



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Tottenville High School

High School R455

**100 Luten Avenue
Staten Island, NY 10312**

Principal: Joseph Scarmato

**Date of review: April 21, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Joseph Zaza**

The School Context

Tottenville High School is a high school with 3982 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 2% Black, 12% Hispanic, 80% White, and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 16% 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 89.4%.

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	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	Focus	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff and provide training. Staff systematically communicates high expectations to all students and partners with families to support student progress towards those expectations.

Impact

High expectations result in a culture of mutual accountability and collaboration for the professional community. The school's successful partnership with families and the community supports student progress towards college and career success.

Supporting Evidence

- The school wide instructional focus is communicated via a faculty handbook, a weekly newsletter, and weekly professional development and it asks teachers to develop student centered Common Core aligned tasks and to model the reading and writing process so that students will be able write, speak, and listen critically using claim and counter claim to support arguments.
- The principal conducts monthly "lunch and learns" that are well attended and appreciated by the teaching staff. One teacher stated, "I enjoy assuming the role of a learner as the principal teaches 'our class' by sharing best practice around a specific Danielson component." The School Professional Development Committee (SPDC) meets weekly to discuss their practice by collaboratively looking at student work and through monthly instructional rounds aligned to a component of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. As a result, teachers hold themselves accountable to high professional expectations.
- The school hosts a career day highlighting careers, trades and occupations in state-certified Career and Technical Education (CTE) and other academic programs. Students learn about the types of colleges, careers and future potential employment. The school also sponsors multiple college trips and partners with universities including St. John's University, The College of Staten Island and Columbia University Teachers' College.
- In order to ensure college and career readiness, the school offers over 14 Advanced Placement classes, nine CTE programs (of which four are certified), College Now and Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC).
- Parents actively partner with the school and one parent stated that all three of her children received appropriate social/emotional as well as academic support based upon their individual needs. This parent was pleased that the school held her child with special needs to the same expectations as his siblings and that the school worked with him to offer the supports he needed. The other parents concurred and stated that parent and student voices are included in school decision-making, citing the building of a solar greenhouse that students suggested the school needed as part of a "go green" campaign.

Area of Focus

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

The majority of teachers consistently analyze data and student work on a macro level to inform instruction and promote the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards. Distributive leadership structures are building leadership capacity to enable teachers to have a voice in key decisions.

Impact

Structures for teacher teams foster shared leadership, while building team capacity, to make key decisions that result in strengthening curricula and pedagogical approaches while embedding Common Core Learning Standards to steer improved student progress.

Supporting Evidence

- Each team has a teacher leader who facilitates meetings and acts as a representative of the grade during weekly teacher leader meetings. Teacher leaders then turn key professional development to the entire faculty. For example, after a workshop on techniques to solicit claims, the science teacher team learned how to build in Common Core literacy shifts into unit plans.
- Teachers work in academic department teams, house teams, and grade level teams to ensure coherence by focusing on vertical alignment, the Common Core, and shared instructional strategies.
- The school's professional development plan for the year focuses on the Danielson Framework for Teaching component study and unit plan development using the Common Core. After full faculty professional development, teacher teams convene to develop activities or strategies for implementation into classroom or unit plans.
- The principal and the administrative team conduct professional development for teacher leaders and the SPDC. The committee discusses and makes decisions on professional learning opportunities, team protocols, school policy and goal setting. The SPDC team turnkeys with house teams, departmental teams, grade teams, and inquiry teams in order to guide inquiry work and curriculum revision.
- The school's instructional inquiry cycle informs teacher teamwork. For example, teacher leaders reported that the administration has supported their decisions to adjust their curriculum to add more strategies for revision writing and annotation as a result of an analysis of student work.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school's curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. Academic tasks are planned and refined using data and student work.

Impact

Curricula revisions ensure rigor in tasks, build coherence, and promote college and career readiness. Diverse learners have access to and are engaged in cognitively rigorous tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- English language arts (ELA) is aligned to EngageNY and math is aligned to EngageNY and Big Ideas Common Core curricula. Social studies curricula is aligned to Common Core anchor standards and each unit concludes with a performance task that asks students to demonstrate college and career readiness skills such as writing claims from evidence.
- Lesson plans embed the instructional shifts across grades and subjects. For example, in a grade 11 ELA class, students used textual evidence from Robert Frost's "After Apple Picking" to argue author's purpose. In a grade 9 algebra class, students watched a video of bacteria growth and worked together to figure out what was happening.
- The grade 10 curriculum map in ELA asks students to read a balance of fiction and non-fiction work in order to demonstrate the ability to synthesize and apply both written work and oral presentations. Essential questions for student consideration included the following Depth of Knowledge questions at level 3 and 4: "How do the struggles of characters in fiction mirror modern day conflicts?" and "How does the study of drama enhance the reader's understanding of the power of word economy?"
- In a math class, students decided which movie studio was most successful using statistics and crafting their presentations using math models such as box and whisker plots, histograms, and graphs. In a geometry class, students worked together to determine how high a pumpkin can fly.
- Lesson plans require students to demonstrate the ability to engage in higher order thinking skills. In a lesson on the New Deal, students were grouped based upon reading level and progress in class. They were given tiered readings so that all students could evaluate the success of the New Deal. In a lesson on the Byzantine Empire, scaffolded readings enabled students to compare empires across time and place.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, it is evident that teaching practices align to the curricula and reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best through high levels of discussion, debate and/or presentation and when they are accountable to each other.

Impact

Students are well aware of their next steps toward improvement because teachers make effective instructional adjustments that result in student work products and discussions that reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- Students stated that, “grouping is big here at our school” and that “we never worked in groups before the new principal came here and we like it better.” In the majority of classes, students worked in flexible, purposeful groups. For example, in an Advanced Placement English class, students discussed a poem in a Socratic Seminar. Outer circle students could “tap in” to join the inner circle conversation. In a grade 9 Algebra I class, students worked in pairs to analyze a video representation of exponential growth and figured out what was happening.
- In an Advanced Placement Chemistry class, a teacher asked students to annotate a science article as well as to write a short reflection piece. In groups of four, students added to the comments of their peers to prepare for a student led class discussion. At the end of the class discussion, students had the opportunity to assess both their own work as well as the work of their peers.
- Academic vocabulary and student discussion reflect higher order thinking skills. In a grade 10 social studies class, students evaluated and discussed the impact of Martin Luther’s 95 Theses and evaluate the church’s response to his actions using some higher order questions to guide discussion. There were some missed opportunities for student ownership of the work products as students used a common template.
- In most classrooms, tasks and lessons facilitated student participation by encouraging student-to-student dialogue. There were some missed opportunities to sustain discussion, whereby students would generate high-level questions of their own. In a global history class, the teacher asked many recall questions such as “What is an example of a church abuse?”, “What’s another word for bribe?” and “What is the role of the printing press?” In an algebra class, the teacher asked, “What do you see?” and “How do you know?” In these cases, students did not have an opportunity to address the answers of their peers.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, assessment practices ensure actionable and meaningful feedback regarding student work, and student self-assessment, peer assessment and ongoing checks for understanding are in place.

Impact

Teachers use data and analyze student work, incorporating strategies into their lessons that meet the needs of struggling learners and improve their classroom practice.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams develop performance tasks for their subject areas and discuss the results at teacher team meetings using a tuning protocol. The school administers mid-year mock Regents exams and then uses the data to modify curriculum maps and unit plans for the second half of the year.
- Students stated they are all aware of the new uniform, school wide grading policy and expectations for high quality work through a variety of school wide rubrics that include homework, class work, group and interdisciplinary writing. Students and parents stated that they check progress on PupilPath, an on-line service where teachers update student scores daily.
- Teachers post student work on bulletin boards in the hallway that reflect various stages of development of a single project. Teachers provide next steps and opportunities for students to reflect and self-assess and students use this feedback to improve their work.
- Teachers conduct ongoing checks for understanding daily within classrooms. Across classes, teachers employed hand signals (thumbs up/thumbs down), whiteboard responses, red light/green light, and random quiz questions to check on student understanding. In an English class, the teacher placed post-it notes on student desks to assess student understanding or push student thinking so as not to disrupt the class discussion. In a geometry class, students held up a white board to answer a multiple-choice question. The result confirmed to the teacher that students understood the concept.