
Inconsistency in rigor of tasks and access to tasks lead to missed opportunities to develop higher-order thinking skills necessary for success in college and careers.

Supporting Evidence

- Curriculum maps reviewed reflected planning that indicated Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles such as "group discussions, guided reading activity, a Color Reading Activity, audio video presentation, Power Point presentation, Q & A, Hands on Activity/projects, Simulations." These strategies were listed as a resource in each unit without specifying which strategies would be used with what content. Furthermore, there was little evidence of key strategies that would be used to address students with disabilities or English language learners.

- A review of an English language arts task demonstrated evidence that there were tasks aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards as this task referenced the Reading Literature (RL) of the Common Core Standards. This task required that students be able to determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development as well as cite evidence which is an instructional shift. Tasks also demonstrated that students would be supported with graphic organizers when reading texts like *The Other Wes Moore*, and identifying textual evidence to support important details about the main character, the setting, or the central conflict. However, in this is practice is not consistent across all subjects, for example, some tasks in Health class only require students to recall information.

- A teacher in a teacher meeting stated that they were in the early stages of refining curricula based on looking at student work and data. The teacher reported that they are focused on incorporating argumentative essays and building student skills on writing. They were using a baseline assessment to work collaboratively to develop benchmarks. Teachers are designing tasks and were in the process of aligning these tasks to the Common Core Learning Standards to help students build the skills and understanding of citing evidence from text and using multiple sources to write essays. In the documents reviewed, this work was not evident across all disciplines.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing

Findings
Across classrooms, teachers use and create assessments and rubrics that are loosely aligned with the school's curricula and inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding.

Impact
Limited feedback to students and inconsistent strategies to check for student understanding are hindering effective adjustments to meet student learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- The teacher use of ongoing checks for understanding to monitor student learning was inconsistent across classrooms. For example, in a Living Environment class, students were learning about sexual reproduction in mammals and were working on a worksheet. After watching a video, students were asked to identify scientific vocabulary and provide an explanation for each word. Students were given time to complete the activity, then the teacher asked students for their answer. Students called out, and the arrow of recitation went from student to teacher with the teacher providing the final explanation without ensuring that students were able to correctly identify the key terms, such as Placenta, Embryo, and Gamete. The teacher had planned an Exit Ticket activity, but the period ended and only six of the 15 students were seen completing the ticket as the other students left before they were collected.

- The practice of peer assessment and student self–assessment was being promoted to engage students in a process of reflection regarding their learning progress. This practice was observed in an English language arts class where students were assessing each other using a checklist to see if their peer had identified a clear central idea, Students were required to explained how the evidence relates to the central idea, and identify an area where their peer needed to improve. Students were engaged in this process leading to students gaining a deeper understanding of the material. Although students reported that teachers had them use peer assessment to discuss their work, this practice was only observed in two classes.

- Across classrooms, teachers create assessments and rubrics aligned to curricula. Students stated that some of their teachers sat them with them individually to review their work and made it clear what they had to do to improve their grade and gave them the opportunity revise their work for a higher grade. However, student work posted contained numeric scores (ex. 1,2,3,4) with circles around the corresponding criteria, such as Completion, Accuracy, Demonstrated Knowledge, Following Instructions, and Effort and did not contain comments to help the students improve their work.

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

Findings
Teachers are involved in professional collaborations on teams and analyze data and student work for students they share.

Impact
Teacher collaboration is loosely connected to school goals and is not resulting in progress towards goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers serve on grade level teams, department teams, or the Common Core Learning Standard team and meet in one of those teams weekly. A calendar of team meetings indicated topics, such as Interdisciplinary Collaboration and Looking at Student work. Teams were working on school goals which were; "1) 70% of all students will earn 10 or more credits; 2) teachers will develop coherency in instruction across curriculum for grades 9 - 12 in ELA, mathematics, science and social studies aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards units of study; 3) all units of core subjects will be aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards; and 4) students' average performance in ELA and mathematics will increase by 5% as shown in scholarship report and NYS Regents examination data." Although there was evidence around a focus on writing with the ELA team, ELA curriculum and evidence of team meetings did not demonstrate that team efforts was strategically building coherence that promoted college and career readiness or that students are being tracked for progress.

- An English as a Second Language teacher focused on English language learners was able to highlight strategies that she was implementing to improve student writing and vocabulary based on working closely with students. However, the process of teachers targeting a group of students to conduct inquiry to determine effective strategies that translated into curricula refinements were in development.

- Teacher teams meet to analyze assessment data and student work for students they share, but there was little evidence of impact regarding student progress toward goals. A teacher stated that the level of incoming students was "very low" and students were "not high school ready." Although the success of one student with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) was highlighted, teachers were unable to articulate an approach to analyzing data of incoming students and developing support to meet targeted students' academic needs.