

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

William Cullen Bryant High School

High School Q445

**48-10 31 Avenue
Queens
NY 11103**

Principal: Namita Dwarka

**Dates of review: April 16, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Lucius Young**

The School Context

William Cullen Bryant High School is a high school with 2,496 students from 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 6% Black, 49% Hispanic, 16% White, and 28% Asian students. The student body includes 16% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-15 was 89.4%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</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	Developing
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	Developing
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	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	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

3.4 High Expectations

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

The school consistently communicates expectations to staff, families and students, and provides supports to meet these expectations.

Impact

Staff, parents and students work together to ensure that students are meeting the expectations of college and career readiness skills, receive ongoing and detailed feedback, and are prepared for the next grade level.

Supporting Evidence

- The school provides workshops aligned to the expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards. Each small learning community offers parent seminars to communicate the expectations of their departments throughout the school year. Each of these workshops provides families with guidance and support to help their child toward college and career readiness and a path to success. For example, a parent noted that after attending the math department workshop, she now is able to provide strategies at home when working with her child. She has learned to ask her child to think more deeply and be able to explain answers in greater depth. In addition, the parent stated that her child now incorporates writing when completing math problems.
- The school dedicates one day per week to input data and provide updates on the PupilPath system that allows parents and students to access information on the progress of their child. This information includes information such as attendance, homework, assignments and assessment results. Families log on to the system on a weekly basis to get these updates and then have conversations with their child. In addition, parents have the opportunity to email teachers if they had concerns or to set up an appointment to discuss any issues. Parents shared that this system has been an excellent resource and provides an opportunity to participate in their child's learning. One parent shared that, over the course of this school year, her child has become better at organizing herself to complete assignments and attend classes.
- The school is divided into small learning communities. The freshman academy is designed to focus in on the incoming students and their transition and orientation into high school. As the year progresses, the freshman academy meets on a weekly basis to ensure that students are on track for credits accumulated and to ensure that other areas, including academic perseverance, are attended to and addressed. In addition, the academy identifies a focus group of students based on state scores and current work to provide intervention strategies and recommendations to tutoring services.
- In the sophomore year, all students are provided with an opportunity to select an academy to be a part of for their junior and senior years. Students would meet with either teachers or guidance advisors to select an area in which to focus course selection. Students shared that at an assembly, a law case that included a mock trial on bullying was showcased to groups of students. This was designed to provide exposure to students who are considering pursuing work in law. Through this and other events, students gain exposure and experiences to help with career choices.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Teaching practices are informed by the Danielson Framework; however, classroom instruction inconsistently provides scaffolds and supports to promote high-levels of student thinking in classroom discussions and student work products.

Impact

The level of rigor in the lessons and cognitive challenge of the academic tasks varies among classrooms, inhibiting achievement for all students including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- The school staff shares a belief that instruction should utilize a workshop model that includes a do now, lesson, and activity. In addition, they believe work sessions in classes should reflect students working independently or collaboratively in groups. Teachers work as facilitators and incorporate hands on activities and implement discussion strategies such as think-pair-share to encourage discussion. This structure was observed across classrooms but there was uneven engagement. For example, in a 10th grade Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, students were engaged in classroom discussions that dealt with the topic of revenge. Students formed questions and engaged in conversations with each other while assigned students acted as coaches using a rubric to peer assess their partners. Conversely, in a 10th grade Algebra class, the teacher was delivering a lesson on standard deviation and students interpreted the standard deviation as a distance from the mean. However, the thinking of students was limited to what the organizer provided students to do and, as a result, the use of the organizer hindered students from being fully engaged in the lesson.
- Across classes, academic vocabulary is provided for ELLs. The words are selected per unit and are designed to provide additional support to student understanding. However, students were observed being engaged in discussions with limited understanding of the meanings in order to complete the task. For example, students in a 9th grade Global History class were asked to analyze a selection and have guiding questions to support their understanding. While attempts were made in the classroom for discussion to take place in the groups, the vocabulary was not strategically explained in the lesson to allow for meaningful conversations to take occur. As a result, student access to the task was limited.
- Across classrooms, teachers employ workstations with a set of varied tasks for students to complete. Students are given a block of time to work in groups to complete each activity. At the end of each timed session, groups then rotate to the next station. All students were expected to complete each station and activity. While the stations provide different activities for students to complete, access for some students to complete the tasks was limited.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure the curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and include the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks are planned using student data.

Impact

The school's curricular decisions result in diverse learners, including ELLs and students with disabilities, having access to the curricula. The decisions also work to promote college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teacher teams develop curriculum maps and pacing calendars aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards in each subject area and incorporate the instructional shifts. For example, in the English department, essential questions are identified and a variety of texts and articles are used to support each unit of instruction. Assessments that include projects are listed to demonstrate mastery of understanding and, in addition, strategies are listed as a guidance to support students with disabilities and ELLs.
- The school has adopted a lesson plan template. The lesson plan template includes focus questions, do now assignments, differentiation activities, assessments and homework assignments to follow the lesson. The lesson plans have planned exit slips to be completed by students to demonstrate they have met the objective of the lesson. Exit slips are planned for lessons and occur in various forms. For example, in a 10th grade ICT class observed, at the conclusion of the lesson teachers collected her students' "coach notes", which are questions generated by students while observing fellow classmates on a task and. The notes collected are used to help make revisions to curricula and tasks. In a 9th grade Global History class, students wrote a response on whether the end justifies the means in order to demonstrate understanding of the lesson, and the information collected would be used to guide the next day's lessons.
- ELLs are provided with multiple opportunities to access the curricula. The ELLs in each class are provided with a word bank that is targeted to the lesson to engage students and to support their learning. In addition, the use of graphic organizers is designed to provide students with access to the task. The teachers also select texts that are at the students' reading levels so that students are able to engage in the task and be able to work towards completion of the assigned task

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

The school is developing in their use of common assessments to measure student progress towards goals across grades and subject areas. Across classrooms, teacher assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of on-going checks for understanding.

Impact

The use of assessment data, formative and summative, is used to measure student progress, however, there is limited evidence of adjustments to instruction, and this impedes progress for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- The school analyzes students' Regent scores, item skills analysis, mid-term assessments and performance tasks to provide a view of how students perform and determine areas of strengths and challenges as a school. School leadership personnel noted from this analysis that students did not do well on short and extended responses. Students would have difficulties with the organization of their ideas and papers as they completed their essays. As such, writing has become one of the school's goals across all departments. The small learning communities focused in on this work with their departments by analyzing specific trends and patterns to address this concern. Teachers then implemented the "Triple A" discussion technique that would help students to ask, add, and argue points with their classmates in support of gathering evidence to support in their writing.
- The school indicated that the use of ongoing checks for understanding varies across all classrooms. In three of the twelve classrooms visited, the teacher circulated and listened in on student conversations, and in one classroom, a teacher recorded checks and circles on a clipboard to indicate how the student was progressing. Across classrooms, students worked in groups to complete the same tasks over the course of a period with scaffolds built in to support learning. However, there were missed opportunities for teachers to capture students' understanding and make timely adjustments to help navigate towards mastery and to respond to any misconceptions from the lesson.
- The school uses rubrics as a guide to support student learning. Across classrooms, rubrics were present; however, the use of rubrics for students to check in on their own work and to provide an opportunity to guide their next steps with feedback was not evident. Some students shared at the meeting that they would receive the rubric after the teacher grades and returns work or with limited feedback from an assignment. As a result, this limits the students' ability to have a clear understanding of how their work will be judged or to fully understand their strengths and next steps so that they can support their own learning and for teachers to fully understand student learning needs.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	---	----------------	-------------------

Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in professional collaborations that provide opportunities to share best practices. Teacher leaders have input in into instructional changes across the school.

Impact

Participation by all teachers on structured teams has resulted in school-wide efforts to strengthen the instructional capacity of teachers and has led to teachers participating in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams have a facilitator to support the work within teams and at the same time yield opportunities for all teachers to play a leadership role around the inquiry work. Teachers meet at a minimum of two times per week and are afforded opportunities in their schedules to meet daily in collaborative groups to analyze student work, plan instruction and share best practices.
- Small learning community directors meet on a monthly basis from each department to identify trends, patterns and discuss strategies to be implemented across classes within their departments. At the team meeting observed, teachers shared their trends from each small learning community department and noted their areas of focus. A planning template that included actionable next steps was provided to all department directors in order to list the suggested action steps. Teachers shared that since writing has been the school-wide focus, the teachers discussed different strategies that included targeted feedback to students, using various graphic organizers to help students capture critical information, and the use of academic language to support writing and understanding of the task. These strategies have been helpful in meeting the school's instructional goals.
- Teachers from the Freshman Success Learning Community use quantitative and qualitative data to ensure students are on track for credit accumulation and to be on track for graduation. During the freshman success team meeting, teachers shared that the opportunity to come together as a group to target new students with all instructors, including guidance counselors, responsible for the freshman cohort has been beneficial in helping students with academic deficiencies and for teachers to provide targeted support. For example, a teacher shared those students who were identified as needing both academic and social-emotional support received targeted assistance that included entrance into an early intervention group for services. A student shared at the meeting that he was recommended to attend the writing center and it helped him to better his essay writing skills because he was now able to organize his thoughts in a coherent manner prior to writing. Another teacher noted that exit slips have has been a strategy discussed at the team meetings and teachers now use this as part of their daily lesson plans to monitor student progress.