



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Cambria Heights Academy

High School Q326

**188-04 91st Avenue
Queens
NY 11423**

Principal: Melissa Menake

Date of review: December 15, 2015

Lead Reviewer: Donald Conyers

The School Context

Cambria Heights Academy is a high school with 376 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 79% Black, 9% Hispanic, 1% White, 1% Native Hawaiian, 2% American Indian, 6% Asian students and 2% other students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 3% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 88.4%.

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	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	Additional Findings	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 and teachers effectively support a school environment that drives ongoing advanced student learning, professionalism, ever-improving instruction and high expectations for all.

Impact

All staff takes consistent ownership of their professional growth and creates multiple opportunities for all students, including lowest and highest achievers, to reach high expectations while preparing for the next level on a path to college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal frequently communicates expectations to staff via weekly email messages that reinforce the instructional focus. Additionally, the principal and teacher leaders collaboratively communicate high expectations of lesson plans during one on one teacher support meetings.
- Guidance counselors and assistant principals organize and elevate college awareness by ensuring that college visits, advanced placement classes, and internships are available to the students. Students are provided full opportunities to attend Saturday classes for either academic support or earning needed credits.
- Teachers value student progress and improvement in their own professional learning. Accordingly, to ensure that the entire community benefits, teachers voted on a School Based Option (SBO) that allows for two 90-minute periods per week during the school day for whole faculty professional learning and three days of office hours for student social and academic support that takes place afterschool. During these support sessions with teachers, students learn to take risks that guide them in their next learning steps. Students reported that these sessions make them feel like they are within a safe environment.
- Without school leader's directive, teachers create pedagogical goals and share goal action plans and progress with their colleagues and the principal. Teachers visit their peers' classrooms to view the implementation of the goals and provide each other with feedback.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

School leaders and teachers ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Standards and instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks are consistently planned to emphasize higher-order skills.

Impact

Academic assignments and lessons grant all students, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, opportunities to engage in rigorous tasks and discussions; however, across grades and subjects, teachers planning lessons that allow all learners to demonstrate their thinking is not yet embedded school-wide. The school's curricular decisions promote college and career readiness; however, they do not yet strategically integrate the instructional shifts.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers plan units using the Understanding by Design method and uniformly express desired results, student understandings, essential questions, vocabulary, assessment evidence, and Common Core Standards as necessary planning components to promote college readiness. However, a review of unit plans revealed that the school is emerging into strategically integrating the instructional shifts.
- Teacher lesson plans reflect execution within the workshop model and follow a school-wide accepted format that require 5-10 higher order thinking questions and a literary connection. However, plans across all grades and subjects do not yet consistently provide for various ways for all students to demonstrate higher-level thinking.
- The instructional team created an acronym that helps students state the claim, cite evidence from the text, explain the evidence and state why the evidence proved the claim in their writing. For example, students in a grade 12 English class argued the unexamined life is not worth living. Using the books, *The Color Purple* and *The Road*, students wrote about and discussed their arguments. The instructional team is working to deepen learners' thinking in all tasks across subject areas.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to a coherent set of beliefs and the school's curricula. Lessons reflect the embedding of critical thinking and student discussion.

Impact

Common instructional approaches across content areas result in increased student progress and student work products that reflect high levels of student thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use the workshop model and intentionally set student groups to facilitate partnership work and student discussion. Across classroom visited, the workshop model was observed 4 out of 6 classes.
- In addition to a discussion rubric to promote student discussion and writing using textual evidence to support a claim, the school developed and uses a writing rubric across core content classrooms. For example, a grade 11 history class, students wrote and discussed the topic of why slavery was kept as an industry in the United States while claiming that this country is the land of the free?
- In a grade 9 science lab class, students investigated how the body systems help maintain homeostasis. Students wrote scientifically using data to present their claim, and used evidence and reasoning relative to explaining the relationship between the impact of maintaining homeostasis to the feedback system.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teachers in department teams collaboratively develop common assessments, use rubrics, and the school-wide grading policy that are aligned to the school's curricula and inform actionable feedback to students on their progress in learning.

Impact

The school's assessment practices are resulting in students being fully informed of their next learning steps and increased student progress.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers review assessment results to determine students' strengths and struggles and adjust forthcoming lessons based on their findings. For example, the grade 10 teacher team used this year's Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) results to plan lessons on improving students skills on reasoning and inferencing. Based on the teachers and school administration data analysis of the 2014 Global History Regent pass rate results, the school administration decided to loop the grade 9 Global teacher with the students to improve student results.
- All students use the school's grading policy that is a rubric based on a 1-5 scale. Students reported that they understand how to use the rubric and indicated that writing, presentation, discussion and homework rubrics provide them with useful information and the opportunities to improve their learning and grades.
- Teachers and students communicate with each other on academic progress and teachers give actionable feedback on student work products via Google docs. All freshmen are provided email accounts and training on how to write emails to teachers. Teachers correct assignments, provide written actionable feedback on assignments, assign and provide readings, and set up appointments during office hours for additional student support.
- The school administers three common assessments through the year. In the fall, the first assessments serve as the baseline in each of the four major subjects. In the winter, the midterm assessments take place, In the spring, the final examination period is the presentation of all Regents. During the year, teachers use performance tasks, exams, quizzes, projects, and presentations to assess students in between the common assessments.

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

All teachers engage in professional collaborations that promote the school goals. All teachers take on leadership roles and are consistently represented in school-wide key decisions.

Impact

As a result, teacher instructional capacity is strengthened and constantly examined. Teacher leadership structures result in teachers having input that affect academic progress for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- All grade-level and department teams use the same goal setting system to ensure that all aspects of student improvement are addressed. In teacher team meetings, teachers examine school-wide goals. Goals focus on looking at academics, technology supports for students, social-emotional development, and a data based target which is an outgrowth of lower achievement.
- Teacher teams follow a set of protocols that guide them through the inquiry process and procedures for looking at student work, developing performance tasks and unit plans, and conducting student interviews.
- Teachers stated that team meetings provide the needed time to ensure that they can achieve coherence in implementation of goals identified by the school. Teachers have a voice in instructional school-wide shifts. For example, teachers decided to create an acronym to support students with evidence-based writing. This acronym is used school-wide.
- The principal holds a monthly two-hour team leaders meeting where she listens to teacher recommendations and develops next steps that are based on fostering academic improvement. Next steps include teacher led professional development, intervisitations, and adjustments to the professional learning calendar. Teachers also took on an increased role in student advisory by creating school-wide lessons on bullying, race, tolerance and most recently the Ferguson Missouri incident.