



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

**High School for Law, Advocacy & Community
Justice**

03M492

**122 Amsterdam Avenue
New York, NY 10023**

Principal: Doreen Conwell

**Date of review: January 13, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Tammy Pate**

The School Context

High School for Law, Advocacy & Community Justice is a high school with 514 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 42% Black, 52% Hispanic, 2% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 8% special education students. Boys account for 45% of the students enrolled and girls account for 55%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 82.9%.

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 | Focus | 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 | Celebration | 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 | 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 | Additional Findings | Well Developed |

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best and student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking, participation, and ownership.

Impact

Teachers use the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts to self-assess and peer assess instructional practices both across grades and content areas resulting in student led classroom discussions supported by rigorous questioning and superior levels of student engagement.

Supporting Evidence

- Classroom visits highlighted the schools' focus on student-led classroom discussions and embedded instructional shifts. During a classroom visit to an 11/12 bridged History class, students were witnessed leading their peers through the lesson by posing thoughtful questions that required answers supported by nonfiction texts and documents read over the course of the school year. For example, while discussing World War I, students referenced multiple incentives for US involvement in the war. They justified a financial incentive by discussing J.P. Morgan's involvement. They included a patriot element by discussing President Wilson's response to public opinion.
- Teachers used multiple questioning systems and text tasks that required students to use evidence to support short and long responses. It was clear from watching entry and exit practices, students understood the purpose of these activities and used them to inform their writing. The teacher never instructed students to select question prompts kept in a central location in the room. Rather students quietly got out of their seats, walked over to the question bins, selected a level (high, medium, low), returned to their seats and continued working. They repeated this process when engaged in a peer activity as well.
- Class visits revealed a school-wide focus on student discussion and high thinking demand. During a visit to an AP English class students engaged in a close read of three chapters from the text, *There Eyes Were Watching God*. Students then transitioned into a Socratic Seminar based on the following prompt: Janie's name is derived from Janus, a two-faced Roman God who represented a gate, as well as beginnings and endings. Reread the last four sentences of chapter 8 and discuss how and why Janus is symbolic of Janie. In the class was posted Expectations for Socratic Seminars and Socratic Seminar Discussion Stems that provided guidance for questioning across the four levels of Webb's Depth of Knowledge. The teacher did not participate in the seminar accept to encourage students to deepen their question.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills and are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

Common Core aligned curricula which integrates the instructional shifts are in place to support the learning needs of all students. A diversity of learners, including ELLs and SWDs, has access to the curricula and tasks and are cognitively engaging.

Supporting Evidence

- The school conducts 10 day cycles of inquiry which allows teacher teams to deeply study the taught curriculum. By examining student work products connected to the curriculum teams identify areas of the curriculum that need revision.
- Teacher teams and administration engage in curriculum rounds that allow them to assure alignment with Common Core Learning Standards. An example of these rounds was noticed while reviewing the school's English Language Arts curriculum. Following a team round, recommendations were made and the school revised the curriculum to include an integration of selected non-fiction texts across content areas for grades 9-12, the inclusion of vocabulary targets, and they adjusted the passing of every unit in order to allow for students to use discussion as a vehicle for cross-content connections and inquiry.
- The school has worked with their network to revise their curriculum that has resulted in all students sitting for Regents' exams. They included cloze reading, building coherence activities that assure content areas support student deep comprehension (History and Literacy share non-fiction and fiction texts), and constructed response assessments. Unit plans include differentiated tasks, tiered rubrics, and questioning at levels 3 and 4 of Webb's Depth of Knowledge. Lesson plans include multiple checks to understanding, the use of technology for students and teachers, modifications for English Language Learners and students with disabilities.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Common rubrics and assessments that set standards and show a clear picture of for student achievement are used.

Impact

Students have clear expectations of what is expected of them, and understand the areas that they need to continue to work to master, helping to improve student achievement throughout the school year. The use of common assessments also enables teacher teams to have deeper conversations about student achievement and student work products as well as track student progress, which allows teacher inquiry work to lead to effective adjustments to pedagogy.

Supporting Evidence

- All common, course-level assessments use Data Driven Classroom (DDC) to align standards to questions on the exam and to track mastery and trends of student achievement in each teacher's classroom, and when students get back their exams, they track their own mastery of each standard. For example, the math department shared a copy of the Student Tracking Sheet. This is available to both teachers and students and outlines students' progress toward meeting each standard taught. Students can see at what level they performed (knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, or evaluation) for every standard covered. They also receive suggestions and access to online support to improve their progress toward meeting standards.
- In a 9th grade ICT Algebra class, students were given a quiz at the start of class which they graded on a question specific rubric to self-assess which task they needed to complete during that class period, based on which standards they mastered on the quiz
- In a meeting with students, every student who spoke expressed that teachers in their classes knew when students did not understand a concept, and that "the teachers make sure not to move onto new concepts without seeing mastery from students." Evidence of this practice was seen on the schools' online assessment tracker. Each teacher is responsible for entering the standards to be covered during the semester, the unit assessments that will be given, and student assessment data. The system calculates student results and creates a focus list of students' not yet meeting standards. The school uses this data to form student and teacher-led afterschool study groups. Teachers then complete individual Student Feedback Sheets.
- In a 9th grade ELA class, there was clear evidence that the teacher provided specific feedback using post-it note arrows, and clear, student-friendly rubrics for student essays. During the lesson, the teacher did a quick walk around the room and realized that five students received similar post-it feedback. She quickly pulled those students into a conference. During the conference, the teacher could be heard encouraging students to discuss their feedback, which they did. Based on this sharing, the students discovered that they all needed help understanding the historical context of *Of Mice and Men* so that they could analyze the actions of the migrant workers in the text.

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|---------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: | Proficient |
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Findings

School leaders and teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning and consistently communicate high expectations that are connected to a path to college and career readiness for all students.

Impact

Systems are in place that offers ongoing feedback and guidance/advisement supports that prepare students for the next level to help families understand student progress toward expectations and offer ongoing and detailed support to special populations.

Supporting Evidence

- Beginning in the 9th and 10th grade students meet with school counselors to go over transcripts and create a plan to meet all graduation requirements. Once students enter the 11th grade more structured group and individualized counseling sessions are held during lunch and study hall periods to discuss credit accumulation and college choice.
- The school offers numerous opportunities for families to be informed and to participate in academic process supports and college awareness including two early awareness evening workshops for 9th and 10th grade families, three college awareness evening workshops for 11th grade families and three college application evening workshops for 12th grade families.
- The school maintains a strong relationship with Columbia University. Over the past three years, admissions representatives have provided information sessions, and run financial aid workshops for students and families. Students attend college fairs, visit local colleges and universities and each student receives a Naviance account in order to research career interests, majors, scholarships and how to create a resume. These efforts are beginning to show an impact in the school's overall graduation rate
- School administrators shared that prior to taking the PSAT 10th and 11th grade students attend an assembly where preparation materials are distributed and an overview of the test structure is discussed, why it is relevant in the college process (National Merit, etc.) and how to use the results and resources on the College Board website to prepare for the SAT. School administrators are working to better support students with disabilities and English Language Learners to perform at higher levels on these assessments. Afterschool and school day tutoring is being used to support the learning needs of all special populations.

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

Findings

Structures are in place so that teacher teams are able to analyze assessment data on a consistent basis, and teacher leaders are formally and informally cultivated and looked to in the building to shape instruction.

Impact

Teacher team work has resulted in highly-effective school wide practices that improved overall teacher rating and student performance and teachers utilize leadership roles in order to engage in peer-to-peer collaboration to improve pedagogy and student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams use a protocol called, “The Five Questions That Address Strategic Planning for Student Progress” to guide their inquiry process over ten day cycles. This cycle was observed during the teacher Q & A. Teachers shared assessment data for a 9th grade student. All team members reviewed two assessments (including constructed responses) for this student. After discussing their noticings they decided that two of the team members would provide the student with graphic organizers to help him organize his ideas and another team member planned to review strategies for understanding and answering constructed responses.
- In a Social Studies meeting, teachers looked at student work from a Global History document-based questions (DBQ), and then teachers identified a specific gap in student understanding. Students were attempting to answer questions without incorporating historical context. They were also not using any recognizable writing genre. One teacher asked, “How can we take this essay to the next level?” The team read from the current rubric and decided, in order to better prepare students to sit for the Global History Regent, they needed to incorporate language from that rubric into their current rubric. The team agreed to add historical details and style to the rubric.
- Teacher team meetings are fully teacher led, teachers volunteered that when they need help in a certain pedagogical area they go and observe other teachers that they know do that specific skill well. For example, teachers shared during a team meeting how they use observation feedback and the online assessment tracker to identify trends for groups of her students. She noticed several of her students with disabilities had higher performance in English than in Math. Through inter-visitation, she learned that the English teacher grouped student heterogeneously so that each group contained students at all performance levels. The group discussions allowed students to challenge and support each other. The special education teacher took this practice back to the math classroom and immediately noticed students were more engaged.