



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Edward A. Reynolds West Side High School

High School M505

**140 West 102 Street
Manhattan
NY 10025**

Principal: Jean McTavish

**Date of review: February 6, 2015
Lead Reviewer: LaShawn Robinson**

The School Context

Edward A. Reynolds West Side High School is a transfer high school with 478 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 25% Black, 72% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 61.5%.

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	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	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	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

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

The school leaders have developed opportunities for the vast majority of teachers to be engaged in professional collaboration. Teacher teams are systematically engaged in structured, inquiry based collaborations to analyze student work products and teacher practice.

Impact

The work of teacher teams provides the opportunity for collaboration around curriculum and instructional task development, which has resulted in school wide coherence. Teacher teams analyze student work assessment data, and share best practices, thus improving academic progress towards mastery of goals for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders have allocated time for teacher teams to meet four days a week. Every teacher is a member of at least one teacher team. Teachers meet by department and in interdisciplinary teams. In addition, there are neighborhood teams, which are teacher teams that discuss the emotional well-being and support services needed for students. Teachers use their meeting time to develop instructional protocols that support student learning. For example, they have worked to develop annotation protocols to help students with summarizing and comprehension. Additionally, teachers work on developing collaborative units, develop assessments, and conduct modified lesson studies. Teachers shared that the work of the teacher teams is allowing them to share best practices across the school and helping to improved teacher practice.
- The work of the teacher teams aligns to the school's focus of "Making Thinking Visible and Audible," which correlates with 3B, 3C, and 3D of the Danielson Framework. For instance, the English department is working collaboratively to develop common instructional units based on the Common Core Standards through analyzing assessments and developing strategies accordingly to help make students' thinking 'visible' across the discipline. In math, teachers are working on infusing writing by helping students understand and use mathematical language, as well as helping student to develop fluency. In addition, the math team is working to design units that have tightly aligned objectives, activities, and assessments.
- Teachers described that there are multiple opportunities for them to develop their capacity and to lead activities in the school. The school leader shared that there are two teacher leaders that help with supporting and implementing the instructional vision of the school. In addition, teacher teams are co-facilitated by an administrator and a teacher. During the teacher team meeting observed, teachers began with a share out of 'highs' and 'lows', and continued the meeting by discussing their "take aways" from a summary protocol that is currently being implemented across the departments.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices reflect the school's curricula and the set of beliefs articulated through the instructional goals of improving comprehension through annotation, student discussion and summarizing.

Impact

Across classrooms, students engage in challenging instructional tasks that promote discussion and provide opportunities to engage students in higher order thinking skills and visualize their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms visited, students engaged in annotation and in summarizing key ideas. Additionally, teachers conducted ongoing checks for understanding. For example, in one of the social studies courses, students read the article entitled, *"New Revelations Show Just How Much Privacy Has Eroded Since 9/11."* Students were provided with a literacy summary annotation protocol, which required them to underline key terms, make connections to prior knowledge, identify the central idea, and to write a short summary of the essay. Similarly, in the Living Environment class, students engaged with the annotation protocol to discuss and review an article on biodiversity.
- Students understand that the school is working with them on annotation and summarizing, and described how teachers use the first draft of their written assignments to provide feedback and to help them improve their work. Students stated, "They give you a lot of responsibility. In English, you are given the task for completing an essay. The teachers give you a rubric, but you have to get the information and set it up on your own." As a result of implementing the coherent practice around annotation and summarizing, students are making improvements with comprehension, particularly on benchmark assessments and developing skills to ensure academic success.
- The activities observed in classes were scaffolded and provided multiple entry points. For example, during the math lesson observed, students had various mathematical equations with varying degree of difficulty, which allowed all students to engage at their level. Additionally, students received graphic organizers across classrooms and were encouraged to participate in class discussion. Teachers embedded reading strategies such as annotation and summarizing to help students with gaining access to difficult text. These supports ensure that all learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities are engaged in the lesson and can demonstrate their thinking in discussion and work products.
- Teachers utilized Socratic circles and posed open-ended questions throughout their lessons which are scaffolded using Universal Design for Learning. The school community is working diligently to ensure coherence in student discussion as a way to make student thinking audible, particularly during Socratic seminars, which were observed in four out seven classrooms visited.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teachers work collaboratively to refine curriculum maps and lessons that are aligned to Common Core Learning Standard. Curricula and academic task are refined in order to provide multiple entry points and to allow for student thinking to become visible.

Impact

The curriculum development work conducted in the school is helping to strengthen vertical and horizontal curriculum alignment, increase rigor of instructional tasks, and elevate postsecondary readiness for all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders articulated that they have worked with teachers over the past years to understand the instructional expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards. In order to achieve the expectations, the school participated in the Common Core Lab during the 2011-12 school year. Additionally, the school has participated in the Transfer School Common Core Institute since 2013. Curricular maps reviewed reflect an alignment between standards, instructional tasks and assessments. The thoughtfully planned curricula promote higher order thinking skills and college and career readiness. In addition, activities planned provided multiple entry points and learning extensions. For example, through unit plans collected, it is evident that the school is working on infusing student-to- student discussion through the use of Socratic seminars, and teachers are embedding literacy strategies across all content. As a result of focused work around curriculum development, all students, are encouraged to demonstrate their thinking and are improving their literacy skills. This is evident by the increased scores on the English Regents exam, where the pass rate has increased by 16% over the last two years.
- The principal described that the teacher team, Common Core working group, is focused on making sure that instruction is aligned with Common Core expectations and instructional shifts. This group has been exploring ways to make students' reading comprehension visible (through annotation and summarizing) and participates in the Transfer School Common Core Institute. In addition, the Universal Design Working Group develops strategies to ensure that all students have access to rigorous curriculum.
- During the teacher team meeting, teachers described that they use assessment data such as Regents outcomes to refine the curriculum and teacher practice. The teachers' results are analyzed and used to determine areas of focus. In addition, teachers described that they use universal learning design and technology to provide multiple entry points for students.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teachers analyze student work, use baseline and Regents assessment data to identify learning gaps, revise curriculum and implement instructional strategies to support learners.

Impact

The work of the teacher team, along with school leaders tracking and monitoring student outcomes, is facilitating student progress towards mastery of learning targets and student achievement of learning outcomes.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has effective practices for collecting and analyzing student assessment data to understand the strengths and areas of improvement for the different groups of students. Teachers track student progress and use their inquiry team meetings to align data outcomes to curriculum adjustments. The principal described that all departments are required to administer NYC performance tasks, even if not for the measure of teacher practice scores. The school used the results of assessment data to identify their instructional focus of reading comprehension.
- Departments create common assessments and analyze data generated from these assessments to adjust curricula and instruction. For example, a reading assessment was administered to all students to determine their reading level and provide appropriate supports. Teachers shared that this was helpful in terms of determining student skills and deficits so that lessons are developed with appropriate scaffolds. The school leader shared that the consistent analysis and assessment of data trends is helping to improve teacher practice and student outcomes. As a result of targeted instructional support and increases in Regents pass rates, the school graduation rate increased by 10% from 2011-2012 to 2012-2013, and the dropout rate decreased by 5%.
- During class visits, teachers were observed checking for understanding by asking questions, canvassing the classroom, and conferencing with students such as in the Supreme Court class, where the teacher spent time working with a student that appeared to be struggling with identifying the central idea of the text. Similarly, during one of the literacy classes, the teacher circulated around the room tracking student responses, while students engaged in a Socratic circle. However, during class visits, there were limited opportunities for students to reflect on their learning and complete self-assessments of their progress. Students shared that they receive rubrics with their major assignments, but stated that they typically self-assess after receiving feedback from their teachers after submitting their first draft.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school leaders consistently foster a culture of collaboration and mutual accountability by constantly communicating high expectations for teaching and learning. The culture of learning is connected to a path of college and career readiness, and providing students with the supports to succeed.

Impact

As a result of this culture of collaboration, the school maintains a highly supportive learning environment that systematically conveys high expectations to students that were previously disengaged and advances student performance.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leader communicates her expectations to students and families from the moment students are enrolled, which is to develop students that will leave ready to attend college- even if that is not currently their plan. In addition, the student orientation process allows school leaders the opportunity to interact with students and to help them acclimatize to the school's culture and expectations. During orientation, students participate in orientation circles where they learn about the community values. Parents also participate in orientation. The school leader shared that the goal of the school is to develop young adults that are not only academically prepared, but that are responsible, self-confident, and have high self-esteem. Families receive feedback around student progress from the family groups. The family teacher monitors academic advisement and goal setting for each of their students.
- The school offers a robust nutrition and health program for students, and last year was one of six schools in the country that received the Alliance for a Healthier Generation National Healthy Schools Gold Award from former President Bill Clinton. Further, as a result of the school being nationally recognized for their work in the areas of health and wellness, they were selected by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to host an event where First Lady Michele Obama was the keynote speaker.
- In order to better prepare students for college and career, the school has engaged in implementing literacy practices such as annotation, note taking, and summarizing. The school leaders believe that these tools will help students to become more confident as they engage in reading and writing at the college level. Additionally, students in the Advancement Via Individual Determination program (AVID) attend tutorials with college students from Hunter College who support them in developing their own study groups with their peers. This practice will help the students to be more successful in college, whether they have to work independently or collaborate with their classmates. In addition, two-thirds of the teaching staff has attended the AVID institute to embed AVID's college and career readiness strategies across the school community.
- The school has a partnership with the College of Technology for their College Now program, and is working to implement a dual credit program accredited by Syracuse University in forensic science. These partnerships allow students the opportunity to be more successful in college by introducing them to college courses in a supportive environment. As a result of the school's unified set of high expectations, students and parents are motivated about school and believe that students are now on the right trajectory.