



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Victory Collegiate High School

High School K576

**6565 Flatlands Avenue
Brooklyn, New York 11236**

Principal: Marcel Deans

**Date of review: May 13, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Caron Martin**

The School Context

Victory Collegiate is a high school with 321 students from grade nine through grade twelve. The school population comprises 90% Black, 7% Hispanic, 1% White, 1% Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander/Asian and 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 20% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45% of students. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 88.0%.

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	Celebration	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	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	Additional Findings	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:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

All curricula are strategically aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. Through team discussions during horizontal and vertical planning, teachers utilize a variety of data streams to refine tasks in a coherent manner.

Impact

All students, including students with disabilities and English language learners, experience a meaningful curriculum that promotes college and career readiness for all students, with multiple opportunities for them to demonstrate their thinking. All students have access to academic tasks which emphasize rigorous habits across grades and subject areas.

Supporting Evidence

- Eight out of eight lesson plans reviewed illustrated alignment to Common Core Learning Standards and included learning objectives, essential questions, strategies for guided and independent practice, opportunities for students to peer review one another's work, and assessment strategies explicitly stated across content areas.
- For instruction across core content subjects, school staff engages in developing interdisciplinary units of study. All units reflect alignment to Common Core Standards and include topics for the unit of study, essential questions, essential understandings, and multi-level learning goals. In a "Power" Unit, students were not only required to explore the social construct of power to build essential understandings of how, where, why and what influences and impacts power, but were also asked to translate their learning into the physical manifestation of power, by exploring impact of Hurricane Sandy, the use of generators and other power restoration techniques that demonstrate the social construction of power impacting power.
- Through vertical planning, teachers are addressing the needs of all learners, including students with disabilities and English language learners, by identifying tiered skills (Basic, Intermediate and Advanced) that will be taught within a unit. For example in an algebra unit, grade 9 basic skills provided the foundation for students to learn about functions and distributive properties leading to application of systems of equations and building up to the grade 11 Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT), geometry and statistics targets. This required students to determine relationships at the basic level and expand on variations and distributions at the most advanced level, all supported by academic vocabulary instruction to increase language development across populations of students.
- Through the Intensive Unit Planning model that the school utilizes, teachers across grade levels come together at the close of each unit to reflect and review student work that will inform the planning of the next unit and day to day instruction. During this team review of student work and curriculum revision each teacher responds to the following prompts: What were you doing/teaching? What change did you make? Why did you think you should make a change? How did you know you should be doing something differently? Was there a question or student work artifact that led to the change? How did you know whether the change was successful / working?

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, pedagogy is aligned to curricula and demonstrates shared beliefs about how students learn best, informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and discussions at the team and school levels. While teaching practices reflect strategically provided multiple entry points, supports and extensions to curricula for all learners, the deepening of discussions to further elevate levels of student thinking and participation was not always evident.

Impact

The coherence of teacher beliefs supports all students to be engaged in cognitively challenging tasks across classrooms. However, teacher implementation of discussion strategies and protocols illustrated missed opportunities for even higher level reflective discourse amongst students.

Supporting Evidence

- Across all classrooms visited, students were either engaged in small group learning, one to one conferencing with the teacher who rotated from student to student, or working together in pairs to complete a task, respond to a discussion prompt or record notes prior to sharing with the whole class. In a grade 9 collaborative team teaching English class there were four groups of students who worked simultaneously on different tasks. One group engaged in peer review and a rewriting of their counter-claim statements. A second group engaged in annotating text in preparation for making their claims. The third group worked with one of the co-teachers on determining opinions versus claims, while the fourth group, also guided by a co-teacher, worked on developing their initial counter-claims, amidst the teacher's brief direct teaching on the mechanics of claim / counter-claim.
- Instructional coherence was demonstrated across classrooms visited, by way of visual supports and scaffolds for students to engage in discussions in a variety of ways: turn and talk, think-pair-share, interactive journaling and developing their own questions. However, in a Global Recovery class the teacher had to remind students to address their peers and not her directly, when responding to the prompt about whether or not some people deserve to be sick. Conversely, in a grade 10 collaborative team teaching Global class, students were engaged in a four corners debate around the causes of the Cold War. In this class students were speaking directly to one another, "No, I think the Russians are responsible... they used to be our friends then they started executing people," while the teacher quietly came through and reminded students to "cite specifics from the text."
- Across all eight classrooms visited, students were engaged with Common Core aligned content and required to demonstrate understanding of concepts and skills taught. In a grade 9 Global Studies class, students were required to compare and evaluate the achievements of various societies by examining secondary source documents and then use this information to respond to the essential question, "How are society's achievements judged?" In a grade 11 English class students first explored literary themes of Fairytales before drafting their own and compared their text to that of "Home" which they were studying. The teacher differentiated the content through the use of leveled graphic organizers and strategic student pairing during the editing process.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Across all classrooms, all teachers use a variety of formative and summative assessment practices to provide other staff and all students with meaningful actionable feedback. Through the development of common assessment practices, teachers are able to evaluate students' progress and implement instructional adjustments based on students' identified learning needs.

Impact

Assessment data allows all teachers to develop a clear picture of students' strengths and areas for growth and use this information to adjust curriculum and promote students' awareness of their next steps, contributing to improved student mastery of learning targets across all classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- Through the process of common planning and cross content curriculum development, teachers have created common rubrics to reinforce literacy targets and craft actionable, high level feedback that informs students of their strengths and next steps for improvement. In a writing assignment determining Mansa Musa's significance to the kingdom of Mali, a student received the following feedback, "4. Great job completing the task and using evidence from the document to support your responses. Next time I want to see you push your partners thinking in a way that may push your own by comparing your competing responses." For an Advanced Placement (AP) English assignment one student received the following, "Be mindful of your organization. Follow the format/template so that your wonderful points of evidence are not lost. You risk being repetitive without a firm structure."
- There is a school wide grading policy that is linked to classwork, common assessments of beginning of the year, middle of the year and end of the year Measures of Student Learning, Regents exams scores and student led conferences. The grading policy, along with rubrics, guide students in peer and self-assessment, contributing to students being able to articulate a deep understanding of their next steps towards mastery of learning goals for all grades and content areas.
- All teachers complete "Weekly Assessment Analysis" and "Instructional Plan" documents. Through an item analysis targeted at the lowest five versus proficient performing students, teachers identify where each student is struggling and determine a path of intervention as well as how they will assess the student following the intervention. In a grade 12 AP class, the teacher identified students who lacked understanding around identifying parallel structure, a writing shift, and to reinforce the concept the teacher planned to provide the student with an interactive lesson and quiz followed by a structure synthesis essay to be completed at home.
- Following a decline in Global Regents exam scores during the 2013-2014 school year, teachers reframed their Regents tutoring program to target specific students based on continuous item analysis of class work, performance tasks and mock exams. They address these students' individual needs in four different groups that meet on multiple Saturdays, prior to the administration of each Regents exam.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders, staff, parents and students all participate in fostering a school culture that consistently communicates and engenders high expectations for current and future achievement. All school staff sustains school wide expectations that inform instructional guidance and make students well prepared for the next level.

Impact

Effective communication of and support for high expectations result in students, their families, and all teachers having a deep personal investment in the success of every student, informed by systematic progress checks and clear paths that lead all students towards college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- In order to communicate and gain staff commitment to school wide expectations, the principal brings all staff together each summer for a Victory Collegiate Summer Intensive. During this week long staff development the school community revisits their guiding principles - Perspective, Understanding, Rigor, Problem solving, Open communication, Social conscience and Expectation (P.U.R.P.O.S.E) - and works in teams to frame learning expectations for the year, in alignment to the Danielson Framework for Teaching.
- The principal sends out a “Weekly Update from Victory Collegiate” to both staff and families, identifying learning targets for each week and informing parents of past, present and future classwork for all students. When asked what the school’s values are, parents overwhelmingly stated, “Victory values academia and parent involvement. We as parents are involved and are given opportunities to support all aspects of the school.” Parents also stated they were appreciative of the levels of communication which the school provides, via text messages, monthly newsletters, and emails as well as through social media outlets.
- The school offers students a weekly advisory program from grade 9 through grade 12, with the overarching goals of college navigation, career exploration, academic support, social and emotional guidance and advocacy. During the conversation with approximately 10 students, when asked about their academic tasks and progress many stated that they receive extensive guidance and feedback on their performance and know what they need to do to be ready for college and beyond. One said, “There is no way we can get by with not doing our work or missing school. Everyone is on top of us. They do a lot to help us become great leaders in the future. The curriculum we have influences us to want to get to a certain place in life.” All peers at the meeting voiced overwhelming agreement with these statements.

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

All teachers are engaged in collaborative inquiry based professional development team activities focused on improving levels of staff and student learning. Distributive leadership structures afford teacher teams opportunities to play an integral role in key decisions about teaching and learning.

Impact

Through extensive teamwork all teachers regularly participate in professional collaborations and contribute to school wide level decision making that results in improved teacher capacity and student outcomes across the school community.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams utilize looking at student work and action research protocols as a method of bringing shared accountability to the collaborative meetings. Typical tasks during these meetings include developing content specific strategies for students to improve their ability to read non-fiction texts, and analyzing mock Regents exam data to determine next steps. Teachers discuss ways to build skills specific to a Regents exam and/or review samples of student work and progress reports.
- The school utilizes a “Partner Guided Inquiry” model that pairs two different content area teachers to target a specific group of students and determine action plans for them through on-going intervention and assessment. Each pair creates a specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time bound goal (SMART). For example the goal for a pair of teachers (Global Studies and English) was, “Our students will be able to comprehend on-level reading texts by reading in class to effectively demonstrate understanding through writing that results in coherent incorporation of textual evidence by the end of the year.” On the day of this visit, these two teachers implemented this practice in a grade 11 English class, where the Global Studies teacher took notes on the English teacher’s moves and student engagement, to debrief with each other at a later date.
- At the beginning of the school year the school administers a learning styles inventory for each student and uses the information to determine interventions and strategies for students, through “kid talk” at team meetings. Student logs with their learning style and grade team teacher comments are maintained in Google Docs and updated during team meetings and as students’ progress or decline, so that information is shared in real time. One teacher stated, “These grade and content team meetings help guide our practice and allow us to improve by planning together around the needs of the same or similar students.” Another teacher noted, “This has helped me to view student progress over a number of weeks and then drill down so that while I’m looking at progression or the lack thereof, I can adjust my practice and approach, based on what I see working in other teachers’ classes.”
- School leadership is shared amongst staff so that all stakeholders have input in decisions. During both team meetings, teachers stated that everyone was involved in determining the need for school wide learning menus for teachers and students. Shared leadership is also demonstrated via the use of titles such as “Director of Culture, Director of Community Engagement”, and “Director of Student Support”, which confer responsibility for high level decision making by teacher leaders deemed “Directors” for their area of specialty area.