



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

Cypress Hills Collegiate Preparatory School

High School K659

**999 Jamaica Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11208**

Principal: Amy Yager

**Date of review: April 12, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Michele Ashley**

The School Context

Cypress Hills Collegiate Preparatory School is a high school with 241 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 7% Asian, 22% Black, 66% Hispanic, and 4% White students. The student body includes 16% English Language Learners and 20% students with disabilities. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 78.3%.

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 <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	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	Additional Findings	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	Celebration	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

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

Teacher teams systematically analyze teacher and student work, and teachers play an integral role in key decisions.

Impact

Collaboration and distributive leadership result in improvements in teacher practice and mastery of goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- Schoolwide teams include grade level and department inquiry teams, Writing is Thinking Through Strategic Inquiry (WITsi), and a cabinet inquiry team. Inquiry teams utilize the research-based Strategy Inquiry approach and Data Wise tools from Harvard University to support their inquiry work. Staff analyzes assessment data, student work, and changes in performance levels after implementation of specific teaching practices. During the WITsi grade 9 and 10 meeting, teachers reviewed writing samples for targeted students and charted their observations on a graphic organizer. After analyzing the student work and reflecting on key questions, teachers shared their findings and reflections and followed directions to “use the tennis chart to make an evidence-based plan for moving forward.” Teachers made plans to revise current WITsi templates to support expanded writing and to create a universal template with examples from each content area that teachers can use across grades and subjects.
- School leadership attributes shared improvements in teacher practice, specifically relating to demonstrating knowledge of content and pedagogy, to inquiry team collaboration. This year, an additional six teachers are rated highly effective in this area as compared to ratings for 2014. Furthermore, teachers interviewed shared that they have improved in their ability to identify trends and gaps in student learning because of their work as a team. Teachers tracked performance of Cohort R students on essays written for Regents exams in 2013 and 2015, and found the average essay score rose from 2.84 to 4.17. Seven out of nine English Language Learners showed improvement in the average essay score. Ten out of eleven of the targeted students who were not successful on the January 2015 English Regents exam demonstrated improvement in writing by passing the June 2015 exam with an average score of 74.
- Lead teachers on the English as a New Language (ENL), WITsi, science, social studies, math, and Spanish inquiry teams are also members of the School Leadership Team. Other school committees include at least one of the lead teachers ensuring that information is shared across the school. The cabinet inquiry committee is involved in a collaborative study of the Strategic Inquiry approach using Data Wise protocols relative to student engagement as outlined in Danielson’s *Framework for Teaching*. Members conduct observations to norm ratings and feedback to teachers and identify school wide patterns and trends to inform professional development. Key decisions include curriculum adjustments, developing a common vocabulary for discussing data, and implementation of school wide best practices in the teaching of writing.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best and are aligned to the curricula, and student work products and discussions evidence high levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact

Alignment to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and use of the instructional shifts to inform pedagogy results in high levels of student thinking and participation. However, there are missed opportunities for students to take the lead and own their learning experience.

Supporting Evidence

- School leadership articulated that students learn best when there is high-level questioning, student discussion and a transparency in learning that provides students with a clear understanding of what is expected. To this end, all lessons include an essential question, focus question, and instructional outcome. Across classrooms visited, teachers discussed the essential question, focus question, and instructional outcomes with students and displayed these statements on charts and boards as a reference. In an ELA lesson on *A Streetcar Named Desire*, the focus question was, “What characters or forces contribute to Blanche’s predicament in scene 11?” In a math lesson, the essential question was, “When can we use exponential functions in real life?” In a science lesson, the instructional outcome stated, “Students will learn why scientists study stem cells by writing a claim and using evidence in an article to support the claim.” While teaching is aligned to school leader beliefs about the importance of high-level questioning, not all discussions reflected a high level of student ownership of learning.
- In alignment with leadership expectations, teachers provided opportunities for students to respond to questions using text-based answers and to write from sources. In an ELA lesson, students used the focus question to engage in a round-robin discussion about the impact of other characters and events on the main character of the text. Students cited particular events as evidence of their opinions. One student stated, “You can tell Stanley is smart because in the chapter he waits for the perfect moment before he acts.” In a science class, the students analyzed and then cited primary and secondary sources to answer the focus question, “What were the causes and consequences of the Green Revolution?” Students also used sources to develop a “phantom document” that would provide missing information. One student stated that she would like to have a firsthand account from one of the individuals whose lives were impacted by the revolution. She stated, “We are not getting information from the people.” Across classrooms teacher questioning and prompts pushed student thinking and required students to provide evidence for their claims.
- In most classrooms, teachers provided students with the questions and allotted time for student discussion. In a science classroom, students formulated arguments on whether or not stem cells should be used to grow body parts. There was evidence of student facilitation in this classroom where one student called on classmates to share their thoughts and provide feedback to each other. One student stated, “I liked your response because you provided details, and your first piece of evidence was strong.” Although most classrooms allowed for high-level discussions, opportunities for students to lead discussions without teacher prompting were limited to two of the classrooms visited.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and tasks for all students emphasize rigorous habits across grades and subjects.

Impact

Purposeful decisions to align curricula and integrate key shifts build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers use the *EngageNY* curricula in ELA and math and the New Visions curriculum in social studies and science across all grades to ensure alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards. School leaders and teachers have made purposeful decisions to emphasize close reading and the use of text-based evidence across content areas. The math curriculum was analyzed to promote greater emphasis on conceptual understanding and fluency. To build coherence across the grades teachers categorize math skills into three categories, “must do”, “can do” and “extension” problems. Must do problems are aligned to grade level standards, can do problems are more difficult and may require support and extension problems are used to challenge high performing students.
- An ENL lesson plan, based on the text *Romeo and Juliet*, states that students will determine how Romeo’s declaration that he is a fool develops a central idea of the text. To do this task, students are required to conduct a close read of identified acts and scenes to find textual evidence that supports the central ideas conveyed. Math lessons delineate plans for developing a conceptual understanding via a detailed mini-lesson. A math lesson plan on algebraic functions includes the essential question, “When can we use exponential functions in real life?” The student activity requires students to determine which of three possible payment options for their dream job would have the greatest payoff in 30 days. The lesson pairs students to solve the problem and gives them the option of using a table or graph to support their response. Across classrooms, teachers integrate opportunities for students to provide text-based answers and apply knowledge to new situations in alignment with instructional shifts in ELA and math.
- Across curricula, teachers use a balance of informational and literary texts. Lesson plans include a variety of literary texts including *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Street Car Named Desire*. Teachers also incorporate articles and historical documents into lessons across content areas. A science lesson includes a variety of articles, such as, “Common Misconceptions about Stem Cell Therapy”, “A Noble Nose Grown in a Lab,” and “Who Nose What They’ll Grow Next.” A history lesson includes 10 historical documents on the Green Revolution. An ENL lesson plan states that students will conduct a shared close reading of a biography of Angela Ramirez to answer the prompt, “What questions do you think the author asked to get this information?” and complete a WITsi expanded sentence task based on information gathered from the biography.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use and create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that align with the school's curricula, and teachers use common assessments to determine student progress toward goals.

Impact

Assessment data provides actionable feedback to teachers and students, and teachers use results to adjust curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Assessment data provides teachers with feedback on student learning that is used to inform next instructional steps. Based on Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) data, teachers identified a need to focus on writing and to provide additional instruction to students to support them in responding to text-dependent questions and identifying supporting evidence. Analysis of baseline assessments in the content areas also provided information on specific areas of need, such as mapping skills, graphing, and algebraic functions, as focus areas within the social studies, science, and math content areas, respectively.
- Teachers use content specific rubrics and provide additional comments in the margins of student work. A Quick Write Rubric identifies the standard assessed, Focus Question, Content Expectations, and Aligns to the Grading Policy, specifically, highly developed (85-100), developing (75-84), and underdeveloped (60-74). Content of the rubric includes pre-writing materials, inferences and claims, evidence, and analysis and conventions. Students interviewed clearly articulated their next steps based on the feedback provided. One student shared that next time she would analyze her evidence more and provide a summary of her findings.
- Teachers in every grade administer a baseline MOSL assessment in October and an end-of-year MOSL assessment in May using a New York City ELA Performance Task. Teachers also administer common baseline, midterm, and final content-based exams in ELA, science, social studies, and math, and have created common rubrics used to assess the quality of the student responses. Teachers in all grades also administer baseline WITsi writing assessment to all students. This year, the grade 9 and 10 baseline WITsi assessments were administered in September 2015, and the grade 11 and 12 assessments were administered in December 2015. Based on a need to improve students' writing skills, the school has incorporated WITsi writing strategies and the use of text evidence throughout the content areas. As a result, teachers observed and noted writing improvements across content areas based on WITsi tasks and quick write assessments.
- WITsi strategies, including sentence expansion and the use of the conjunctions, but, because, and so, have been included across content areas. A Living Environment lesson requires students to write a claim about why stem cells should or should not be used to regrow new body parts. The prompt reminds student to "Be sure to add because, but, or so, to make your claim stronger." Teachers have also adjusted curriculum maps to include additional lessons on graphing and mapping skills. A social studies lesson plan incorporates mapping skills and includes the essential question, "How can we build our knowledge of migration through the analysis of maps, texts, and charts?"

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations and provide training to all staff. School leaders and staff offer feedback and ongoing support to families.

Impact

Clear communication and systems hold staff accountable and help families understand their children’s progress toward meeting learning expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders communicate expectations through faculty meetings, professional development on Monday afternoons during the mandated professional learning time, and they send weekly announcements to all staff that outlines weekly events, deadlines, and expectations. Leadership shares written and verbal feedback and next steps on teacher performance that focuses on the school’s instructional goals for writing, planning, and preparation, and effective questioning. School leaders also supported the development of the Strategic Inquiry Newsletter, a vehicle to highlight best practices, professional learning, and effective inquiry strategies. One Strategic Inquiry Newsletter included articles on Data Visualization, the Strategy of the Week, and Science Sees Growth in Graphing. Teacher leaders and administration participate in training to facilitate strategic inquiry with groups of teachers. Additionally, 98% of all teachers have been trained to implement the sentence expansion strategies of the WITsi program.
- During Monday professional development sessions, school leaders engage faculty in professional learning on the norming of teacher practices with an eye on providing suitable support around developing instructional foci, planning curriculum, and embedding WITsi strategies. Additionally, a coach, assigned by the principal, meets weekly with various teachers to help them improve their practices in specific components of the *Framework for Teaching*, as identified by their previous year’s ratings in Advance.
- School leaders and staff communicate with families via phone calls, PupilPath, online and hard copy progress reports, a monthly family newsletter, a family resource guide, workshops, and monthly grade-level town hall meetings. The newsletter includes information about academics and school goals. Staff has conducted workshops for parents on college planning and the application process. Parents interviewed shared that the school communicates well and works hard to make sure students are prepared for the next level of learning. One parent shared that her daughter was falling behind in her credits for graduation, so the school worked with her to create an instructional program that incorporated the required courses that would allow her child to graduate on time. The majority of parents interviewed utilize PupilPath to review their children’s grades, monitor their progress, and keep track of lateness and attendance. All parents present reported that they review progress reports made available every two weeks and use the information to communicate with teachers when they feel their child is falling behind or is in need of additional support.