

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

**High School for Youth and Community
Development**

High School K537

**911 Flatbush Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11226**

Principal: Mary Prendergast

**Date of review: April 23, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Tammy Pate**

The School Context

High School for Youth and Community Development is a/an high school with 394 students from grade 9 through grade12. The school population comprises 87% Black, 8% Hispanic, 2% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys account for 60% of the students enrolled and girls account for 40%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 91.0%.

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	Proficient
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 consistently communicate high expectations and provide training to the entire staff, and effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness.

Impact

Consistent high expectations and training has resulted in a culture of mutual accountability for those expectations and the school has successfully partnered with families to support student progress toward those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers and administrators shared that the school formed a College Leadership Team (CLT) that governs and guides the college pathway plan that includes: *Aspiration, Application, Actuality*. Aspiration phase is for 9th and 10th graders and sets the groundwork for college exposure and goal setting. The 11th and 12th grades are supported through the Application phase including college essays completion by the end of the 11th grade so that 12th grade is concentrated on early college courses (Advanced Placement and College NOW) and internships. The Actuality phase encompasses freshman year in college. The school's CLT provides regular check-ins to help freshman troubleshoot the transition challenges to ensure a successful first year.
- Parents shared overwhelming support of the school. One parent stated, "I know that my son will be better than me because of this school." Another shared the emotionally charged story of her child's extraordinary brain injury and recovery and how the school worked to assure he missed as little seat time as possible. The student is on target to graduate just one semester behind his original cohort. Parents attend at a rate of 30-50 per monthly Parent Association meeting, attend the school's 8 college tours, twice weekly parent workshops and actively participate in their student's academic progress.
- The school has initiated an Advanced Placement (AP) Expansion. In partnership with the National Math and Science Initiative, which is providing funding, organizational guidance and teacher training. The school has rolled out an expansion of multiple AP classes across the Erasmus Campus. The goal is to maximize the number of AP classes in Math, Science and English throughout grade levels. Beginning in the 2015-2016 school year, students will have a menu of choices (example: AP Calculus or AP Statistics). Those not eligible for Calculus can take statistics or AP Environmental instead of AP Physics.
- The school has a wide array of programs that target the social-emotional needs of adolescents. Student Mentor Program: The mentor program was a planned development from the annual Student Empowerment Retreat. 11th and 12th grader mentors received extensive training in peer mentoring to build academic capacity, communication skills, leadership, self-awareness and empathy. Counseling in Schools (CIS) has conducted innumerable individual and group counseling, academic advisement, parental outreach and structured support throughout the school year. CIS staff attends weekly multidisciplinary meetings and monthly parent and administration meetings. Next year, the school intends to add a Guest Speaker Series to provide a structured platform for speakers from various professions, business, and academic institutions to visit the school and support its students.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best so that teaching strategies (including questioning, scaffolds in English and/or native language where appropriate, and routines) consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact

Teachers use the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts to create learning experiences that include challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in student work products so that all learners, including English language learners and Special education students, are engaged. This work is beginning to show impact across the vast majority of classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- The school-wide instructional focus is aligned with CCLS shifts, focusing instruction on text-based lessons that embed reading and writing skills development across the content areas. The school shared that their focus on discussion and differentiation, has resulted in consistent “multiple entry points into the curricula” and there is more evidence of “discussions reflecting high levels of student thinking and participation.” In a visit to a 9th grade English class, students grappled with the essential question; why do people tell stories? This lesson was tied to the mythology unit. During the class students reference multiple texts in support of their varied opinions. In the room were vocabulary helpers, the guiding text at three reading levels, Depth of Knowledge conversation charts and a discussion rubric with three categories (lose, maintain, and gain). Students assessed themselves and their peers on their contribution to the discussion. The use of higher order thinking skills among students was observed during many classroom observations of student discussion, but not all.
- Teachers shared that each department selected focus strategies aligned to three key areas of Danielson: 1e Designing Coherent Instruction, specifically in regards to differentiation; 3d Using Assessment in Instruction; and 3b Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques. During a visit to a 10th grade English class, team-teachers demonstrated this focus. There were three discussion topics with guiding questions on the board. Students sat in groups and decided which topic and which questions to address. Students were able to explain that the questions were tiered from “straight-forward to crazy hard.” In their groups they were directed to select not more than one question from each level, but they could skip the first level and choose multiple questions from the second and third level.
- The school has developed an instructional focus for each content area. These foci also include statements for how students learn best and differentiation strategies. In social studies, the instructional focus is to develop vocabulary, embed reading intervention strategies in instruction across the content areas, and improve student informational and argumentative writing skills. In one class students were engaged in determining the concept of ‘power’ of several Pre-Modern Empires. Students successfully argued their point of view by citing reference to no less than three civilizations and text from other content areas. The vocabulary use appeared intentional and students did not have to be reminded to cite the source of the information they shared.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and/or content standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts, and curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

CCLS alignment has produced coherence across grades and subject areas that promotes college and career readiness for all students so that individual and groups of students, including the lowest- and highest-achieving students, English language learners and Special education students, have access to the curricula and tasks and are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers meet once a week to examine student writing and to score and analyze student work products. They record students' strengths and weakness across the grade and revise rubrics to support student discussion and language development through the use of questioning. An example of this was observed in teacher unit plans and on student work products that both emphasized the use of high frequency words and transition words as a way to make student discussions more accountable and to require a higher thinking demand. Additionally, student work demonstrated evidence that instructional shifts in literacy were embedded such as rubrics that assess student's ability to use evidence from sources to inform or make an argument.
- The school shared that they are extremely excited by their latest CCLS curriculum initiative called *The Calculus Project*. Administration and teachers are focused on administering the AP Calculus exam. In order to successfully accomplish this, they have embedded organizational planning, teacher training and instructional planning into the professional learning cycle. The purpose of the Calculus project is twofold: to train teachers and prepare eligible students to take the AP Calculus exam in their senior year, and to accelerate learning for all students in mathematics. Students who do not enter the AP Calculus strand will be supported in taking AP Statistics beginning in the 2015-2016 school year.
- Curriculum development is inquiry-based. Teachers examined instructional resources available through EngageNY, Common Core Library, AMAPS, NCTM, various websites (MathBits, jmap, Castle Learning), and discussed how they can be utilized in the classroom. Teachers selected the Glencoe McGraw Hill Common Core aligned Algebra 1 textbook with teacher resources such as leveled worksheets and assessment resources and students resources such as Study Notebook, the Homework Practice Workbook, and others. In addition, ConnectED allowed teachers to build lesson plans with easy-to-find print and digital resources, search for activities to meet a variety of learning modalities, and teach with technology by providing virtual manipulatives, lesson animations, whole-class presentations, and personalize instruction with print and digital resources.

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula and across classrooms, teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

The use of assessments aligned to curricula, ongoing assessments, grading practices, and analysis of student learning outcomes provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement and teachers make effective adjustments to meet all students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- The school shared that teachers grade tasks and assessments, analyze data, and then adjust their instruction based on this new evidence. The school uses a multi-level data tracking system to monitor individual student progress toward meeting performance goals. Teachers use data to modify lesson plans and student work books show evidence that peer-to peer assessment has resulted in more rigorous engagement and student performance. The school's support organization, New Visions, has supported the school in implementing a data sorter and assessment analysis online program. This program also links to a Google system so that teachers are able to communicate and share best practices and revise curriculum and assessments on the school's Google space.
- To promote school-wide coherence, teacher teams meet weekly to discuss student performance for all students, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, and make revisions to assessment practices as they deemed necessary. Teachers grade tasks and assessments, analyze data, and then adjust their instruction based on this new evidence. Evidence of this was observed in the school's data analysis structures. Teams agree upon standards to be assessed based on previous year summative assessments, Measures of Student Learning results and unit tests show an increase in individual and groups of students' performance year to year.
- Classroom observations revealed students self-assessing and peer-reviewing each other's work. Students prompted each other to explain their thinking and offered each other feedback on how to meet higher levels on the rubric's criteria. Lesson plans and activities consistently evidenced the use of multiple forms of checks for understanding with the majority of these checks occurring student to student. Questioning is scaffolded and tiered for groups of learners. Teachers use graphic organizers for students to record their thinking.
- The school has prioritized the instructional needs of English language learners after analyzing last year's Measures of Student Learning (MoSL) and Regents performance data. The school piloted an ELL afterschool enrichment program, hired an additional English Language Arts teacher, and revised their student feedback system to make it a more interactive conversation between students and teachers.

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

Teacher teams systematically analyze key elements of teacher work including classroom practice, assessment data, and student work for students they share or on whom they are focused. Distributed leadership structures are embedded so that there is effective teacher leadership.

Impact

As a result, teachers have a strong voice and play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning across the school. Teacher practice has improved so that mastery of goals for groups of students is readily observed.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher-led common planning where teachers work on the literacy and math curriculum, lesson planning, assessment data is analyzed and used to drive instruction, looking at student work, and turn-keying of information received at professional development. Teacher teams were responsible for identifying and rolling out two major initiatives at the school. The “Bridge to Trig” CCLS curriculum fuses algebra and trigonometry topics so that students are both prepped for future exams as well as spiraled back through previous standards regardless of which math class they are programmed. The second initiative is the CUNY at Home program specifically designed for students scoring below 75% on regents exams. This program is a virtual classroom that provides additional support for struggling students and tracks their progress across a range of standards so that they know when they are ready to sit for a regent exam.
- Teachers were observed engaging in inquiry-based conversations as they analyzed student work products. As teachers conducted inquiry work, conversations were focused on how students performed when they were provided with multiple forms of assessment and remediation tools. Teacher teams analyzed Regents performance data for all students. The results of this analysis was the development of a new instructional focus; A common vocabulary around how we read and write; reading strategies in all content areas; writing strategies in all content areas. To meet this focus, teachers created an annotation protocol, explicit vocabulary foci in each content area, discussion and fluency instructional norms and a reading intervention program. The impact of this work was demonstrated in the schools nearly 20% increase in graduation rate from last year, and an increase from 10% to 23% pass rate on the 2014 Global History Regent.
- The school has several levels of distributive leadership. Each content area has a lead teacher; each grade has a team leader. There are three content/instructional coaches, all professional development is teacher-led, new and challenged teachers have peer mentors, model teacher lab sites. Two lead teachers in English language arts and social studies, and a coach provide actionable feedback to teachers, focusing on working with struggling teachers. These teacher leaders meet regularly with administrators to identify areas of need in the school so resources can be allocated and interventions can be planned. A review of Advance teacher observation reports showed growth from Developing to Effective in components 1A, 1E, 2D, 3B and from Effective to Highly Effective in components 1A, 1E, and 4E for teachers participating in the school’s voluntary inter visitation teacher to teacher support system.