

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Williamsburg Preparatory

High School K561

**257 North 6th Street
Brooklyn
NY 11211**

Principal: Michael Shadrick

**Date of review: February 26, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Jo Ann Benoit**

The School Context

Williamsburg Preparatory HS is a high school with 682 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 16% Black, 69% Hispanic, 10% White, 3% Asian students and 2 % others. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 90.5%.

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	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 to the entire staff, students and families. Teachers, in turn, communicate high expectations to students and provide clear and focused supports and guidance.

Impact

The school's culture for learning promotes mutual accountability for the expectations. Families are partners in the work to support student achievement and students own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders ensure that the expectations are clear and that supports are in place to help teachers meet them. Expectations are communicated, among other ways, through the Staff Handbook, a newsletter to the staff that includes a 'celebration section'; the Cultural Norms and Expectations document developed by teachers, which list behavioral expectations, collegial expectations for staff, and the dress code. To help meet these expectations, assistant principals provide one-on-one meetings to teachers every other week, teachers meet to support one another with pedagogy in a video group in which they view each other's lessons and provide feedback and next steps, and co-teachers meet regularly to talk about ways they support their students with Individual Education Plans. All of which promote a culture of mutual accountability on all sides.
- Students' progress towards goals for college and /or career is shared with families in a variety of ways. Communication is maintained between the home and the school through Jupiter Grades, progress reports and report cards, phone calls, emails, letters, and face-to-face meetings. Families support students' academic achievement through their participation in the Parent Teacher Associations' meetings, workshops, their use of Echalk to track supports offered to students by the school. They are made aware of the expectations and of the ways they can support their children when they sign class contracts with their children and the classroom teachers.
- Teachers create opportunities for students to become lifelong learners and receive supports towards that end. Students work with guidance counselors for two years to promote stability and being well known by staff members. They also receive support for their college and career decisions through the college advisors and take advanced placement and college level classes and exams. They participate in a college readiness program through a partnership with College Bound Initiative. Students are encouraged to support one another. For example, twelfth graders mentor ninth graders. There are also student interns in the school which all help to ensure students are aware of their choices, the supports that exist for them and the ways they can prepare for the next level. Students are publicly acknowledged when their names are picked for the "ship slips" – recognition for scholarship, citizenship, leadership or relationship.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula and academic tasks for students.

Impact

Students are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks across classrooms, and their discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation. However, teaching strategies do not yet promote student ownership of learning, in the classroom.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teachers consistently differentiated the work for students to provide multiple entry points into the curricula. In one science class, the text read by students was differentiated to offer struggling readers vocabulary supports and a chunked text. In an English class, the task was differentiated offering students the opportunity to complete one of two tasks - the more complex level and the 'straightforward' level. The "straightforward" level's task was to "Introduce context and use one piece of evidence to support your claim. Use CTE (content, technical, essential) to analyze your quote". The more complex level, the "Mountainous" level's task was "Introduce context and use two pieces of evidence to support your claim. Use CTE (content, technical, essential) to analyze your quote".
- Across classrooms, student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation. In an AP Literature class, students were discussing with each other what made Shakespeare relatable to some and not to others. In a Global History class, students were engaged in a Socratic seminar facilitated by themselves around the despotic leaders of World War II. After the discussion, the teacher engaged the students in an assessment of the Socratic seminar by asking: "what did we do well?" During the student interview, students spoke about having choice in their work and being engaged in work that interests them and challenges them. One example of work students enjoyed was in an economics class when they were given a salary and had to budget their living expenses. The students who experienced that unit said it gave them real world experience and a new perspective on earning and spending.
- Across classrooms, students were engaged and participated in class and group conversations. Teachers, however, facilitated and led many of those conversations. Planning to ask more open-ended questions may lead to more student-centered work and more student-led discussions promoting students' ownership of the work.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

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

Impact

There is coherence and rigor in the curricula and tasks developed across grades and subject areas. Students have access to the curricula and grade level work and are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and faculty ensure that curricular adjustments help promote student achievement. There is ample time in the units for students to go deeply into topics/content. Units have been extended to allow for depth in the learning of concepts as well as to ensure the standards and shifts are embedded in the curricula. Students are programmed for 8 week cycles in literacy to strengthen their skills in reading and analyzing complex texts, reading and analyzing non-fiction, and using evidence appropriately. The lesson template used school-wide supports the expectations of the Common Core and the shifts. One question added to the template this year is “How am I checking for understanding in this lesson?”
- Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are emphasized throughout the curricula promoting coherence and college and career readiness. Teachers use the Core 6 book to reinforce literacy skills in all classrooms. Across classrooms, charts can be seen with the acronyms CEIL (claim, evidence, interpretation, link) and CTE (content, technical, essential). Seniors take a year-long government course which culminates in a 10-page college level paper. Students work on their college essay starting in the 11th grade. They also enroll in Advanced Proficient classes. From 2010 until 2014, the number of students taking AP exams has risen from 31 to 149 and the number of students with scores of three or higher on AP exams has climbed from 1 to 72. For the 2013-2014 academic year, 95% of 10th grade takers passed the English language arts regents. For the current class of 12th graders, over 35 students have already qualified for an advanced Regents diploma. This is up from a total of 16 students from the class of 2014.
- Tasks are planned and refined using student work and data. The school has moved to goal-based grading for their students with Individual Education Plans in order to better provide feedback to both teachers and students and thus better plan for them. Administrators and teachers also programmed students for a one year or a two year algebra class and tailored the curricula accordingly to provide access to students. This differentiation in programming as well as the tiered tasks given to students provide multiple entry points into the curricula for different groups of students promoting cognitively engaging tasks.

Findings

The school uses and creates rubrics and grading policies and utilizes common assessments to determine and promote student progress towards goals.

Impact

Teachers use data to make curricular adjustments to meet all students' learning needs and provide feedback towards goals.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teachers use data to determine student progress across grades and subjects. The school shares with students, staff and families four progress reports and four report cards a year. This data provides feedback to teachers and students and helps teachers plan for differentiated instruction. For example, teachers tier tasks and homework to help students meet goals. Tasks are offered in three options and usually, students choose the option they will complete: straightforward, uphill, and mountainous.
- The school uses common assessments data such as the regents exams, mock regents exams, exit slips, measures of student learning, teacher created quarterly assessments to determine student progress and plan for next steps. All students mentioned they receive next steps for most of their work allowing them to understand what they need to improve on or continue to do in order to do well academically.
- The analysis of student work and data has allowed the staff to offer differentiated opportunities in adjusted curricula and programs. The grading policy has enabled the staff to provide targeted support to students and identify programmatic decisions. For example, when a student re-takes a Regents exam, the staff decides whether to offer an AP class or an elective to ensure students meet college and career readiness benchmarks. Students and teachers use Google classroom as a way to give and receive feedback on their draft works. Some of the feedback given to students read "great context", "great evidence and use of CTE. Add a link back to how this brainwashing connects to language", "It looks like you did not fully finish revising this essay. Always check for spelling, grammar... and to make sure you've addressed any comments you received on your draft!"

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 professional collaborations, analyze student and teacher work and play key a role in decision making at the school.

Impact

Participating in these collaborative structures affords teachers the opportunity to strengthen teacher practice, increase student mastery towards goals and participation in decision making which affects student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers meet in inquiry-based structured collaborations. Teachers support department and grade level teams, provide professional development to colleagues, participate in book studies, and conduct inter-visitations. 95% of classrooms were rated effective or highly effective as of February 9, 2015.
- In teacher teams, teachers focus on school goals student data, the curricular resources to help bring coherence to the work. For example these practices, tiered tasks, Cultural norms, goal-based grading etc. are seen across classrooms and many are teacher-developed or initiated. They help the staff meet the needs of students who are at different levels academically and behaviorally.
- Distributive leadership is embedded in the school culture and teachers have played an integral role in decisions that affect student learning across the school. Teachers played a major role in the reorganization of the 11th grade ELA curriculum, in the identification of students for the one-year or two-year algebra classes, they lead several committees. Some teachers are working to move towards an administrative position for the fall of 2015. One of them leads the school's work on community building and organizes activities that bring students and parents together. Many teachers lead the clubs for students and have developed classes to help students both academically and socio-emotionally be college and career ready.
- The teacher team observed looked at student responses to the third reading passage in the Regents exam. Students at all levels, high, medium and low struggled with that component's text and questions. Teachers brainstormed why they think this may be and listed some possible steps to take with their respective classes. Some of their suggestions included choosing less ambiguous texts, doing shared-readings with the students to teach them the skills needed to answer these types of questions. They even questioned the types of questions they ask and whether or not they are rigorous enough. They decided to develop questions that mirror those on the test and embed them throughout their lessons. The teachers during that observation mentioned that they co-plan all lessons and that has helped their plans be more effective.