



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

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

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2014-2015**

**Dewitt Clinton High School**

**High School X440**

**100 Mosholu Parkway South  
Bronx  
NY 10468**

**Principal: Santiago Taveras**

**Date of review: April 1, 2015  
Reviewer: Elaine Lindsey**

## The School Context

Dewitt Clinton is a high school with 1,993 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 32% Black, 54% Hispanic, 3% White, and 8% Asian students. The student body includes 22% 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 2013-2014 was 81.0%.

## School Quality Criteria

<b>Instructional Core</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Developing</b>
<b>School Culture</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Developing</b>
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	<b>Celebration</b>	<b>Developing</b>

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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### Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations that are beginning to use an inquiry approach to examine student data and work products that will result in improved teacher practice and student achievement.

### Impact

The work of teacher teams is beginning to strengthen the instructional capacity of teachers that results in improved student progress.

### Supporting Evidence

- The principal has organized teacher teams to meet weekly to focus on instruction through *Kid Talk*, a student analysis protocol that is focused on examining data, such as attendance records and scholarship reports to develop successful teaching strategies across subject areas. The majority of teachers engage in professional collaborations two to three times per week to determine effective teaching practices. A review of teacher team agendas and minutes reveals that the school is in the process of developing teams that utilize a structured inquiry approach aligned to school-wide goals and consistently assess student work and other data to increase teacher capacity and student progress toward goals.
- Teacher teams meet regularly to analyze student data from Regents exams to inform cycles of inquiry. During a teacher team question and answer meeting teachers stated that after reviewing the social studies Regents data they discovered that reading comprehension was a struggle, so the social studies team began focusing on vocabulary development. Additionally, teachers on the science team stated that as a result of their inquiry they noticed a struggle with graphs, resulting in a focus on implementing reference tables as a primary text point. Teacher team work has not yet resulted in improved teacher practice or student achievement.
- Teacher teams have been organized to meet for *Kid Talk* to ensure student success across content areas. During these meetings, teachers review scholarship and attendance data. However, an observation of a team meeting and review of agendas and minutes revealed inconsistent use of an inquiry approach. Teacher teams use a template to guide them through conversations, but they do not consistently engage in inquiry work that results in adjustment to teaching strategies or the curricula.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Developing**

### Findings

Pedagogical practices inconsistently provide effective curricular supports, learning extensions and questioning and discussion techniques.

### Impact

The lack of inclusive teaching strategies leads to students not being consistently engaged in appropriately challenging tasks that might lead to high levels of thinking, rich classroom discussions, deep reasoning or meaningful work products.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school's belief that students learn best when there is real world application, productive struggle and high expectations has informed their instructional focus for the school year. Across classrooms, teachers are beginning to develop structures and routines to include real world applications in lessons and structures and routines to ensure students work cooperatively and engage in higher order discussion. These practices are emerging and are not consistent across most classrooms. Most lesson plans do not include essential questions or academic tasks that require collaborative learning in which students engage in high level discussions.
- Across classrooms visited, the majority of lessons were teacher-centered, with dialogue typically being teacher-student-teacher. In most classrooms, students were not observed engaging in rich peer-to-peer or whole-class discussions. Students were not observed generating their own questions or responding directly to their peers. For example, in a science class, students used words from the word wall to fill in the blank and answer a series of rote questions. In a math class, students worked on the same problems and did not engage in peer-to-peer discussion regarding the written work products.
- In a ninth grade English class, students engaged in small group discussions in which they analyzed the qualities needed for Hercules to accomplish his labors. Then, students evaluated which of the qualities was most important in characterizing Hercules as a hero. As students shared out their conversations, they cited evidence from the text to support their claims. While this lesson reflected high levels of student thinking and participation, across classrooms, tasks do not consistently emphasize the use of text-based evidence to inform student arguments as identified by the school's instructional focus. Additionally, students do not generate their own questions or respond to their peers.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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### Findings

Curriculum is in the process of being aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) to ensure engaging and rigorous habits and higher-order skills are accessible for all learners across grades and content areas.

### Impact

Although teachers are revising curricula, the school's curricula decisions do not yet ensure coherence across content areas and grade levels, and teachers inconsistently provide access to rigorous curricula or high level tasks that might push student thinking and promote college and career readiness for all learners.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use Engage NY curriculum in English and math. The English curriculum is in the process of being refined to include more complex texts and multiple entry points to meet the needs of all learners. Math teachers are adapting the Engage NY algebra and geometry units as well as curricula from Pearson's algebra and geometry textbooks to modify pacing for algebra and geometry.
- Teacher lesson plans do not consistently reflect modifications to meet the needs of all learners. Additionally, plans across content areas do not consistently emphasize higher order thinking or include a menu of strategies that students might choose from to complete rigorous academic tasks. Also, lesson plans do not reflect modifications to support all learners including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities. For example, in an ecology class, the teacher provided ELLs with visual aids to demonstrate the process of mitosis, modeled how to annotate the science text, and provided a translated text to emerging ELLs; however, in a math class all students were asked to complete a worksheet of the same problems.
- Teachers' unit and lesson plans do not demonstrate how the school adapts instructional materials from Engage NY to develop rigorous academic tasks that are accessible to all learners including ELLs and students with disabilities. Algebra units do not reflect evidence of scope and sequence, adaptations for diverse learners, essential questions or differentiation. English curricula do not consistently provide evidence of unit plans or maps. Additionally, unit plans do not consistently have evidence of Common Core-aligned rubrics or learning tasks.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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### **Findings**

The school is developing in their use of common grading policies, assessments and classroom checks for understanding to track student progress and make adjustments to curricula and instruction to meet students' learning needs.

### **Impact**

The school's grading policy, assessments and systems to monitor progress through data analysis as well as during instruction are not yet consistently used to guide adjustments in units and lessons to meet the learning needs of all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- The school is developing its use of a common grading policy that demonstrates student achievement. This year each small learning community (SLC) has a common grading policy. For instance, one SLC has agreed to weigh classwork as 45% of students' overall grade in each course. Within each SLC, teachers are given flexibility to determine alignment of student work products to grading categories. However, in the Health Opportunities SLC, the teachers have not reached a standardized grading policy.
- Common assessments in mathematics and English include performance assessments taken directly from Engage NY. During a teacher team meeting, teachers stated that all humanities courses use common assessments to look for gaps that lead to strategies to support improved student achievement. However, lesson and unit plans and visits to classrooms did not reflect the use of assessments to inform strategies that would support all learners. Some unit plans for science include Common Core aligned performance tasks. Teachers also use previous Regents exams to conduct item analysis.
- Teachers are beginning to use checks for understanding as a formative assessment technique. Some teachers are beginning to increase the amount of feedback they give individual students during the lesson. Across classrooms visited, teachers' checks for understanding and assessments varied. For example, in a social studies class the teacher asked a series of rote questions with the same students responding. In English classes visited, teachers used an exit slip to assess student mastery of the learning objective. However, this is not a consistent practice across the school. In remaining classes observed, teachers conducted whole class or on the spot checks without follow-up questions to check for understanding that could inform adjustments to meet the needs of all learners.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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### Findings

High expectations are inconsistently communicated to staff and students with systems and support to ensure all learners achieve.

### Impact

Structures that support the school's high expectations primarily for only one of the school's SLCs contribute to unequal accountability among staff, students and families, thus obscuring a clear path towards college and career readiness for all students.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school's new structure around SLCs is in its beginning stages for creating a common language that communicates high expectations to all staff members, students and families. During meetings with parents and students, it was stated that there are inconsistencies across SLCs in communicating high expectations and providing college and career readiness opportunities. For example, in the Macy Honors Community, students are challenged to excel academically and develop leadership qualities while taking advantage of many internship programs, summer programs and partnership opportunities. Students take honors-level core subjects that emphasize math and science as well as advanced placement and college courses. However, in the other SLCs, structures and courses have not yet been developed to offer the same high-level expectations connected to a path of college and career readiness.
- Structures are in place to provide supports to achieve expectations regarding a trajectory to college and careers. For example, each SLC is assigned a guidance counselor. Guidance counselors are beginning to individualize their support for individuals and subgroups of students by utilizing scholarship and attendance data to develop interventions to provide feedback to students and their families regarding student progress toward meeting the expectations.
- The Danielson Framework for Teaching is beginning to serve as the core for how school leaders communicate expectations about teaching practices. The principal and assistant principals are in the process of developing expectations that are connected to college and careers and are beginning to provide actionable feedback and guidance that communicate expectations for next steps. For example, in an excerpt of an observation report from an assistant principal to a science teacher she states, "In order to move your practice for *Engaging Students in Learning*, a suggestion would be to continue allowing students to read the short documents extracting one fact and sharing the fact with their group..."
- School leaders regularly communicate high expectations regarding implementing elements of the Danielson Framework for Teaching to the entire staff and are developing training to support pedagogy. For example, in the spring assistant principals provided professional development to the teachers within their SLCs to increase the cognitive engagement of students in lessons. Teachers watched and analyzed videos of instruction to assess student engagement and rigorous learning outcomes. In the professional development session, teachers then practiced writing and revising their own learning outcomes for future lessons.