



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning**

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Cypress Hills Collegiate Preparatory School

High School K659

**999 Jamaica Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11208**

Principal: Amy Yager

**Date of review: April 21, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Cyndi Kerr**

The School Context

Cypress Hills Collegiate Preparatory School is a high school with 323 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 20% Black, 71% Hispanic, 4% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 22% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 78.0%.

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	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	Focus	Developing
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	Additional Findings	Proficient
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	Celebration	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Structured, consistent and ongoing professional collaborations focused on school goals combined with robust distributive leadership structures allow teams of teachers to share content knowledge and strategies.

Impact

Thus, the collaborative work of teams result in improved teacher practice and progress towards the achievement of school goals. Furthermore, robust distributive structures that are in place ensure that teachers' capacity is strengthened overtime and teachers are drivers of key instructional and curricular decisions that have impact on student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- The new, grade nine academy team meets with coaches from the Renewal Program to develop instructional strategies and curricula. This team uses the Writing is Thinking through Strategic Inquiry (WITsi) protocols to look at student work, identify gaps in learning and plan instruction to close those gaps. For example, during a grade 9 team meeting, teachers were observed using student work in which students in an exam responded to the stems "Black Death/because, Black Death/but, Black Death/so". The teachers were using a notice and wondering protocol to look for trends and discussed the student writing skills and whether the students were doing well with the shortened stems. They referred to a rubric for the student's work that had a scale of zero to three.
- The teachers compared and contrasted the student skills and discussed next steps in the next mini lesson. The teachers stated that using the writing strategies and student work inquiry cycles enable them to have a common frame of reference and be more focused on a cycle of re-teaching, modifying and focusing on key words when designing lessons. They established a Google.docs tool data tracker to upload their results and have evidence of improved student writing. One of the assistant principals is a member of this team and supports the cabinet in understanding next steps for teacher development in observations.
- The principal stated that, in addition to the grade team meetings twice per week, content team work on vertical alignment includes inter-visitations to align curriculum. A revised spring pacing calendar for English language arts (ELA) and Living Environment along with ELA content team minutes was reviewed and had the objective of teachers as: will learn how to evaluate and align written feedback to text-dependent questions by examining an *EngageNY* module.
- On-going professional development is being provided to develop teacher leaders. The Renewal coaches hold bi-monthly training sessions on how to use inquiry protocols and how to track progress using teacher and student work that includes time to share and reflect on their work.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Teaching practices across classrooms, although becoming increasingly aligned to curricula, inconsistently provide scaffolds and multiple entry points into curricula, tasks and text.

Impact

Student engagement and rigor of tasks are uneven across classrooms leading to inconsistent demonstration of higher order thinking skills and student participation in class discussion and student work.

Supporting Evidence

- Most teachers had strong routines, classroom management and pacing; however, multiple entry points were not visible and, as such, there was uneven student engagement. In one classroom, students used a text on the Janissaries and the teacher guided them in using because, but and so stems to read, annotate and to better understand the text. The teacher moved around the classroom to give targeted feedback asking questions like, “How do you know that from the text?” Students were working in pairs to annotate and find the answer. Students were observed chunking the text to complete the stems. However, in another classroom, a teacher was leading a discussion about chemistry that was teacher-student-teacher dominated. While the teacher planned for modeling, only a few students were engaged during the questioning.
- Most teachers utilize essential questions, a focusing question and writing strategies to increase engagement and accountability for learning. For example, in a math class, the focusing question was “What is the zero product property?” The student outcomes included that students would learn the Zero Product Property by solving increasingly complex one-variable equations noting that some might need algebraic manipulation, including factoring as a first step. The teacher spent time supporting students to understand the concepts by having students talk in pairs and answer the question, “What does it mean to be a true equation?” The teacher was talking to each student and was observed prompting the student to come up with their own definition, and used a sentence stem and appropriate wait time. The exit slip had a question asking students to write whether the problems one and two are similar and in what ways are they different.
- In an ELA Integrated-Co-Teaching class, students were asked to create an argumentative claim by taking a side on “Should students wear school uniforms?” While one teacher was using a clipboard to track student completion of work, the other teacher dominated the lesson without inviting student participation. The teacher repeatedly called upon the same five students without calling on non-volunteers to engage students in discussion.
- In a Global class students were looking at Renaissance art while the teacher elicited student discussion that was teacher-student, teacher- student. The line of questioning was teacher directed without opportunities for students to think more deeply through discussion and questioning each other.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Using student work and data, the school creates and refines curricula aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts, across all grades and content areas.

Impact

The school's commitment to continuously reviewing and adjusting curricula results in coherently sequenced Common Core aligned units of study with academic tasks designed to accelerate learning for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Engage NY is the State resource used to support English language arts (ELA) and math instruction (algebra, geometry courses) and create tasks that are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts as well as other relevant content standards. Instruction in science is grounded in Common Core and state standards, with teacher developed units for courses such as living environment, earth science, chemistry and marine science. The Global curriculum has been developed as a two-year sequence aligned to NY State and CCLS. Further curricula include units of study for six Advanced Placement (AP) courses and a pre-AP program. In addition, Achieve 3000 serves as an online resource for Common Core aligned articles and lessons using nonfiction texts that are integrated into unit and lesson plans to support differentiated instruction and intervention activities for students.
- Unit plans show tasks requiring students to engage in learning activities linked to the use of WITsi, a literacy-based strategy now being used across classrooms and content areas, elements of the Frayer Model, and outlines that allow for chunking of tasks via "Because, But, So" and "5Ws" sentence frames that help students to organize their ideas in responding to writing tasks across disciplines. Unit maps and lesson plans viewed also contain essential questions, focus questions, instructional focus, targeted skills, learning standards, rubrics, vocabulary, scaffolds, assessments and additional resources for the unit. Furthermore, unit and lesson plans offer evidence of teacher moves to integrate the instructional shifts. For example, units include a menu of tasks aligned to the Common Core standards and shifts to offer all students access to self-selected, inquiry-based activities, such as making inferences, annotating text, citing evidence to support arguments and explanations, and problem solving.
- Minutes and agendas of team meetings indicate that all teachers meet regularly and engage in analysis of data from assessments. Teachers stated that they use assessment data to modify curricula and tasks as well as group students for differentiated instruction. For example, in an ELA pacing calendar shared by the teachers, there was a column for Instructional Outcomes, Learning Task/Assessment. In the final column of next steps teachers noted when to support students with text-dependent questions. Also, the principal shared a planning document that was produced in February that illustrated by content area what specific instructional shifts were in each content area to inform curriculum planning. In addition, the principal also noted that as a result of a review of grade-level assessment data, the school has added a weekly math lab session and changed ninth grade math from a one year to a two year course, to afford students more time to acquire skills needed for success on Regents exams.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Assessment practices aligned to curricula across all grades and content areas inform students and teachers about students' strengths and learning needs, reflect consistent teacher use of ongoing checks for understanding and promote self-assessment by all students.

Impact

Actionable feedback by teachers helps students know and understand their next learning steps while teachers make effective adjustments to instruction to meet all students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers administer a range of assessments, including math, English language arts and mock Regents assessments, a baseline assessment for all students in January 2015, performance tasks involving open-ended responses linked to WITsi strategies, and formative assessments linked to skills trackers. In addition, ongoing checks for understanding occur regularly as teachers engage students in conferences before, during and after instruction. End-of-chapter and end-of-unit assessments linked to Engage NY curricula further contribute data about students' strengths and learning needs in specific content areas. Teachers use the data to implement instructional adjustments such as revised groupings, differentiated tasks, and learning stations designed to remediate areas of skills deficits, as per data about the diverse learning needs of student's across classrooms.
- Teachers use a school-wide grading policy and task-specific rubrics aligned to curricula to provide feedback on student performance in all disciplines. For example, task specific rubrics such as a "French Revolution Project Rubric" and a "Critical Lens Scoring Rubric" attached to samples of work for each student; provide feedback on work seen on classroom bulletin boards and in students' folders. Furthermore, across grades and subjects, a portfolio maintained by each student evidences teacher feedback and student self-assessment from one assessment to the next. Students interviewed stated that teachers use the school's grading policy to confer with them about whether they are "on track, approaching or not on track" in meeting criteria for the next level. Student folders show rubrics for assessment of the task, copies of assessments, and the student work with scores and teacher comments about strengths and next steps to improve on the work.
- During the student meeting, students stated that they are all well aware of expectations for mastery of skills for all content areas, as teachers regularly engage them in goal setting and reflections on their work. Some students noted that through grade book and portfolio checks they reflect on work in writing and get additional feedback about their performance as well as receive any help needed to pass their courses and improve credit accumulation. Some showed examples of self-assessment documents including a "Portfolio Piece Reflection", an "Essay Self-Evaluation" and a "Skills Mastery Self-Evaluation." They also displayed a "Portfolio Product Rubric" and explained that they use the rubrics and checklists to determine what they need to do to succeed in mastering course requirements.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Administrators convey high expectations about teaching and learning across the school and engage families in activities that empower them to help their children succeed in meeting the school's expectations.

Impact

The communication of and targeted supports for attainment of high expectations by staff and students promotes accountability for learning and result in collaborations among staff and families to understand student progress toward those expectations..

Supporting Evidence

- A staff handbook and weekly instructional memoranda explicitly state expectations linked to targeted components of the Danielson Framework, the instructional focus across the school, content specific instructional steps, and supports and materials to be used in all classrooms. In addition, tools such as a lesson plan template, data tracking sheets, and templates for analyzing student work are distributed to all staff, further specifying the school's high expectations for teaching and learning. For example, teachers are expected to model the use of WITsi strategies, incorporate scaffolds to promote students' access to Common Core aligned and cognitively engaging tasks, and assess student performance regularly to maximize student achievement. Administrators attend team meetings, provide teachers with verbal and email feedback from observations, review unit and lesson plans, and analyze student work regularly, promoting accountability for the school's expectations and engaging in ongoing assessment of levels of staff and student growth.
- Minutes of meetings and the school's professional development plan indicate that all teachers receive multiple forms of support to help them succeed in meeting the school's high expectations. Teachers at the meeting reported that they engage in ongoing training in planning and delivering rigorous instruction in alignment to elements of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Specifically, they spoke highly of training that they receive to implement WITsi, promote accountable talk, engage in effective questioning and assessment, elevate feedback practices and support a school-wide Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) that targets improved academic growth and college and career readiness for all students. Some spoke about administrative support for structured peer-to-peer inter-visitations and administrators visiting classrooms regularly to offer additional support and feedback to improve their pedagogy.
- During the parent meeting, parents praised the school for its high expectations and added that they are kept abreast of their children's progress toward those expectations, via an events calendar, phone calls, emails from teachers, progress reports and report cards, the school's website and Pupil Path, an online portal which families are able to view from home. They noted that the school offers weekly conferences for families and has hosted events such as "Family Night," "Freshman Orientation" and "Awards Nights," as well as workshops that help families to learn about goals for their children and how to help them achieve the goals. Meetings include mandatory parent meetings hosted by individual teachers and /or a guidance counselor, who communicate expectations for student progress towards requirements for the next grade and college and career readiness targets.