



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

All City Leadership Secondary School

Middle - High School K554

**321 Palmetto Street
Brooklyn
NY 11237**

Principal: Elvis Estevez

**Date of review: April 21, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Roxan Marks**

The School Context

All City Leadership Secondary is a middle - high school with 358 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 13% Black, 77% Hispanic, 4% White, and 7% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 3% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 96.1%.

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	Focus	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	Additional Findings	Well Developed
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
---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------	-----------------------

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to all staff and aligns professional learning plan with Danielson Framework for Teaching. Partnering with families enables the school to communicate high expectations for college and career readiness.

Impact

The school leaders high expectations results in a culture of mutual accountability by all stakeholders. The school has embedded routines that cultivate a culture of high expectations resulting in partnerships with families and college readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- High expectations are messaged through the staff handbook, email, text, team meetings, and through morning announcements. The school leader and team developed a professional development plan for fall and spring terms. The professional development focused on Danielson Framework for Teaching targets questioning and discussion techniques and engaging students in learning. Professional development meetings begin with a recap of prior sessions to ensure thorough understanding of prior learning or strategies. Some areas of learning include essential questions, rubrics and using assessments, with multiple sessions for certain topics allowing for deeper learning and practice in key areas. Inter-visitations occur with a focus on using questioning and discussion techniques and engaging students in learning. Blooms taxonomy, Hess and the work of Marzano are also areas delved into this year. To support the instructional focus, professional learning focused sessions on engagement and the work of Phillip Schlechty resulting in collaborative work and accountable talk.
- Parents articulated that Engrade, an online grade book with parent and student access, is used to monitor the progress and work done by students. Progress reports are distributed to families on the off months when no report cards are given. Progress reports list topics and dates along with the overall score earned by students on assignments, homework, test, papers, projects, and participation. Newsletters, calendar and meetings with guidance department support families with navigating the college admissions process. A review of agendas from parent workshops reveal work in study skills, helping your child at home with developing effective work habits, Common Core, reducing text anxiety, resume building, nutrition and financial aid for college. Parents shared that the workshops provided have been helpful and the school focuses on making students college-ready. Coffee with principal and attendance at Parent Teacher Association meetings provides information about events. One parent referred to the school as “peace of mind school” where the teachers work as a team with parents, and the parent coordinator is a bridge to home.
- To address college and career readiness, student morning meetings are highly structured and expectations for respect are embedded in the routines and messages about college readiness to students as school leaders sets the daily tone. The “College Visit Checklist” is used by students to document visits to colleges and the “to do list” section helps students to focus on places to see while at the colleges. Students visit colleges beginning in grade 6, prep courses are offered, advisory and financial aid supports are also provided. Students completed a career day survey that gave them a voice in identifying key areas of interest, as well as community service options and identified favored leisure activities.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts and promote college and career readiness. Academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills.

Impact

The staff and school leaders build curricular coherence through purposeful decisions and promote college and career readiness, and do not yet promote higher-order thinking skills across grades and subjects to ensure that English language learners and students with disabilities must demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- Course syllabuses are created for classes outlining major topics covered required texts, assessments and essential questions by units. Unit plans created by teachers are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards. For example, a Living Environment unit on Immunity and Disease includes overarching learning outcomes, essential questions, standards and differentiation. Lesson plans were included and contained key vocabulary, turn and talk questions, checks for understanding and homework. To address the shifts, there is a focus on argumentative writing and using more non-fiction materials to create a balance between fiction and non-fiction.
- Teachers shared that they believe to be college and career ready it is important for students to be proficient in writing and to communicate clearly, inclusive of proper vocabulary. To this end, teachers' plans build annotating skills, making connections with text, and time management. Students in grades 11 and 12 participate in a college career class as well as the Leadership Cadet Model that supports the development of habits including persistence, flexible thinking, communicating with clarity, and problem solving.
- The school uses Depth of Knowledge and Hess Cognitive Matrix Rigor as tools to support higher-order thinking when creating curriculum maps to ensure depth and complexity in tasks. Teachers use modules from Engage NY and adjustments are made at the team level. Review of plans submitted shows that some units included specific instructional strategies used to address English language learners and student with disabilities to show their thinking. For example, the Equation unit for grade 8 was adopted from another state and aligned to New York Common Core Learning Standards and use of visuals, highlighting complex terms, use of multimedia, and chunking information to address the needs of ELL and students with disabilities was noted in the planning document. The unit contained a list of differentiated instructional support for students and extensions with connections to technology. However, not all units planned with instructional strategies targeted to ELLs and students with disabilities to demonstrate their thinking at high levels.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms teaching practices reflect a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best and students demonstrate higher order thinking in their work products. In implementing instruction for all learners, teachers strategically use multiple entry points, high-quality supports, extensions of curricula and discussions.

Impact

In the majority of classrooms, teaching strategies and practices aligned to the curricula and the Danielson Framework for Teaching, enable all students to complete challenging tasks that illustrate high levels of thinking, participation and ownership of learning.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses $e=mc^2$ as part of their belief system, whereby student engagement equals mastery of content and a caring community both at school and at home. Strong belief in student engagement and creating excitement for learning will make students want to come to school and be motivated to learn. The school has been focusing on selected components of the Danielson Framework for Teaching, including “using questioning and discussion techniques and engaging students in learning”. Key strategies that are being promoted across the school include strategic grouping, student goals to inform next steps in learning and academic vocabulary.
- In a grade 8 English language arts lesson, students compared and evaluated how the notion of race is applied in the novel *Ellen Foster* as well in supplemental texts that was assigned to groups based on complexity, providing multiple entry points for learners. Students worked in groups annotating texts and orally sharing insights about portions read. The teacher provided a graphic organizer to help students better understand and analyze the message of the text. The higher performing group received a non-fiction article. All students were engaged in this lesson and there was a high-level of discussion with their peers.
- In a grade 8 math lesson students were in groups and rotated to different stations, solving various equations that reflected different levels of complexity and would be used to assess understanding and knowledge of students at the onset of the unit. Students collaborated with their peers to help each other as they worked on solving the problems and referred to a strategy chart posted. In this class as well as others visited, teachers used student performance data to prescribe supports, assign tiered tasks and personalize learning.
- In a grade 6 math lesson students worked in groups to solve a set of problems. The teacher elicited students’ thinking and used a SMART board to record their responses as the students recited the steps taken by the group to solve each problem. Similarly, in a grade 10 English language arts classroom consisting mostly of students with disabilities and English language learners, the teacher assigned various non-fiction topics on social justice and provided students with a guided notes template.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-----------------------

Findings

Across the vast majority of classroom teachers use and create assessments, rubrics, and grading system aligned to the curricula, offering a clear portrait of student mastery. Frequent checks for understanding are used across the vast majority of classes and students engage in self and peer assessments.

Impact

The school uses assessment results to inform instruction, grouping and adjustments to lessons and unit plans. Students receive meaningful and actionable feedback affording them opportunities to take ownership of their learning and aware of their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- Formative and summative assessments across all subject areas are given and the school has a system for the collection of data. Assessments are ongoing, diagnostic and planned in curriculum. Teachers use and create rubrics aligned to standards and provide students with feedback and next steps. Work displayed on bulletin boards and in folders consistently had feedback. For example, the teacher's feedback stated, "You clearly understand the text, the task and the audience. You have a thorough development of your argument essay. Next time you need to work on cohesion and select words and phrases to link to the major sections. Be mindful of some sentence structure issues and make your transitions clear." Students use rubrics and checklists to assess their work and meet with teachers to talk about ways to improve.
- Teachers shared that they use Performance Series, past Regents, mid-term, entry and exit tickets and observations of students to determine individual student's needs and progress toward goals. Conferences are conducted with students and used to set goals and provide feedback on work products. The goal sheet used begins with a goal statement, "How will students reach their goal?" and "Identify obstacles and solutions." Beginning of unit pre-assessments are used to create groups based on skill levels and tiered assignments are created.
- Checks for understanding were evident in lessons observed, and the school leader shared the professional learning done this year to support teachers in embedding this practice in lessons. During lesson observations, teachers checked for understanding through multiple methods including oral responses while reviewing the aim, questioning during lessons and summarizing of key learning, and exit tickets. For example, in a grade 10 classroom, the lesson plan delineated the check for understanding and during the observation the teacher asked the students, "How did Jim Crow laws affect blacks and whites?" At the end of the lesson students completed the exit ticket.
- Students were engaged in self and peer-assessment as noted in a grade 6 ELA classroom. Student reflections were seen on student work products. For example in an argumentative writing unit on class action, students reflected on the experience of a juror and attorney by responding to questions such as, "What was most challenging aspects of the trial?" "Did the verdict surprise you?" "What would you do differently if you argued this case?" and "What goals would you set based on this experience?" Students shared that they receive feedback all the time and as they organize their work in portfolios they use a sheet to reflect and take ownership for the ways to improve their work. Students commented, "Reflection helps us to see where we went wrong and ensure we learn from it."

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

Findings

The vast majority of teachers are involved in structured collaborations that have strengthened teacher pedagogy and promoted the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards. Distributive leadership structures are embedded.

Impact

There is a schoolwide instructional coherence and increased student achievement for all learners. Participation in teacher teams where teachers play an integral role in key decisions has strengthened teacher pedagogy and increased student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers engage in inquiry-based collaborations with a focus on adjusting syllabi, looking closely at student work, alignment with Common Core Learning Standards, ensuring there is a focus on instructional shifts and tracking and discussing student progress by looking at data. Teachers review entrance and exit slips and other formative assessments, including checks for understanding to modify unit plans and lessons as needed. During team observations, teachers were using a rubric for Document Based Questions (DBQs) that was developed by ELA and social studies teachers to review essays and identifying areas with which student may continue to struggle. Teachers effectively use data charts with Lexile reading levels, January Regents data and grade point averages (GPA) as well as “progressive goals” for students to continually monitor performance. Teacher teams keep a binder with agendas and data that documents their work. Teacher team looked at baseline data and set goals for groups of students to increase student mastery of specific skills.
- Teachers shared that they track, set goals, and use data to drive instruction. Teachers stated that working in teams has strengthened their instructional capacity because they are able to learn different strategies from their peers. Newer teachers appreciated the support that team meetings provide. Teams identified 10-15 students that fall within the lowest third in each grade as targeted students for modified instruction. These students are tracked and monitored throughout the year with progress and next steps discussed at team meetings. Teachers shared that data drives their instruction and they meet often even outside of the scheduled time. Data for the target inquiry group in grade 9 shows an increase of 15.7% improvement on the November baseline data on Living Environment unit on Cell Transport and Communication compared to end of unit assessment. Analysis for the same target group shows 23.8% increase from baseline assessments on Genetics, Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA), Ribonucleic acid (RNA) and Protein Synthesis to end of unit in March.
- Teacher leaders meet weekly with administration where they are empowered to voice decisions regarding instruction and professional learning. Teachers also stated that they collaborate with school leaders who provide resources based on the needs articulated by teachers. The professional development team works with school leaders to create a plan and continually meet to assess and adjust as needed. Professional development opportunities are open to staff who express support. Teachers stated that administration has an open door policy and they are accessible to address concerns and issues.