



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Waterside School for Leadership

Middle School Q318

**190 Beach 110 Street
Rockaway Park
NY 11694**

Principal: Linda T. Munro

**Date of review: May 15, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Rajeev Bector**

The School Context

Waterside School for Leadership is a middle school with 193 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 57% Black, 32% Hispanic, 9% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 29% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 91.4%.

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	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	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 hold high expectations of the entire staff, effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness to families, and establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations for all students.

Impact

By effectively communicating elevated expectations to the entire school community, the school creates a high degree of accountability and successfully partners with families to foster a college and career mindset.

Supporting Evidence

- After analyzing data, school leaders realized that the school was not making adequate progress in meeting the needs of students with disabilities. Consequently, school leadership, with the support of coaches and network specialists, started providing monthly professional development to Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) Teams to improve ICT classroom practice. In addition, school leaders developed professional development plans by incorporating staff input through surveys, and provided staff with a choice of topics to build ownership and community.
- School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff via the use of a newsletter, *The Waterside Weekly*. The newsletter communicates staff expectations, reminders, and professional development opportunities and responsibilities.
- Students at the school are addressed as scholars by all constituents and expected to perform at high levels. The school prides itself on communicating clear academic expectations to students via advisory, the student council, and assemblies. The school helps students understand their academic progress, and students are able to formulate their own goals every two weeks based on their progress reports.
- The school's family handbook includes the family compact and ways that families can assist the school. The school sends out monthly parent newsletters and hosts curriculum workshops based on parent feedback and interest. Parent newsletters outline the content focus for each class, and parent workshops familiarize families with academic expectations for high school, Common Core standards, curricula, and State assessments. The school sends honor roll and promotion-in-doubt notifications via mail and phone, and uses the EngradePro system to provide families access to student grades, assignments, and teacher feedback. Families indicate high levels of satisfaction with the school. One parent stated that she volunteers regularly at the school to support the school's afterschool program. Another indicated that teachers regularly and consistently share students' academic progress via email, and the school provides training to parents on the use of the IXL website so that parents can continue to further their children's education at home.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Pedagogy is aligned to the school's core beliefs about student learning and to the curricula, and is informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts. Teaching strategies provide multiple entry points into the curricula, and student work products reflect high levels of student thinking.

Impact

The alignment of pedagogy to curricula enables students to be engaged in appropriately challenging tasks. While teachers create the conditions for high levels of student thinking through scaffolds and supports, students do not always take ownership of their own learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classes, students participated in Socratic Seminars, read a balance of informational and literary texts, provided text-based answers, and used academic vocabulary. In a grade 7 English language arts (ELA) class students prepared for a fishbowl discussion by annotating the text. In a grade 8 ELA class students were provided informational text to supplement the anchor text in their discussions, and in a self-contained grade 7 math class students used a Smart-board to show their work, and reflected on the steps they used to solve math problems. Similarly, in a grade 6 math class, students were asked to explain their thinking and use academic vocabulary when agreeing or disagreeing with their peers on the best way to solve the problem.
- Students used technology, such as laptops and Smart-boards, to access content, and teachers used scaffolds, such as native language support and highlighted text, to build content knowledge and support struggling readers. In a grade 8 math class students were given a choice of academic tasks, at different levels of rigor, and in a grade 6 ELA class students were separated into different groups to provide targeted reading instruction.
- The school's instructional focus is to increase student-to-student discussion and conversation. Although students were encouraged to collaborate and use one another as instructional resources, student participation in small groups and student-to-student discussion in large group settings was limited. For instance, in a grade 8 science class, only 5 of 21 students participated during the whole class discussion, and in a grade 6 math class only 6 of 25 students participated. In both classes, students did not engage in discussion directly with one another.
- While student work products reflected high levels of student thinking, ample student-to-student dialogue was not consistently seen across classrooms. Moreover, teachers did not consistently ask high quality questions or encourage students to arrive at new understandings of complex material. And while students were on task and expended effort to meet academic expectations, they did not always have an opportunity to initiate topics or make unsolicited contributions. Across some classrooms, teacher-centered instruction hindered students from engaging in a genuine discussion with their peers, and from reflecting upon their learning and consolidating their understanding.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics and assessments aligned with the curricula. Teachers use the results of various assessments to adjust curricula and instruction, and their formative assessment practices reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding.

Impact

By monitoring student understanding and analyzing trends in student performance data, teachers are able to make instructional adjustments to meet students' learning needs, to determine student progress toward goals, and to provide actionable feedback to them regarding their achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- Curricula and instruction are adjusted based on the results of common assessments and different assessments that measure common skills. School leaders indicate that teachers use a mix of common and individual assessments to measure student progress toward goals. The school implements baseline assessments, mid-term assessments, Scantron, and Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) assessments to track student progress in reading and math. Teachers compare item analysis data from these assessments to the previous year's data to determine growth, and modify the curricula and academic tasks to support struggling learners.
- Across classrooms, teachers monitored and assessed student understanding by using iPads, checklists, agree vs. disagree questions, and by asking students to indicate via thumbs up and thumbs down their grasp of a concept. In a grade 6 math class students used peer-assessment sheets to evaluate one another's work, and in a grade 7 ELA class students used their peer assessment sheets to provide specific feedback to their pre-determined partner as s/he participated in a Socratic Seminar. However, in some classrooms, students did not monitor their own progress by checking their work against clear criteria.
- An examination of student work products across classes and on bulletin boards indicates that teachers consistently assess student strengths and areas of struggle and provide rubric-based actionable feedback to students, as well as clear next steps for continued growth. Rubrics and assessments are aligned with the school's curricula and teachers use Common Core-aligned questions from EngageNY and previous NYS assessments to build coherence.

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Curricula and academic tasks are aligned to the Common Core and content standards, strategically integrate the instructional shifts, emphasize rigorous habits, and are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

By aligning curricula to standards, refining curricula based on student outcomes, and ensuring that curricula emphasize higher-order skills, the school builds coherence across grades and subject areas and promotes college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Curricula make purposeful connections between the instructional shifts and the topics in each subject. For instance, the ELA Codex Unit Plan focuses on text-based answers, writing from sources, and provides a pacing calendar to support the shift of staircase of complexity. Planning documents and curricula embed higher-order tasks such as explaining the steps of a math problem in writing, using academic vocabulary appropriately, engaging in close reading activities, and using evidence in argument.
- Curricula and planning documents, across grades and subject areas, include essential questions, learning objectives and activities, enrichment activities for accelerated learners, and scaffolds and supports for English language learners and students with disabilities. For example, accelerated learners are provided extension questions and a choice of activities, while struggling learners are supported via the use of graphic organizers, highlighted and enlarged text with vocabulary and sentence starters, extended time, use of Google translate, question stems, and small group investigations.
- Teachers, across grades and subjects, use student work and data to plan and refine curricula and academic tasks to cognitively engage all students. Teachers meet weekly during team meetings to discuss changes to their curriculum and instructional practice. Every Monday teachers participate in a Professional Learning Community (PLC), and every Wednesday they are provided time to work on their professional responsibilities. During these times teachers refine tasks, share best practices, and revise curricula based on student performance data as well as qualitative observational data. Teachers provide access to the curricula and academic tasks and seek to cognitively engage students through leveled Do Now assignments and technology use, such as IXL.com to differentiate learning.

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

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations. Teachers systematically analyze classroom practice, assessment data, and student work, and play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Impact

The deliberate and structured work of teacher teams has resulted in school-wide instructional coherence and mastery of goals for groups of students. Distributed leadership structures enable teachers to positively impact student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers lead in various capacities: as Peer Instructional Coaches (PICs), team leaders, and subject-area liaisons that facilitate professional development sessions and inquiry rounds. Teacher leaders promote and facilitate teacher reflection across grades and content areas, challenge teachers to rethink their approach to planning, and encourage peer-to-peer collaboration to improve learning outcomes for students.
- Teacher teams create Beginning, Developing, Secure (BDS) charts based on student assessment data and students are placed into one of these three groups. Teachers create an action plan for each group and write a reflection on the assessment results and on the groupings. Teachers also conduct inter-visitations on a regular basis and provide their colleagues with warm and cool feedback. They use school templates such as classroom environment checklists and low inference sheets to conduct walkthroughs and inter-visitations. PICs and demonstration teachers take a leadership role in this initiative by facilitating inter-visitations and by opening their classrooms for inter-visitations. Every week teachers focus on a different instructional strategy, and its impact on student work, and debrief their findings during team meetings. This work has led to specific gains for students as evidenced by New York State assessment data. On the State ELA assessments, students scoring at levels 3 and 4 increased from 12% in 2013 to 16% in 2014.
- Teachers meet in grade level teams to collaborate, share instructional strategies, and to embed the Common Core standards and instructional shifts in curricula and academic tasks. Teacher teams examine the results of pre- and post-tests for each unit to assess which students have mastered the objective. This data is then used to differentiate activities and to inform student grouping. ELA and math also use interim assessments and practice tests, and every three months the ELA team assesses students using the online Scantron assessment. This assessment provides student reading scores and their reading level. Teacher teams then use this data to create goals for groups of students.