



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

Boys and Girls High School

High School K455

**1700 Fulton Street
Brooklyn
NY 11213**

Principal: Michael Wiltshire

**Date of review: May 19, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Claudette Essor**

The School Context

Boys and Girls High School is a high school with 387 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 2% Asian, 87% Black, 7% Hispanic, and 1% White students. The student body includes 4% English Language Learners and 34% students with disabilities. Boys account for 70% of the students enrolled and girls account for 30%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 78.4%.

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	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 <i>Framework for Teaching</i> , 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

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations for learning to all families and school staff and provide support to help them work with all students to meet those expectations.

Impact

School leaders consistently hold all staff accountable for meeting high expectations for teaching and learning. Ongoing feedback helps families understand student progress towards meeting all expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders use various memoranda and recommended templates for lesson planning and data analysis to communicate high expectations for teaching and learning across the school. There are memoranda which explicitly state instructional expectations linked to targeted components of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, such as planning and delivering rigorous and differentiated instruction, effective questioning and discussion, and using assessment in instruction. The school's professional development plan also indicates that all teachers receive training in areas such as crafting measurable learning objectives, using Webb's *Depth of Knowledge (DOK)* wheel to add rigor to tasks and implementing co-teaching strategies. Further, teachers receive support in creating inclusive classrooms and devising classroom management strategies that are helping to build their capacity to effectively address student needs through learner-centered instruction and cooperative learning practices.
- Administrators use conference notes, reviews of unit and lesson plans, feedback from observations, and examination of student work products to hold staff accountable for meeting all instructional expectations. Teachers reported that administrators visit their classrooms regularly and follow up with support as applicable. In addition, school leaders engage teachers in peer inter-visitations through which teachers support each other towards improving instructional practices. Members of the school's professional learning committee, including school-based coaches, program coordinators and three teachers who are in the New York City Department of Education Emerging Leaders program, team up with school leaders to facilitate differentiated professional learning events for all staff. The school leader referenced *Advance* data and anecdotal evidence in highlighting improved instructional practice for some teachers, as a result of team activities.
- Parents praised the school for high expectations and noted that they are kept abreast of their children's progress via phone calls, emails, and conferences with teachers. They noted that through workshops, newsletters, bulletins, and meetings with guidance counselors and other staff they receive information about college fairs, graduation requirements, and college application and admission requirements. Several stated that they also benefit from tips to help support their children in meeting all expectations. Progress reports, reviews of scholarship reports and transcripts, along with messages and data from PupilPath, an online student information system, keep families informed about their children's progress towards readiness for the next level. One parent praised the school for offering a financial aid seminar and reviews of curricula at parent teacher meetings which help families to understand the challenge of getting their children to meet graduation requirements and be ready for college life.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Student engagement in learning was evident across classrooms. However, lessons did not consistently incorporate rigorous tasks and high-level peer-to-peer discussions.

Impact

There are missed opportunities to consistently engage all students in tasks and discussions that reflect higher-order thinking and result in high quality work products across disciplines.

Supporting Evidence

- Some lessons demonstrate use of multiple entry points to meet the diverse needs of students. In a chemistry class, students engaged in hands-on investigations of interactions between acids and bases. Wearing gloves and goggles, the teacher told students to observe and write about what happened as he poured acid on baking soda in a cup. The teacher used an interactive white board to display a diagram of the interactions and summarize teaching points. After brief questioning about what was observed, the teacher presented two scenarios for students to engage a peer in a turn and talk about what each would do if accidentally splashed with bleach or battery acid. The teacher invited a few students to share their responses and then distributed a list of acids and bases for students to continue to identify and record which base neutralizes a given acidic element. By contrast, in an English class, most students worked on a Do Now about qualities of a good President, with little interaction with peers or the teacher, for most of the observed period.
- In a biology class, students worked with peers at four different learning stations to explore how the environment interacts with living and non-living things. One station presented students with questions about food chains and food webs, another involved comparing and contrasting fossils and other artifacts, a third required students to dissect an owl pellet to determine the diet of the owl, and the fourth station called for an examination of texts about natural selection among species of elephants. Students could be heard discussing noticings, wonderings, and theories as they moved around the room to peruse activities and artifacts at each station. Similar opportunities for high-level peer-to-peer discussions were not evident in several other classrooms. For example, most students in an algebra class rotated across stations, solving one problem at each station without any conversation with a peer or two. The teacher commented on common errors seen across the room but did not facilitate a discussion of answers by students.
- Some tasks make few demands on students, many of whom finish tasks quickly and sit waiting for peers to finish or for next steps from the teacher. For example, in an Algebra 2 class students were directed to work on problems in a workbook; however, some finished quickly and moved to off-task conversations with peers, while others moved on to the next set of problems in their workbook. Similarly, in an English class where the teacher directed students to use a rubric to edit the work of a peer and provide “warm and cool feedback,” some students quickly read their partner’s paper, offered a brief comment that was not linked to the rubric, and moved on to their own conversations that were not related to the assigned task. Additionally, most student work seen in the classrooms and student folders consisted of short responses to questions on a graphic organizer or guided writing template that did not call for higher-order thinking. A task for a grade 11 student involved listing words on a graphic organizer to describe a character in a novel.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Teachers are beginning to use student work and data to develop and revise curricula with a focus on the alignment of units of study to Common Core and other relevant learning standards.

Impact

Teachers are designing curricula and tasks to provide all students with access to engaging learning experiences that build college and career readiness skills.

Supporting Evidence

- Through teamwork, teachers engage in ongoing development of unit and lesson plans to create alignment to Common Core and Regents Standards and the instructional shifts. Lesson plans reflect some applications of the Webb's *Depth of Knowledge (DOK)* continuum to create tasks that offer students opportunities to engage in activities such as citing relevant evidence from texts in response to questions, describing steps for solving complex problems in math, and presenting opinions about and summaries of reading selections. For example, a task for grade 11 students requires them to report on applications of themes from *The Crucible* to their own lives, and a task for grade 10 students asks them to explore some lifestyle changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution. However, tasks that illustrate in-depth writing and research activities across grades and content areas are not yet consistently evident in unit plans, student folders, or on bulletin boards.
- Curricula across grades and subjects include modules of instruction from *EngageNY* for English, Algebra, and Geometry and teacher-developed and Regents-aligned curricula guide instruction in Chemistry, Living Environment, Global History and US History. There are also units of instruction related to Advanced Placement courses in English literature, computer science, and physics. Additionally, there are units of curricula that support instruction in an Extended Learning Time program and an afterschool program designed to provide students with additional exposure to standards-based learning activities. Curricula for Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses in music, theatre arts, architecture, computer programming, and electrical technology further extend college and career related learning opportunities for some students. The school leader reported that teachers of new courses such as Algebra 2/Trigonometry are working to align their curricula to Common Core Learning Standards.
- The school's curricula incorporate instructional materials to heighten engagement in learning by all students, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities. The materials include manipulatives and technology-based learning tools such as interactive white boards and web-based resources such as *Castle Learning* and *BrainPOP*, which are used as tools for intervention and enrichment activities. Some teachers at the team meetings described adjustments in curricula and instruction to increase student learning, based on their analysis of student work. For example, one teacher noted that analysis of student writing samples resulted in a deep focus on tasks that engage students in annotation to help them flag relevant details to support answers to constructed response questions. Other teachers continue to explore the design of tasks that reflect findings from student work derived from applications of Writing is Thinking through Strategic Inquiry (WITsi) strategies to improve student writing across the school.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Analysis of student performance data highlights student progress towards learning goals and is beginning to inform student self-assessment and staff adjustments to meet student needs.

Impact

Teachers and students have some data with which to implement next steps for improving student achievement. Instructional and curricular adjustments that effectively target individual student needs are not yet consistently evident across classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders' assessment records indicate that teachers implement common pre- and post-unit assessments, *Schoolnet*, and Measures of Student Learning baseline assessments to evaluate student proficiency on performance tasks. Further, in January 2016, teachers administered Regents exams to eligible students including students in grade 9. There are also *Student Annual Needs Determination Inventory (SANDI)* benchmark assessments for some students with disabilities and teacher-developed assessments, including mock Regents exams that some teachers use in determining areas of proficiency as well as gaps in student learning. The school leader indicated that teachers are working on alignment of all assessments to curricula to further determine areas of proficiency as well as gaps in student progress towards learning goals across grades and disciplines.
- Teachers at a team meeting presented notes illustrating that they re-teach specific concepts to improve student mastery of targeted skills based on data from unit assessments. For example, one teacher explained that after noting "weak sentences" in student writing, teachers brainstormed to identify and incorporate new strategies in re-teaching for mastery of this skill area. Other teachers described the use of data from Skedula, a data-driven classroom portal, to identify and assign struggling students to interventions, such as additional tutoring in Regents preparation sessions and remediation classes after school and on Saturdays. However, data analysis that consistently results in targeted adjustments to curricula and classroom instruction that meet student needs is not yet evident across content areas and grades.
- During the student meeting, most students reported that they use rubrics and checklists to assess their work and plan how to get a high score. Further, during classroom visits, some teachers were observed engaging in ongoing assessment of learning via activities such as discussions of Do Nows, exit tickets, whole class questioning, check-ins via group or one-to-one conferencing, and reviews of classwork. In a Global History integrated co-teaching class that involved students watching video clips and viewing pictures of life in desert lands in Africa, the teacher posed questions and asked students to explain their responses by citing evidence from the video and pictures. Both teachers circulated around the room, checking on individual student responses and restating concepts to clarify responses. Similar checks for understanding, with immediate follow up on findings about learning needs detected, were not noted in most of the other classrooms visited.

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

A majority of teachers engage in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations that are focused on school goals, including implementation of Common Core-aligned instruction across content areas and grades. Distributed leadership structures are utilized throughout the school.

Impact

The inclusion of staff members in a variety of teams empowers them to work collaboratively towards strengthening instructional practices school-wide. Distributed leadership practices result in staff members having a voice in high-level decisions about teaching and learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers are programmed for professional learning activities that allow them to collaborate regularly on improvements to their practice. Minutes of meetings show weekly common planning meetings that provide for targeted focus on lesson and unit plans and content-specific strategies to improve instruction and student performance. For example, during common planning sessions teams of teachers develop unit tasks that incorporate applications of the WITsi strategy that has been implemented to improve student outcomes, such as credit accumulation and course pass rates. Teacher team meeting records also show inquiry work linked to a mentoring program that provides guidance and tutoring to address deficits in the performance of targeted students, including students in grade 11. The principal credits teamwork for success towards goals, such as having an increasingly larger number of students being on track for graduation this year than in previous years.
- During an inquiry team meeting observed, the teachers reflected on the performance of some students on a Global History task to determine the extent to which the work met the expectations of the applicable Common Core and Regents Standards. The task illustrated the application of a WITsi strategy, requiring students to create sentences with transition words such as “because, but and so,” after viewing pictures and a video about changes in the Sahel region of Africa over time and the impact on the lives of the people living there today. The teachers shared ideas about how to improve the students’ work based on criteria aligned to the expectations of the WITsi strategy. Next steps included additional tasks involving highlighting of text, more practice in analysis of information from videos and other artifacts, and use of Regents-aligned question stems in re-teaching for improved student mastery of the targeted writing skills.
- Through their service on a variety of teams, many teachers participate in school-level decision-making linked to school goals. Some teacher leaders serve as program coordinators, including a testing coordinator and a coordinator of student affairs, with direct responsibility for school-wide activities for staff and students. Teacher leaders, such as grade and department team leaders, are members of a professional development committee which collaborates with school leaders and others to assess growth and gaps in teaching and learning and helps to design and implement related professional learning activities for all staff. Other teacher leaders include members of the attendance team, Crisis Intervention Team, School Leadership Team, and CTE team, all of whom work with all staff to achieve the goal of improved student achievement. For example, the CTE team is exploring the addition of courses such as welding and carpentry to increase career and technical education options for students.