



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Dreamyard Preparatory High School

High School X329

**240 East 172nd Street
Bronx
NY 10457**

Principal: Alicia Wargo

**Date of review: April 22, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Claudy Makelele**

The School Context

The Dreamyard Preparatory School is a high school with 340 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 33% Black, 62% Hispanic, 1% White, and 4% Other students. The student body includes 24% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 40% of the students enrolled and girls account for 60%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 80.5%.

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	Developing
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
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Findings

Through multiple venues and school protocols, school leaders and staff communicate high expectations to students and their families emphasizing the school's core values connected to a path of college and career readiness.

Impact

Staff leaders and staff work together to improve classroom practices and work with students to improve their academic performance. Students reflect on learning and are held responsible for progress.

Supporting Evidence

- The core values of the school are scholarship, character and artistry. Awards are given monthly to students who demonstrate these values to reinforce the desired behaviors. Student assemblies are held monthly around one of the core values. Additionally, the principal teaches a leadership class, two mornings a week, to a diversified group of students. Teachers text, email, and call their advisees at home on a weekly basis as well as students identified as a target population. This ongoing communication for all students establishes a strong connection between home and school and aids the students on their journey towards college.
- The school has instituted the use of restorative justice circles meetings to promote high behavioral expectations, build community, and address conflicts. The dean has implemented a Fairness Committee to help facilitate the school's Restorative Justice Practice. Students are offered the opportunity to engage with these values in the units that are implemented across disciplines, which has increased a sense of school community. The restorative justice circles promote high behavioral expectations focused around the core values to teach and learn what it means to be a community member, which has provided skills to deal with conflict resolution and decreased overall incidents of conflict and the need for administrative disciplinary measures.
- Students are held accountable for learning and are required to communicate their progress to their parents through a Life-Ready Conference during which they reflect on learning and take ownership of progress and preparedness toward academic goals. Parents shared that these meetings were constructive in supporting their children's academic goals and acquisition of common core learning standards.
- The We Are the School Committee has been established in lieu of a traditional School Leadership Team in order to promote parent and student involvement. The team meets in the circle room and plans school-wide events and initiatives to jointly engage the students and their families. Some of the events they have planned to promote college and career readiness has included college information nights, tours, a financial aid workshop, and a career day with many careers represented. The school forms partnerships with companies for student internships, allowing them real-life exposure to careers.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Pedagogical strategies do not consistently include targeted instructional supports, scaffolded questioning and discussion techniques or learning extensions to engage all learners in rigorous tasks and high-level discussions.

Impact

Across classrooms, students are not consistently engaged in appropriately challenging tasks or rich classroom discussions that lead to high levels of thinking and meaningful work products.

Supporting Evidence

- In a Math class visited, all students engaged in the same teacher directed task with little student interaction. The activity was primarily a worksheet activity using playing cards. This activity did not elicit critical thinking and did not engage the students in further discussion to explore the topic further.
- In a theater class, students observed their peers enacting a student-written skit and gave each other feedback, however students did not have a rubric or protocol to guide them in giving peer-to-peer feedback. Across classrooms visited, students were observed working in groups and asking clarifying questions. However, the majority of lessons were teacher-centered, with dialogue from teacher-student-teacher.
- Teachers inconsistently provided multiple entry points for the English Language learners and special education students. In a science class observed, students were involved in conducting an experiment, which was challenging to some students. However, the lesson had not been modified to meet the levels and needs of all learners. Some students were readily able to complete the experiment with ease, while others grappled without the appropriate scaffolds.

Additional Findings

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

The majority of teachers participate in collaborative inquiry that promotes the integration of the instructional shifts and achievement of school goals. Distributive leadership allows teachers a voice in the decision-making that affects school-wide learning.

Impact

Through team collaboration, teacher's instructional capacity and pedagogy and progress towards goals for groups of students have improved.

Supporting Evidence

- Content teams develop department goals that reflect instructional shifts that support school-wide academic goals. They meet once a week to discuss instructional practices that support department goals. The school has an academic goal of producing eight units of study, over the course of the year that aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and provide access for all. Most importantly, the teams meet to analyze data and student progress made towards those goals. As a result, teachers stated that involvement in teacher teams promotes access to other grade levels and opportunities for team members to present and respond to questions from the group. Department heads meet bi-monthly with the assistant principal and principal to discuss practices and decisions made at the team level. For example, teachers look at data to identify areas that students have difficulty in reaching proficiency and identify key standards that groups of students have not yet mastered.
- The Student Intervention Team meets weekly to discuss student behavior and grade-wide academic progress. This team conducts Kidtalks, opening up communication between teachers and students. They are also responsible for coordinating grade-wide strategies to celebrate student accomplishments via trips, career days, honor roll assemblies, etc. The Student Intervention team meets with the principal and assistant principal to align work with school-wide goals. Due to the team's work, a majority of students have improved attendance from the previous academic year, Regents pass rates have increased, and the Learning Environment Survey data affirms that the staff feels that they work together to meet student needs and that the principal encourages open communication.
- As part of the school's collaborative inquiry, teacher teams are visiting each other's classrooms to observe practice. One new teacher said that she was currently visiting her colleagues to observe effective group management. The teacher shared that some of the inter-visitations had helped her realize that she needed to work on her demeanor and set clear expectations in her classroom.

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

The instructional team is in the process of aligning curricula to Common Core Learning Standards in order to ensure that curricula emphasizes higher order skills and that rigorous tasks are accessible for all learners across grades and content areas.

Impact

Although the curricula offers alternative methods of learning, the schools' curricula decisions do not ensure coherence across grade levels and all students do not yet consistently have access to rigorous curriculum or high level tasks that push their thinking and promote college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use a school-wide template to create lesson plans using the Understanding by Design format. While the format is inclusive of essential questions and Life-Ready tasks aligned with the Common Core Standards, the lesson plans are not written with multiple entry points for understanding of the aforementioned essential questions by English language learners and students with disabilities.
- The Socratic Seminar is a school-wide practice that is integrated across the curriculum. Seminar activities are still being developed by the teachers to incorporate entry points specifically tailored to the needs of the English Language Learners.
- Teachers actively collaborate to develop end-of-unit, Life Ready Tasks for students to apply their learning to real world scenarios. These teacher created units are adjusted based on peer feedback and lesson outcomes to improve students' successful completion of culminating tasks.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

The school is in the process of developing systems to use common assessments, benchmark exams, and classroom checks for understanding to track student progress and adjust curricula and instruction to meet students' learning needs.

Impact

The school does not yet consistently use data analysis to guide adjustments in units and lessons to meet the learning needs of all students, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities hindering student progress.

Supporting Evidence

- While interim assessments are given every semester and used to fuel department goals, they are inconsistently used. The school is working on looking at the assessments to help set goals for next units as they go forward.
- In some of the classrooms visited, there was evidence of teacher use of peer to peer and group assessments, such as turn and talk or use of group discussions as tools for ongoing assessment of learning. However, the level of student engagement in peer and self-assessment was limited across due to a lack of clear directives from some of the teachers. For example, students did not have checklists or rubrics to direct their work.
- Across classrooms, teachers' checks for understanding and assessments were inconsistent. For example in an English class, teachers were observed using exit slips to assess student mastery of the learning objective. However in other classes observed, teachers conducted whole class or on-the-spot checks without follow-up questions to check for understanding or any adjustments to meet the needs of all learners.