



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Kurt Hahn Expeditionary Learning School

High School K569

**5800 Tilden Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11203**

Principal: Veronica Coleman Xavier

**Date of review: May 15, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Brenda Perez**

The School Context

Kurt Hahn Expeditionary Learning School is a high school with 341 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 92% Black, 7% Hispanic, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 21% 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 87.4%.

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

The school leader consistently communicates high expectations for professional collaboration, student learning, and family supports that exemplify a culture of mutual accountability. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that provides clear, focused and effective feedback and guidance/advisement supports to ensure that students own their educational experience.

Impact

All teachers, students and families share a common understanding and mutual accountability so that all students own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leader communicates high expectations during daily teacher morning meetings, instructional cabinet and weekly horizontal and vertical team meetings. Leadership holds teachers accountable through observations and professional learning opportunities provided by the school leader, an instructional coach, consortium forums and network support. The instructional guide schedules inter-visitations with teachers and other consortium schools. This has established a culture of trust as teachers collaboratively work towards improving their practice.
- All classes end with work products that prepare the students for Performance Based Assessment Tasks (PBATs). The school leader stated that as a New York Performance Assessment Consortium school, they believe that the graduation level PBATs mirror more closely the type of learning and assessment that students will encounter in college. This is the message to all school constituents. Students stated that they realize that this work is more difficult than taking a Regents exam but better prepares them to succeed in college. Grade 9 students stated that in the fall semester they presented work that demonstrated mastery to a panel of teachers and experts at roundtable discussions. The principal reported that preparation for these presentations communicates to students the importance of revision and editing to produce high quality products that are college preparatory and worthy of an outside audience.
- Parents and students reported that the school invites parents to Student Led Conferences (SLCs), in lieu of parent-teacher conferences, where the student presents his or her scholarship report, samples of student work from different classes, and honestly reflects on what they must improve in order to succeed to a panel consisting of the advisor, parents and invited guests. Students respond to questions from their advisor, any outside visitors, and their parents and the panel rates them using a SLC rubric. Students take SLCs very seriously and the school leader stated that asking students to take ownership of their own learning and inviting parents to take part, communicates high expectations for all school constituents.
- The school communicates the expectation that all students will attend college and provides students with opportunities to attend college trips. Students reported that they had the opportunity to go to St. Lawrence University for an overnight trip and sit in on college classes, shadow a college student, and do coursework with college professors, making the connection that their PBATs are preparing them for college.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

While instructional practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect the school's beliefs about how students learn best, strategic entry points and high quality supports vary across grades and subject areas.

Impact

While across classrooms, teachers use scaffolds to support student engagement in rigorous tasks, they do not always strategically plan opportunities to enable all learners to access the challenging tasks to promote further critical thinking skills and ownership of learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers have been building coherent practices across content areas that address the needs of all learners. The English as a second language (ESL) teacher reminded English language learners (ELLs) to use the strategy of annotation as they read *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*. The teacher modeled the reading of a portion of the text and reviewed vocabulary words in context with the ELL students. The teacher provided the students with guiding questions and they worked in pairs while the teacher circulated and checked in with small groups of students.
- Teachers across content areas provided students with time to process reading turn and talk opportunities or small group conversations prior to a whole class discussion. Students in a grade 11 chemistry class used accountable talk strategies that encouraged class discussions and ensured that all voices were heard, providing students with scaffolds to understand complex texts. Students used guiding questions, working in small groups to discuss possible sources of error in their original experimental designs, how they could avoid those sources of error and propose relevant questions for future research. Each group had the opportunity to share their group's thinking with the class.
- Instructional practices, informed by the project based assessment task and rubric, create learning experiences that engage students in authentic tasks, critical thinking, discussions, problem solving and presentation. Teachers reported that they provide students with opportunities to meet during advisory to discuss student's work for teacher and peer feedback and/or self-assessment, in addition to multiple drafts that they submit before a final product is due. Students also prepare for presentations of learning in advisory that include grade 9 "Roundtables", grade 10 "Passages", a process through which students defend their readiness to move to the upper class using student work as evidence to support a cover letter presented to a panel, grade 11 PBAT panels, and grade 12 "Senior Expeditions" showcase.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The school aligns curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards and content standards to provide rigorous academic tasks that strategically integrate the instructional shifts across all grades and subjects to support all students for college and career readiness.

Impact

Common Core aligned curricula provide coherence across grades and rigorous tasks provide a range of learning experiences that challenge and foster higher order thinking skills that require all students, including students with disabilities and ELLs to demonstrate their thinking, thereby promoting college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers design curricula using Understanding by Design principles, and Expeditionary Learning mapping tools that begin with assessment design. As part of the consortium, teachers design assessments that align to the consortium rubrics for their discipline and create a developmental sequence of skills by department that align with both the consortium and Common Core Learning Standards. All consortium school leaders and faculties meet in August to refine and/or revise curricula and provide peer feedback focused on the quality of curricula and assessment plans. The school leader reported that all teachers are committed to ensuring that the curricula and their craft align to the Common Core Learning Standards, instructional shifts and the PBATs. Teachers reported that they meet during school, sit in their colleagues' classes to observe a best practice, discuss plans and get feedback on ideas and strategies that will help them to improve student outcomes.
- Teachers submit drafts of their curriculum to the school leader and the instructional coach for feedback. Department meetings throughout the year continue the work to vertically align curricula, plan portfolios and look at student work to refine the plan and establish hierarchy of mastery. Teachers reported that they meet in grade teams during professional learning opportunities to review tasks across the grade. They then meet in department teams to refine and align tasks to the consortium rubrics and the Common Core with a focus on preparing for end of year presentations of learning. Teachers provide each other with feedback to ensure the vertical alignment of departments and the scaffolding of learning experiences for students in anticipation of graduation level PBATs.
- Teachers use Expeditionary Learning core practices to plan units of study that include a kick-off, the building of background knowledge, and project based learning. During Explore Week intensives, students have the opportunity to take an intensive course, rich with fieldwork and hands-on learning that enables them to explore a topic or issue in depth. The social studies curriculum is enhanced with high interest topics such as "Apartheid - The Promise of Freedom", where students study and compare youth in South Africa to youth in Brooklyn.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across the school, teachers use common performance-based assessments, rubrics, and ongoing checks for understanding that align with the school's curricula and provide actionable feedback to accelerate learning and student achievement.

Impact

The consistent monitoring of student progress provides actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement that enables effective adjustments to curricula and instruction so that all students are making progress toward their goals.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers incorporate ongoing checks for understanding using formative assessments in class, including exit tickets, class discussions, and short writing pieces that build to summative writing assessments and other whole class checks for understanding. In a grade 9 algebra class, students engaged in "mad minutes", where the students asked questions to prompt other students' thinking. One student asked a question and called on another and that student asked another question. Questions and directives included "What is the question asking for?", "Label everything you know", "Set up the equation", and "What does that mean?"
- Teachers meet in teams to look at progress report data and discuss ways to support students across the grades by designing cohesive practices to support assessment tasks that include accountable talk, annotation, and structures for providing students with ongoing feedback. Teachers use data to inform instructional practices, curriculum planning and assessment design and revisions. The principal provided data that compared the fall 2013 and fall 2014 student credit accumulation data that indicated an overall 9% increase from 67.9% to 77% and a 10% increase in the school's Comprehensive Education Plan targeted grade 10, from 65.8% to 76.3%.
- Students engage in a bi-annual process of self-assessment in preparation for and during the SLCs. A grade 11 student stated that these experiences have helped her to "become a more independent and mature student".

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

Across the school, teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured teacher teams to analyze classroom practice, data and students artifacts. Additionally, the principal has fostered leadership structures to enable teachers to have an integral role in key decisions that promote and improve student learning.

Impact

Professional collaboration and shared leadership opportunities promote school wide coherence, increase instructional capacity and result in increased student achievement for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers participate in several teacher teams including grade teams, department teams, advisory teams, the instructional leadership team, and interdisciplinary teams to analyze student data. This work informs instructional practices and drives the revision and refinement of school curricula.
- Teachers work in collaborative teams to discuss individual and class data analysis and use the data to inform instructional practices, plan curriculum and design assessments. While the principal provides the resources, teachers focus on those elements of the inquiry cycle that they determine to provide the greatest leverage. Examples include, framing questions, reading literature, tuning teacher practice, planning implementation, and examining data and student work. Department team leaders were trained in leadership development, initiated vertical portfolio planning and continue to align curricula vertically to the demands of the Common Core and the consortium rubrics. The model teachers, along with a group of interested colleagues, have developed an inter-visitation team with a school-wide focus on writing. To support this work, the school partners with New York City Outward Bound to provide the inter-visitation team teachers with training in low inference observations and protocols that support meaningful conversations about teacher practice.
- The school leader selects teachers to present best practices at team professional learning opportunities. The social studies teacher, whose students presented their Global History 1 projects during roundtables, presented his structure for ongoing assessment using student portfolios, which included revision practices, peer feedback and self-assessment leading to the roundtable presentation. Department teams subsequently met to begin designing vertical portfolios for students, and the math team began keeping student portfolios as the result of this professional development opportunity.
- During teacher meetings, teachers and the school leader look at class and individual student work on PBATs and discuss the students' progress towards meeting their goals. Teachers focus their conversations about practice and student work on student achievement and look closely at student achievement data to assess the impact of their work to inform instructional practices. Teams have been looking at "high leverage" students who were on track to earn between 4 and 5 credits in the first marking period this spring, to target those students who may be on the cusp of earning 5+ credits this term.