



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

**George Washington Carver High School for the
Sciences**

High School Q272

**143-10 Springfield Boulevard
Queens
NY 11413**

Principal: Dr. Janice Sutton

**Date of review: April 7, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Adam Breier**

The School Context

George Washington Carver High School for the Sciences is a high school with 504 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 9% Asian, 77% Black, 11% Hispanic, and 1% White students. The student body includes 3% English Language Learners and 14% students with disabilities. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 90.1%.

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	Additional Findings	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	Focus	Underdeveloped

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff and have a system of accountability for those expectations. School leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations that are connected to a path to college and career readiness.

Impact

Teachers are supported to meet the high expectations to which they are held accountable. In addition, students and families are supported regarding a path to college and career.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders conduct frequent classroom observations and provide feedback utilizing the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* as the standard for professionalism and high quality instruction. Each rated item on classroom observation reports includes language from the rubric along with specific detailed evidence from the observed class to support the rating. Next steps for teacher improvement are included at the close of each observation report.
- A path to college and career readiness is communicated to students through Advanced Placement (AP) courses availability. AP courses available for students are English Language & Composition, English Literature & Composition, Statistics, Environmental Science, Macroeconomics, and United States History. College and career readiness is communicated to all students beginning in the 9th grade with college information events catered to students from grades 9 through 11 and their families.
- In October, school leaders and teachers hosted an annual College Application Week during which teachers were paired with a group of up to eight students. Teachers personally guide their respective cohorts through the college application process, ensuring that students were taken through the entire process of applying to college. In addition, on-site college admissions events were held at the school the following November along with a college fair. Presentations at the school and trips to colleges have taken place or are planned for the remainder of the school year at multiple colleges, some of which are Berkeley College, St. Francis College, State University of New York (SUNY), City University of New York (CUNY) York College, and Columbia University.
- Parents praised efforts made by the school to keep them consistently informed about students' progress toward college and career readiness. One parent said "They are always having workshops for us on financial aid and college applications." Another parent added, "We're also getting constant information from PupilPath. As soon as my kid is off track, I know."

Area of Focus

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

A minority of teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations on teams. Teacher teams do not typically analyze assessment data and student work.

Impact

The work of teacher teams has not fostered collaborations resulting in increased student achievement. Teacher team meetings do not lead to shared improvements in teacher practice or goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- Two teams, representing 12 of the 27 teachers employed at this school, are engaged in structured professional collaborations. Members of the grade 10 teacher team reported that they met weekly. However, evidence shows that this team conducted its first meeting of the school year on January 11, 2016. This team did not meet again until February 29, 2016 at which point their meetings began to occur weekly.
- Grade 10 teacher team agenda items include New York State (NYS) Regents Exam proctoring procedures, review of team members' phone extensions, class trip protocols, and respecting colleagues' schedules to avoid conflicts among clubs and programs. The earliest mention of inquiry work preparation appears on an agenda dated March 22, 2016.
- During the grade 10 teacher team meeting, teachers analyzed student work resulting from an assignment in which students were to read four texts and write a well-developed argument based on those documents using evidence from at least three texts. Teachers had an agenda and used a protocol. However, evidence revealed that this was the first occasion that this, or any, teacher team in this school has analyzed student work this school year.
- Whereas the grade 10 teacher team identified a student group on March 28, 2016, discussion during the second teacher team interview revealed that no student groups had been identified by any other teacher team.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core State Standards, integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills.

Impact

Curricula are coherent and promote college and career readiness. Additionally, curricula emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills across grades and subjects.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of curricular documents revealed alignment to the Common Core State Standards and New York State content standards where applicable as well as integration of the instructional shifts. The Algebra 2 curriculum includes a unit in which students would apply math concepts to the real-world situation of college cost analysis. The grade 9 English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum includes consistent references to the citation of textual evidence in written responses. One example reads “Be sure to include evidence from the text that support your response. How do the latest vignettes [from *The House on Mango Street*] differ from earlier vignettes we have read in the past?”
- A review of curricular documents revealed purposeful planning aligned to the school’s instructional focus of using questioning and discussion across grades and subjects. Lesson plans consistently detailed high-level questions. A grade 11 ELA lesson plan indicates that students will discuss “How can voting have an educative impact on citizens?” “How does the author support the argument against compulsory voting?” or “How can random voting affect the democratic process?” This lesson plan included the names of students for whom the task needed to be read loud. A grade 10 Global Studies lesson plan indicates that students will discuss “Why was the presence of Soviet missiles in Cuba a problem for the US?” and “Analyze the responses of the US and Soviet governments during the crisis.” This lesson plan included specific adjustments for students with disabilities and ELLs.
- Samples of reviewed performance task assessments emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order thinking skills across the grades and subjects. For example, a reviewed performance task in a grade 9 ELA *Romeo & Juliet* unit requires that students “Write a eulogy for Juliet from the point of view of another main character.” A grade 9 Living Environment lesson requires that students respond in writing to the following “A person cannot see a single cotton thread 10 feet away, but if you wound thousands of threads together into a rope, it would be visible much further away. How is this statement analogous to our extraction of DNA and what you were able to observe?” This lesson plan includes the names of students with disabilities along with the modifications designed for them to ensure their participation.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are beginning to reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best. Work products and discussions inconsistently reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact

Inconsistent teaching strategies that reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best results in varying levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- Though school leaders believe in the importance of using Webb’s *Depth of Knowledge* to inform the design of low and high level questions, across the classes visited, questioning was generally low level and resulted in student responses characterized by one word answers directed back to the teacher. In a science class, a teacher asked students “What did you observe?” and “Explain the process of this lab.” In a math class a teacher asked “Explain why it’s a right angle.” In English Language Arts (ELA) classes, teachers asked questions such as “What are the definitions of democratic and advocate?” and “Who are the four authors we’ve studied?”
- Though school leaders believe in the importance of using student to student discussion as a means to provide guided instruction, student to student discussion was inconsistently observed across classrooms. In a science class, students conducted an experiment while talking, discussing the process within their respective groups. In an Algebra class, the teacher instructed students to call on each other after sharing their learnings that resulted from peer conversations. In a math class, students were seated in a “U” shape around the room without being asked to neither discuss their work with a partner nor share their work for peer editing. In a grade 9 ELA class, students responded to questions about the nature of Hip Hop artists’ motivation to write directly to the teacher.
- In a social studies class, the teacher instructed students to share their writing with a partner. In a science class, all students participated in the experiment to extract DNA from strawberry cells. However, in a math class, 4 students responded to the teacher’s request that all students indicate if they understood a problem that had been demonstrated for them. In an ELA class, a core group of six students volunteered definitions to the 2 words being discussed, while a majority of the students in the class sat quietly.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create rubrics and grading policies that are loosely aligned with the school's curricula. Common assessments are in place but results are inconsistently used to adjust instruction.

Impact

Feedback to students regarding student achievement is inconsistent and limited. Use of common assessment data is mainly used for programming purposes with little impact on curricular or instructional adjustments.

Supporting Evidence

- Review of posted student work products revealed the following examples of teacher feedback: "Your argument is convincing but I wanted to hear more from you here," "Great work! Next time be more careful with your responses and how they are worded," "You have convinced me and that is the mark of a good argument essay, and "Excellent. Now analyze how these differences will affect the outcome of the wars respectively." However, the majority of posted work in classrooms and in halls contained no feedback or feedback lacking enough clarity to effectively guide the student toward improvement. Examples of observed unclear feedback were: "Be more careful with your responses," "You work well together," and "I agree that this is one of the best ways to voice your opinion."
- During a classroom visit, a student said "The teacher has them, I think" when asked to produce any copies of graded work that contained teacher feedback.
- Teacher feedback on work provided by students during the student interview contained specific comments related to grammatical errors and their negative effect on AP exam and college paper grades. One example of actionable feedback was "Next time you get a project, please take the time to make it look like one unified project. You begin to touch upon some important themes, but your analysis lacks real depth, lacks questioning." However, only four of the eight students interviewed were able to produce examples of work that contained teacher feedback.
- School leaders and teachers use New York State (NYS) Regents Exam student scores as common assessment data for the purpose of adjusting curricula and instruction. However, this practice is in beginning stages. There was no evidence that NYS Regents Exam data is parsed or analyzed leading to any specific curricular or instructional changes. Instead, this information is used to determine which courses should be programmed each term, along with after school exam preparatory opportunities. A teacher reported "We try to focus on students who did not pass Regents Exams. We try to enhance instruction via extra help and Castle Learning."