



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

EPIC High School – North

High School Q334

**94-25 117th Street
Queens
NY 11419**

Principal: David Weinberg

**Date of review: May 6, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Musa Ali Shama**

The School Context

EPIC High School - North is a high school with 94 students in grade 9. The school population comprises 23% Black, 36% Hispanic, 5% White, and 17% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 0% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-14 is not available due to new school status.

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	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	Focus	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

High expectations that are connected to a path to college and career readiness are consistently communicated to staff, students, and families, and has developed a culture for learning that engages all students.

Impact

Systems of support and accountability have been developed to undergird the high expectations that help prepare students for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- An advisory program has been implemented that utilizes a curriculum developed by College Access: Research and Action. The curriculum is geared toward introducing students to careers and college access with a focus on developing social and emotional skills they will need as they prepare for post-secondary goals. Another practice in place to support social and emotional behaviors is Restorative Justice. Restorative circles are used for conflict resolution between community members and provide students with strategies on managing conflict and communicating with peers and adults in the school community.
- Faculty, with the support of the school leader, focus on developing and enhancing curricula to create a culture that promotes “students to think like college students and problem-solve like professionals in the workplace.” The instructional core is focused on competency-based achievement requiring students to master sixty-six “attainments” aligned to nineteen competencies that the school has identified through research to prepare students for college and careers. For example; Communicate and be creative, Connect to the Environment, Investigate Scientifically, to name a few. Students highlighted their weekly Journal Article Reviews that is preparing them to do college level work. Students also stated they had already gone on several college trips this school year.
- Teachers articulated that they meet weekly with the principal for one on one conference to discuss observations and understand next steps in their progress. A teacher shared their struggle to change his pedagogical practice to align to the school’s philosophy of project based learning and the instructional model. Through collaboration and support from his peers, feedback and professional development provided by the principal, the teacher stated “I have come a long way, and although I still have a lot of room to grow, I have become a better teacher for my kids.” Through daily teacher meetings, informal classroom inter-visitations, teachers have developed a culture of mutual accountability.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and the use of rubrics to provide feedback to students on their progress.

Impact

Teacher feedback to students and student self-assessment provide actionable next steps and student progress that leads to effective adjustments to meet all students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Students are graded on a Mastery based system that is tracked using an online grading system that tracks student attainment of skills and mastery of those skills. A uniform grading policy is in place that all teachers adhere to and students understand and are able to articulate how they are graded. Student led conferences are held four times a year so that students can discuss their progress toward goals with their teachers and parents, and identify areas that they need to improve on in order to achieve mastery.
- Teachers develop common assessments and rubrics and provide feedback to each other during the development of rubrics. Across classrooms, student work posted and in student folders contained rubrics. Student work clearly identified student next steps towards mastery.
- The use of Achieve3000, provide information regarding students' Lexile levels. Faculty uses this data to select articles and develop tasks within the Achieve 3000 platform to support students in increasing their reading skills. The school also utilizes Think Through Math to inform the teacher on student understanding and progress toward goals. Student progress is monitored and additional supports are put in place to provide targeted interventions.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty have developed curricula that is Common Core aligned and integrate the instructional shifts and emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills.

Impact

The impact of developing coherent curricula across subject areas embeds rigorous habits that lead to college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has focused on writing across the curriculum using The Writing Project (TWP) strategies to improve student writing, reading, and oral presentation skills. Teachers have received professional development on TWP strategies and work collaboratively to improve lessons that incorporate writing tasks.
- Lesson plans and unit plans reviewed identified Common Core learning standards aligned to the tasks students were engaged in. For example, in a social studies unit titled “From Globalization to Global Warming”, it was documented that students would cite textual evidence to support the analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text and write arguments to support claims in an analysis of topics using valid reasoning and relevant evidence. Activities embedded in the unit included having students read and annotate sample arguments and engage in a Socratic seminar.
- Coherence is built across curricula by embedding the “Attainments” students are required to master in each unit. Lesson plans and identified assessments indicated the “attainments” students were engaged in and would be measured in each task. For example, in “House of the Future” Project, the attainments listed were “#25 – I can create models for a situation, #28 – I can show precision in my work, #45 – I can conduct research, #55 – I can collaborate with others”. Students were able to identify which attainments they were working towards in classrooms visited.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs that engage students in critical thinking in the development of work products and student discussions.

Impact

Teaching practice is informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and promotes the instructional shifts that leads to high levels of student thinking and participation in the development of student work products and discussions.

Supporting Evidence

- The articulated set beliefs on how students learn best was articulated as engaging students in real world application of skills in mastering content. Teaching practices aligned to curricula and integrated skills that encapsulated the attainments students were working towards. For example, in an English language arts class, students were working on acquiring the following attainments, “#24. I can use reasoning to justify a solution or argument, #44. I can write effectively for a particular audience, purpose, or task” to cite two. Students were preparing to write an argumentative essay and were analyzing media bias based on various media clips in their groups. Students were prompted with questions such as “How can persuasion be used as a tool for argument?” and “Why are my views on controversial topics important and relevant to the world at large?” Students were engaged in accountable talk substantiating their points of view and building off each other’s responses by agreeing or disagreeing and adding to their peers’ statements.
- In a science class, students were presenting their research on a collaborative unit between Science and social studies titled “From Globalization to Global Warming”. The project had been a culmination of doing research, reading text-based articles, stating a purpose and hypothesis of their project, developing an experimental design, collecting data, doing data analysis and writing a conclusion outline, writing a scientific abstract, and creating a power point presentation. Students were observed presenting their findings and defending their conclusions as students and teachers asked questions based on their presentation.
- In a social studies class, students were preparing to engage in a lesson with the objective: “I can participate in a mock trial in order to assess the advantages and disadvantage of varying political and economic philosophies as they relate to globalization. “ Students were asked to role-play being a journalist and prepare four questions for the press conference. Students had a press conference and presentation rubric to self-assess the questions they developed. Students in this class were in various stages in the process but each child moved to the appropriate activity in order to prepare for their mock trial.

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

All teachers are engaged in structured professional collaboration that systematically analyze key elements of teacher work.

Impact

Teacher collaboration is resulting in school-wide instructional coherence and increased student achievement for all learners, and shared improvements in teacher practice.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers participate in various teams such as; Ninth Grade Interdisciplinary Team, that includes all the learning coaches, and guidance counselor. The Special Education team that is comprised of the two teachers that support all students with disabilities. The Youth Development team that includes the Guidance Counselor and Learning Coaches. Each team plays a specific role in supporting the coherence across the school for increased student achievement. For example, the ninth grade systematically analyzes student work and data to inform curricula modifications. The team also discusses students to identify strategies to best support them through the use of scaffolds as well as the development of extensions. Teachers highlighted the work around curriculum to ensure the alignment of the Common Core learning standards and strategically embedded the instructional shifts to align with skills needed to master in order to acquire the attainments necessary to graduate.
- Special education teachers analyze and review student work and data of the students to with disabilities and review student goals to develop the necessary scaffolds for students. They work with their colleagues to coordinate the services for students and keep teachers informed of student progress in order to make the necessary adjustments to curriculum and instruction. The Youth Development team is charged with developing, evaluating and determining improvement plans for student attendance. In addition they take the lead on addressing social and emotional behaviors through coordinating the Restorative Justice Program.
- Teams have norms and protocols in place in order to have productive conversations that lead to strengthening teacher instructional capacity. For example, teachers were observed utilizing a Performance Task Tuning Protocol that ensured teachers discussed Real World Transfer of Learning, Cultural Relevance, Integrated Domains and Depth of Competencies, Project base teaching & learning. Teachers gave each other feedback aligned to the rubric to refine performance tasks. The development of Interdisciplinary projects were initiatives that were outcomes of teacher collaboration in teacher meetings.