



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

Coalition School for Social Change

High School M409

**2351 First Avenue
Manhattan
NY 10035**

Principal: Geralda Valcin

**Date of review: May 26, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Gary Knight**

The School Context

Coalition School for Social Change is a high school with 233 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 4% Asian, 40% Black, 51% Hispanic, and 3% White students. The student body includes 7% English Language Learners and 32% 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 79.5%.

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	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	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	Developing

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff. School leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations that are connected to a path to college and career readiness.

Impact

School leaders provide training and have a system of accountability for those expectations. The school leaders and staff offer ongoing feedback to help families understand student progress toward those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leader sets the expectation that students should be provided engaging learning experiences that allow students access to the curricula and responsibility for their learning. In addition, the school promotes the idea and the expectation that students will be exposed to ample opportunities to practice writing across the curricula. Communication of expectations happens in several ways including: emails, newsletters, one-on-one conversations, and professional development.
- A review of a professional development document indicates that incorporating writing into daily lessons is expected. It also addresses what lesson plans must have, how to align the lesson plan's aim with the objective, and how to develop appropriately challenging questions. Emails from school leaders to staff include statements such as, "The best test preparation is meaningful instruction," and that teachers are to focus on questioning and discussion in order to be able to engage students in genuine discussion with one another. The school leaders conduct ongoing observations with feedback as a method of teacher accountability for academic expectations.
- The school communicates with families via newsletters, progress reports, color-coded report cards, parent workshops, Family Night, and the *PupilPath* online grading system. At the onset of the year, the school hosts a Back-to-School Night, which provides an opportunity for families to meet staff, to become acquainted with their children's curricula and to sign up for tutorials on how to use *PupilPath*. Letters are also sent home to parents to make them aware of whether their children's graduation or promotion status is in jeopardy. Ongoing events are held throughout the year to provide families with additional information on their children's academics and college and career options. For example, the school has a college application week for students and families, which includes college fairs, presentations and workshops.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to the curricula and beginning to reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best. Across classrooms, teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact

Teaching practices are informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and the instructional shifts; however, due to inconsistencies in teaching practices, there is uneven engagement in appropriately challenging tasks and uneven demonstration of higher-order thinking skills in student work, including the work of English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's leadership and staff believe that students learn best by being engaged in lessons and taking charge of their learning. Lessons observed during classroom visits included analyzing primary and secondary documents, citing textual evidence and writing an argument using supporting evidence. For example, in a science lesson on the functions of enzymes, students worked in groups to understand the function of the enzyme, explain the role of a catalyst, and cite evidence from the text for comparison and contrast. In a global studies class on human rights abuses in China, students were analyzing and discussing primary and secondary sources and using supporting evidence to write an argument.
- Although evidence of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and the instructional shifts were present, there was limited evidence of teaching strategies that supported the stated belief that students learn best by doing and taking charge. Most classrooms were teacher dominated, offering little opportunities for students to fully engage in their learning. For example, a grade 6 math lesson on imaginary numbers provided no opportunities for student discussion. Similarly, during a humanities lesson, there were missed opportunities to infuse student centered activities. Some classes had students seated in pairs or groups; however, accountable talk and student discussion observed, was limited.
- Across classrooms, there was some evidence of multiple entry points observed. In a grade 9 science class, students were provided images and tactile learning activities to address multiple learning styles. Students were also given a Cornell note-taking template to scaffold learning and to provide access for learners. In a grade 10 global studies class, the use of primary and secondary source documents including: video, graphs, photos, cartoons and quotes was observed. Through the use of laptops, students were provided additional access to the task at hand. Performance tasks were differentiated based on level of difficulty. There was a challenge task and a supporting task in which students were provided a graphic organizer to capture claims, evidence from documents, and supporting evidence from outside information. However, in most classes, differentiation of tasks was not observed.
- Across classrooms, higher order thinking questions were not present. Students were not appropriately challenged in their work. In an English class, students were told to peer-assess research papers. However, students were not clear on how to do so. Some students were randomly assigning scores with no clear justification. One student said, "I guess," as her partner tried to justify a score. She then said, "I'll give it a 3." He said, "O.K."

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, integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits.

Impact

The school leaders make purposeful decisions to build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all schools. Higher order skills are planned for across grades and subjects for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of curricula planning documents indicates alignment of the curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards and the integration of the instructional shifts. For example, a grade 10 unit on *Macbeth* established goals for using textual evidence to support the analysis of central ideas, character development, figurative language, and argumentative writing. A grade 10 unit on *Revolutions of Thought* established goals that include, but were not limited to, citing specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, determining the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source, determining the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, and writing arguments.
- Teachers provide each other peer feedback on planning documents based on Common Core Learning Standards alignment, alignment of assessment with Common Core Learning Standards, student discussions, essential questions and rigor. Teachers provide evidence of each category and offer each other feedback for revisions. The school leaders provide professional development on lesson planning and give feedback to teachers along with accompanying graphs to provide visuals on where the school community stands in meeting the planning expectations.
- Teachers are provided staff development on the use Costa's level of questioning, which they use to guide planning of higher order thinking, and planning of essential questions, which are included in planning documents. For example, a grade 10 English Language Arts plan asks, "How does Shakespeare's use of language contribute to the development of his characters and themes in his play?" An earth science planning document asks, "How does interaction between the Earth's lithosphere, atmosphere, biosphere and hydrosphere lead to the wide range of complex landscapes we see today? And how do climate and types of materials influence the landscapes we see in different regions on Earth?"

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

The school is developing in their use of common assessments to measure student progress towards goals across grades and subjects. In addition, across classrooms, teachers' assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

The results of common assessments are inconsistently used to adjust curricula and instruction. Teachers inconsistently make effective adjustments to meet students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- The school administers baseline assessments and mock Regents exams in English, Algebra, Living Environment, Earth Science, Global History and U.S. History. On-demand writing and Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) assessments are also administered. However, based on review of evidence, adjustments to curricula and instruction are not being made across all subjects.
- Analysis of a grade 11 post-mock Regents text analysis responses, the Global History Regents Exam, and Living Environment mock Regents, resulted in revisions to instruction. For example, the Living Environment data revealed three questions where most students struggled. As a result, the teacher developed a revision task centered on the skills lacking and provided small group instruction, which also allowed for reassessment of the skills.
- There was some evidence of ongoing checks for understanding across classrooms in teachers' assessment practices. The most common form of checking for understanding was the use of exit tickets. Although not observed, some lessons did plan for it. For example, in Earth Science, students were to summarize the role of a catalyst in chemical reactions, and in global studies, students were to do a quick write explaining what they can conclude about the history of human rights in China, with fully developed paragraphs and the use of evidence from the documents provided, and at least one piece of additional outside information to support their opinions.
- In only one class visited, humanities, was there evidence of a teacher using a tracker to document students' understanding throughout the lesson. The tracker captured which students used text evidence, made connections to World War II and participated in the lesson. In all other classes visited, during teachers' circulation of room, questioning, and students' sharing out, there was no form of teacher tracking of students' understanding observed, nor was there any evidence presented to reflect such practice.

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations that promote the achievement of school goals and implementation of Common Core Learning Standards. Teacher teams analyze assessment data and student work for students they share or on whom they are focused.

Impact

The professional collaborations are strengthening the instructional capacity of teachers, but this work does not typically result in progress toward goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers work in grade level teams and across content teams to discuss curricula and student data. The professional collaboration allows teachers to identify skills and sub-skills as the focal point and not just the test question itself. It helps teachers to better understand the increased need to categorize relationships among test questions. Teachers shared that the conversations allow them to see where skills tie into what they are teaching in other content areas, and support the reinforcement of skills across disciplines. Another teacher shared that teacher teams helped with taking something that could be overwhelming, but through peer input and ideas, she was able to break skills into sub-skills and make the process more manageable as a teacher.
- Based on observations and review of meeting minutes and agendas, the teacher team structure is a practice in which the majority of teachers routinely engage. Observation of a team meeting evidenced teachers completing the analysis of Global Studies Regents-based assessment questions, discussing findings specific to the skill of understanding cause and effect, sharing strategies for addressing deficits identified, and selecting the strategy to use for next instructional moves. The team noted test question language that indicated a need for students to identify as cause and/or effect. For example, students could be cued to look for phrases like “this led to,” “this was a major reason for,” “this resulted in” and “this impacted.”
- Although teacher teams are in place, and teachers are seeing the difference in their instructional capacity, the impact on student progress towards goals for groups of students is still developing. There is data that speaks to some growth with students using the “because, but, so” (BBS), strategy as a means of improving their writing. For example, a *Writing Is thinking Strategic Inquiry* sentence tracker for a targeted group of students, shows 4 out 7 students are successful with the BBS method, but 0 out of 7 are successful with appositives, and 1 out of 7 are successful with sentence types, varied sentence starters and varied precise vocabulary. In addition, the impact of student progress across grades and subject areas is not evident.