



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

**Riverdale / Kingsbridge Academy
(Middle School / High School)**

X141

**660 West 237 Street
Bronx
NY 10463**

Principal: Lori O'Mara

Date of review: December 3, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Timothy Behr

The School Context

Riverdale/Kingsbridge is a middle and high school with 1,392 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 11% Black, 55% Hispanic, 26% White, and 8% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 92.1%

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 |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|

Findings

School leaders and staff effectively convey high expectations to students and parents to positively impact student achievement so they can own their educational experiences.

Impact

The successful partnerships with student and families resulted in in student ownership of their learning and being prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- A College Fair informs parents and students about the college admission process and career opportunities. Parents state they appreciate teacher updates that are regularly sent to keep them informed regarding curriculum, academic expectations, and their child's progress. Parents report good follow-up with opportunities for reciprocal conversations with teachers regarding their children's learning. They also report that they can also access teacher websites and an on line grading program to keep informed of their child's progress towards college and career readiness.
- Parents acknowledge that the school's Welcome Class of 2018 presentation on graduation requirements keeps them informed of the schools goals and how they may best support their children's academic achievement at home in alignment with promotion standards, high school requirements, Regents diploma requirements, Advanced Regents diploma requirements, including expectations for Students with Disabilities, and English language learners. Sports programs for both girls and boys as well community services activities encourage students to participate in recreational activities that enhance the learning experience and to identify possible future aspirations.
- There is a 'don't be shy...just drop by" tutoring/extra help program to support students' academic growth. Student work (displayed and in folders) are replete with detailed teacher comments to guide students to higher levels of achievement. Deans and guidance personnel reinforce supports through class visits and assemblies regarding the school's behavioral and academic expectations.
- As per the 2013-2014 High School and Middle School Quality Guide ,81% of 9th grade students and 82% of 10th grade students earned enough credits to be on track for high school graduation. 83% of student graduated within 4 years. 83% of the June 2014 graduates went to college. 89% of former 8th graders earn enough credits to be on track for high school graduation.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

School leaders and teachers offer a range of learning experiences, the alignment of curricula across grades and subject areas that promote high levels of thinking and cognitive engagement for all students.

Impact

The schools' purposeful decisions ensure coherence of units of study across content areas. Student work analysis informs curricular enhancements, so that a diversity of learners has curricular access.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's Common Core Learning Standards aligned curricula for Middle school incorporates: Scholastic's Code X for English language arts, Connect Math Pearson 3, Glencoe texts and Foss Kits for Science, and New York City's Scope and Sequence for Social Studies. In High School, Core Proficiency Skills Units are used for ELA. In mathematics, the school uses Engage New York units, the Science curriculum incorporates tasks and labs and the NYC Scope and Sequence is used for Social Studies.
- The curriculum is rich and varied, providing extension activities via application of learned skills through projects, including accelerated courses that lead to Regents and Advanced Regents examinations. Collaborative team teaching activities support learning for students with disabilities. In an 8th grade integrated co-teaching math class students computed volume of three dimensional objects. Resource Room and English language lessons have yet to ensure the inclusion of high interest and diverse titles to invigorate student interest and stamina in reading activities.
- Journalism, book and math clubs, poetry, a Science Olympiad, cheerleading, a track club, media arts, and high school sports teams provide opportunities for students to pursue their interests and talents.
- An Algebra II project engages students to apply properties of quadratic equations to solve problems. Students in an Advanced Placement Science class completed a cellular Respiration investigation activity. A mathematics common core learning task had students demonstrate equivalent ratios and explain answers based upon State test results. Numerical fluency skills are prioritized based on student work products to address application of learned skills to problem solve.

Additional Findings

| | | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Quality Indicator: | 1.2 Pedagogy | Rating: | Proficient |
|---------------------------|---------------------|----------------|-------------------|

Findings

Teaching practices across the school reflect a common belief about how students learn best and across classrooms student work products and conversations demonstrate high levels of thinking and participation.

Impact

Instruction is based on data so that lessons reflect purposeful grouping, students are challenged, and tasks accommodate different learning styles.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's instructional focus is for students to work independently and to collaborate with teachers, peers, and communities to engage in text-based discourse and to develop, present, and reflect upon written information and argumentative work. Across classrooms students were engaged in content specific conversations. In a 12th grade Advanced Placement Literature class students were engaged in conversations that cited examples from the novel *Withering Heights*. Students were also practicing writing from sources to defend an opinion.
- Across classrooms the school's guiding principles for instruction: modeling, hands-on activities, teacher feedback, questioning skills, assessment, writing, and peer interaction were evident. Learning tasks and activities are aligned with the instructional outcomes and are designed to challenge student thinking. In an Algebra II/ Trigonometry class the teacher modeled how to write a claim. Students were collaboratively worked together to solve and then explain their answers. In a Science class students referenced to text evidence to define an enzyme.
- An instructional focus was evident in all classrooms observed. A high school Science teacher revised practice of report writing by creating open ended response questions. Students in a middle school math class chronicle their thoughts to solve problems. In an 8th grade Social Studies class students used primary sources to support their answers. Across classrooms the majority of student work products represent high levels of student thinking as evidenced by classroom dialogue and work products. Students in an English 10 class used figurative and descriptive language to write a narrative of Fredrick Douglas.

| | | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Quality Indicator: | 2.2 Assessment | Rating: | Proficient |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-------------------|

Findings

Through the regular and ongoing use of data, school leaders and faculty have an on-going understanding of the performance and progress of students.

Impact

The school cohesive monitoring system effectively informs and supports targeted instruction across all content areas.

Supporting Evidence

- All content areas in both the middle and high school have grading policies. Grades are calculated for each marking period based on student work, participation, tests, homework, and projects using percentages for each category. Rubrics are consistently used in all content areas. Teachers continually reflect to revise instruction that meets the needs of students. Through the analysis of student performance on end-of-unit assessments and baselines English language arts and Social Studies teachers have identified specific reading and writing standards to improve student outcomes. These teachers are supporting students' abilities to develop claims, support the claim, use of counter claims, and coherence of organization in their writing.
- Despite students showing improvement in last year's baseline data to midline data, students still scored below proficiency in June 2014 in all writing traits evaluated. Current results showed that the majority of students need support in the following writing traits: position, elaboration, textual analysis, counterclaims, reading, organization and conventions. Based on this information and qualitative feedback from teachers adjustments were made to the pacing and scope of the writing task. Supplemental activities and lessons also support student achievement.
- Students receive consistent actionable feedback from teachers on their progress that is based on Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) aligned rubrics. This evaluation leads to differentiated goal setting. Teachers use this information to plan data driven instruction for different groups of students. Students in a 12th grade advanced placement English Literature class practiced writing revision strategies to eliminate unnecessary words by combining sentences.

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

Findings

All teachers are effectively engaged in inquiry-based structured professional collaborations where they share responsibility for cohorts of students and successfully plan together, improving instructional coherence and learning for all students.

Impact

The inclusion of all staff in a multitude of teams empowers all teachers to assume responsibility for collectively improving teacher practice and student mastery of applicable performance standards.

Supporting Evidence

- All teacher teams use the Tuning Protocol to look at student work. Outcomes that result from Tuning Protocol activities are memorialized in Google Docs and are implemented during classroom practice. For example grade 8 math teachers use tracking sheets to record common assessments. Analysis of tasks has led to the focus of including additional multi-step problems that require students to solve, supply answers and an explanation to support the methodology chosen. These dual intensity problems support the school goal of having students apply learned skills to complete tasks and to reflect on their work.
- The math and science teachers work together to ensure congruency of both teacher practice and student designed tasks in regards to the school instructional focus and the Danielson Framework domain components of questioning and discussion techniques and student engagement. They work in a 4 week cycle with a focus question. There is continuous formal training of teacher leaders (plan objectives and scope), Google Docs inform next steps. Grade wide common assessment results drive instruction.
- The department assistants were expanded to nine positions for the current academic year. They serve as mentors for new teachers. Responsibilities include modeling lessons, coordinating intervisitations, leading professional development activities, and facilitating communication regarding the use of the Measures of Student Learning and the schools instructional focus. The principal reports that teachers enjoy learning from one another in a collaborative process.