



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Sunset Park High School

High School K667

**153 35th Street
Brooklyn
NY 11232**

Principal: Victoria Antonini

**Date of review: March 24, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Steven Strull**

The School Context

Sunset Park High School is a high school with 1333 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 8% Black, 79% Hispanic, 7% White, and 6% Asian students. The student body includes 18% English language learners and 22% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 84.7%.

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	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	Focus	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
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations, including opportunities for ongoing professional development, coupled with consistent communication of high expectations to students from faculty and staff.

Impact

Consistent communication of high expectations to teachers, students, and families yields a positive school tone and climate and a college-going culture for every student. Teacher team empowerment and decision making promotes clear and focused feedback and shared leadership.

Supporting Evidence

- Grade level team teachers meet daily to discuss academic progress and attendance and data gathered is shared regularly with students and families. Student Learning Profiles are shared weekly and include learning needs, how needs are being met along with attendance and student work habits information.
- Each child is known well through an advisory structure where specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely (SMART) stretch goals are established for each child. There is an advisory point person per grade team who meets regularly with the school's community based partner, Center for Family Life, and a "Big Picture Learning" coach. These partners contribute to a culture of high expectations by connecting the academic focus and college preparatory expectation between student advisories and families. Teachers are increasingly able to have meaningful communications with families as a result of these partnerships.
- SPHS works with its community partner, Center for Family Life, to create a college-going culture for all families. It begins with the Road to College night which targets families of 9th and 10th Grade students, giving them an overview of the college application process and types of college options. For older students and their families, activities include helping families understand and complete the FAFSA form, universal SAT participation for all Juniors as well as SAT preparation courses.
- Teachers are empowered to develop their practice and are charged with sharing best practices such as the February Professional Development Day where teachers rotated facilitating and participating in instructionally focused experiences. Teacher teams meet regularly outside their prescribed meeting times, and by their own volition, to review daily student attendance and any other critical incidents that may have happened during the school day and that can be addressed the next day. In one instance, a teacher team was observed meeting "publicly" in the hallway as a way of communicating their shared expectations to the students they serve.
- Administrators routinely communicate their expectations to staff through a system of continual feedback. Examples of this include reviewing agendas for teacher team meetings including written feedback and targeted questions, an articulated set of beliefs that all professionals in the school make their thinking transparent, and a theory of action for communication including expanded bands of concentric circles and communication protocols leading to a "comprehensive and collective impact on student achievement."

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

School is beginning to use common assessments to determine student progress and across classrooms teachers regularly check for understanding.

Impact

Across classrooms teachers provide ongoing feedback to students resulting in students being able to articulate what they are working on, including students with disabilities and English language learners (ELLs), and what their next learning steps should be. The use of common assessments informs teacher teams on individual student progress across the curriculum.

Supporting Evidence

- In 9th grade algebra, teachers assign specific problems calibrated to individual student's skill needs including students with disabilities; progress on skills is transferred from teachers to students with daily feedback on student work.
- The math content team has begun the process of creating standardized unit assessments to ensure alignment of teaching practice to student work and understanding. This is especially important because of the smaller learning community structure of the school. As the school matures, they have realized the need to align assessments within content areas and not just within each Small Learning Community (SLC).
- In advisory, each child works with an advisor to develop stretch goals that are continually monitored and adjusted, leading to progress toward graduation. Students are able to articulate and reference their goals using their own work as examples including students with disabilities and ELLs. Each grade team selects an academic success coordinator who supports each grade team and tracks each student's progress, sharing student progress metrics with the student's advisor.
- In almost every classroom there was clear written feedback on student work, including narrative feedback in a math classroom. A more iterative process of this practice would allow students to comment and ask questions of their teacher's feedback giving each teacher additional information as to how the student's performance on the assessment aligns to the learning standards.
- Teachers are making effective adjustments to lesson plans in "real time" to meet the learning needs of students. As an example, a teacher adjusted the "do now" portion of his lesson that was assigned as students entered the room based on information gleaned from the previous class period. Additionally, students had the opportunity to revise their work based on teacher feedback ensuring a common experience of teachers checking that their students understood the work asked of them.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The school is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and consistently using rigorous, engaging, and coherent curricula in all subjects.

Impact

Teachers actively use the Common Core Learning Standards in their planning, leading to high levels of student engagement and increased rigor of student tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- The English content team has developed a “skill continuum” matrix using standards and skills from the Common Core with increasing levels of complexity as students age through the vertical grade structure for each class. As an example, 9th grade students in English are expected to make a claim and cite relevant evidence to support the claim; 10th graders are expected to deepen their analysis and infer meaning; 11th graders are expected to infer implicit meaning; and 12 graders are expected to infer meaning even when the text is ambiguous or unclear.
- The school has aligned core classes with supplemental offerings intended to promote skill development and content knowledge in the core subject class. Examples are a statistics class to support Algebra and an American Studies class to support US History.
- Grade level teacher teams explicitly plan for curricular modification and supports for students with disabilities and ELLs. Teacher teams co-plan and to co-teach, thus allowing for the curriculum modifications and support to receive proper attention in the classrooms. At times, it is hard to tell which teacher in the classroom is the general education teacher and which is the special education or English as a Second Language teacher providing support for each student as needed.
- An inquiry team structure is in place where teachers continuously look at student work toward planning and refining curricula and academic tasks. Teacher teams are in place which allow for on-going consultation and re-grouping of students daily, if needed, including students with disabilities and English language learners thus ensuring that academic tasks are cognitively engaging.
- Faculty routinely participate in New York University’s Facilitative Leadership Program with several presenting portfolios on an annual basis. This practice further ensures that teachers have the proper tools and experiences to make adjustments in their curricula based on actual student work products.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Teaching practices are aligned to curricula and reflect a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best. Student work products and discussion reflect high levels of student thinking.

Impact

Students are engaged in activities and assignments that promote student collaboration and discussion; teacher pedagogy is consistent across classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- Inquiry is a foundational component of the school and is evident in both lesson plans and instruction. Students are actively discussing their lessons in class with clear emphasis on “productive struggle” – the instructional focus of the school. Teachers continuously monitor and participate in small group, student-led discussions.
- Teacher teams regularly discuss what it means to have student productively struggle as they routinely look at student work to revise lessons, and there is a general sense that teachers believe in the capabilities of their students. Teachers believe that students should work at their “edge”, causing students to be interested in the work they are asked to complete and not become frustrated by it. Students articulate that their teachers push within a supportive environment.
- Students are engaged in real-world activities that tap both prior knowledge and their individual lived experiences. As an example, in statistics class, students were learning about exponential and linear graphs using a problem-posing technique of determining salary increases in varied intervals over time and which would yield the greatest increase in overall salary. The teacher monitored each group’s process and collected exit tickets from each student in order to help modify instruction for the following day.
- In one English class, the teacher provided the text in both English and Spanish to provide scaffolds for ELLs. In Earth Science students were assigned research based on their instructional reading level, allowing for all students to actively participate in the conversation.

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

All teachers are engaged in a robust series of overlapping professional collaborations consistently using an inquiry approach.

Impact

The teaming structure allows for teacher teams to feel empowered to make decisions and adjust plans based on the needs of their particular student groups and curricular areas.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers meet in various team configurations throughout each week. As an example, the Health SLC 10th grade team meets with their community partner, the Center for Family Life, on Mondays for advisory support, as a grade inquiry team reviewing and discussing student work on Tuesdays, engage in parent outreach as a team on Wednesdays, work as a “kid-talk” team including the guidance counselor and social worker on Thursdays, and as a SLC community around inquiry on Fridays. Teachers are responsible for leading these efforts, contributing to an academic environment that affects and supports each student.
- As an empowered grade team and an example of distributed leadership, the 10th grade team has chosen to meet daily after school to review any attendance or cutting issues from the day. They meet publicly in their community’s central hallway as a way to hold their student body accountable for class attendance. Different teachers on the team facilitate the daily meetings. This practice leads to teachers being not only responsible, but also accountable for this particular student behavior and leads to increases in daily student attendance and decreases in class cutting.
- Teacher instructional capacity is promoted by a scholarly inquiry approach. As an example, teachers on a team take turns bringing in a text on a specific instructional practice. The group reads the article using a text-based protocol, reviews their lesson plans based on the pedagogical or curricular innovation, refine their plans using a modified tuning protocol, teach the lesson with the modification, and bring examples of student work to a subsequent meeting to determine the efficacy of the innovation. An example of this is the use of an *Educational Leadership* article called “Strengthening Student Engagement: What do Students Want” that was used by a team to refine a lesson plan, teach the lesson, and bring student work from that lesson to a subsequent meeting using the Tuning Protocol to see if their goals around student engagement were met.