



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

Civic Leadership Academy

High School Q293

**45-10 94th Street
Queens
NY 11373**

Principal: Phuong Nguyen

**Date of review: January 14, 2016
Lead Reviewer: AJ Hepworth**

The School Context

Civic Leadership Academy is a high school with 469 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 9% Asian, 6% Black, 70% Hispanic, and 6% White students. The student body includes 5% English Language Learners and 16% students with disabilities. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 90.2%.

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	Celebration	Well Developed
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	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	Additional Findings	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Rigorous habits and higher order skills are emphasized in curricula tasks and are embedded in a coherent way across grades and subjects. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data for individual and groups of students.

Impact

Planning documents support opportunities for all students, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, to demonstrate their thinking and permit access to curricula and tasks that are cognitively engaging.

Supporting Evidence

- Lesson plan documents are developed for all students by both the general education teacher and the Integrated Co-Teacher (ICT). Specific modifications inclusive of prompting and one-on-one accommodations are planned for students with disabilities. Additionally, lesson plan documents reflect accommodations for self-learners, or those students that “generally do not need modifications and minimal accommodations.” A review of a Regents Living Environment lesson plan on homeostasis includes a vocabulary word worksheet with images and brief definitions provided for some students. A lesson plan document in grade 9 global studies on ancient Rome includes sentence starters, graphic organizers, and a bulleted worksheet for lower-level students.
- In grade 12 English Language Arts, students are reading *Memoirs of a Geisha* by Arthur Golden. Students are expected to connect overarching topics of the policy brief to the novel. Additional rigorous articles are provided for students to annotate and excerpt with a focus on important information and make connections to evidence they see being present in the novel. Article topics include poverty, social classes, corruption, women’s rights, and gender roles. Accommodations are provided to some students such that their article identifies specific challenging vocabulary in the text (noted by underlining) with simplified definitions at the bottom of the page and guiding questions to support higher order thinking skills. The guiding questions are presented with a note for the students to “consider these questions when reading the following text.”
- Data is often used to refine tasks for groups of students when planning future lessons. A review of a lesson plan for algebra states “students will receive tiered assignments with scaffolds “ as identified on the last page of the lesson plan document according to “quick checks from Tuesday and Wednesday.” Students identified as having previously performed at a low level, will receive key vocabulary defined, written in notes, a labeled table, and guiding questions to support their development of a conclusion. A challenging college algebra course also included accommodations for students based on prior information such that they are provided a “checklist to follow when completing the square.” Students who answered the quick check correctly and completed the last two homework assignments with 85% correct are selected to be given independent work.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points for students into the curricula and discussions.

Impact

All learners, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks which reflect high levels of student thinking and participation, although opportunities for extensions and student ownership are limited.

Supporting Evidence

- Student discussions are a key element of all classes observed throughout the school. Students engage in conversations with single partners, small and large groups, and Socratic seminar styles. During a social studies class, students conducted the discussion in Socratic style with two partners for each student's speaker providing feedback and constructive criticism. Students challenged one another and provided additional evidence based on their readings about ancient Rome and made inferences such as, "So I inferred he gave power to the people," in reference to Augustus Caesar's rule over Rome. In an English Language Arts class, students reading *Othello*, discussed how they know Othello has power. Students presented their findings within their groups, although when challenged by the teacher to make connections between the reading and people's emotions, students stated they "don't understand what we are connecting?" Additionally, in a math class, the teacher asked all students to turn-and-talk with their partner about the definition of depreciation; although once challenged with the task several students were immediately redirected by one of the teachers to copy down their partner's definition who was provided with a definition to support their modified learning.
- Students in science are focused on investigation through inquiry using the 5E's (engage, explore, explain, elaborate, and evaluate). Although opportunities exist for students to explore, criteria for students to enter into the activity is not always clearly defined. During a lab investigation on the effects of understanding homeostasis and the regulation of internal versus external temperature, students were challenged with the task of designing the procedure to test regulation. Although student-led discussions provided them an opportunity to reflect on how they would collect measurable data to validate their findings, the use of specific materials was not fully understood by a majority of the class. Additionally, the limitations to how the experiment could be conducted was not clear as evidenced by several groups' methodology. Students shared that they engaged in a similar exercise when investigating cellular respiration with a finite list of materials and were able to communicate their findings.
- During a pre-calculus class, students had the opportunity to present their solution to the class and explain their unique approach to finding the solution. A digital camera was used by a student who presented his calculation both orally and visually. His strategies led to the correct answer although it was not the same approach used by all students in the class. This opportunity for student ownership and extension into class discussions and learning was not evident in many of the classes observed.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula. Additionally, teacher's assessment practices consistently reflect use of on-going checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

Actionable feedback is provided to students and teachers regarding student achievement and teachers make effective adjustments using assessment information to meet all students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Feedback is provided to students in a variety of styles to inform them of their learning. During a social studies Socratic seminar discussion on ancient Rome, students in the outer circle recorded on a feedback form interesting points of the conversation and questions for future discussion as well as a Likert scale feedback form based on evaluating the inner circle. Additionally, the teacher noted on a scale the students' level of discussion, inclusion of textual evidence, encouragement, questioning, and respect. The teachers shared they use the formative assessment results to plan their goals for future lessons.
- Students shared they use rubrics often for class work and projects, and review them prior to completing an assignment. One senior shared her college narrative essay and was able to communicate clearly what she could have improved on. She shared several drafts of her essay including the checklist which she used to self-assess according to specific criteria for structure and development. Another senior shared a similar experience with his writing of a college narrative essay and some teacher feedback notes written in the margins intended to help him know his next steps. Comments included, strong organization and description, clear elaboration, and make sure to edit out lines that make you sound unsure.
- Some teachers maintain a record of student progress on assignments to inform them of overall development on future submissions. During the writing of a theme essay for *Forest* in grade 10, the teacher maintained a student record of feedback on skills including introduction, evidence, summary position, and overall development. Positive and negative symbols inform the teacher of checks for understanding during their next conference.
- Science lessons often require students to provide support for their answers in the form of a claim, evidence, and reasoning (CER). Several reviews of student work included content specific and relevant explanations for their CER. Additionally, the teacher provided feedback on an attached post-it with next steps. For example, a teacher further challenged a student to add "some science concepts that explained your evidence better [such as] you could have included why water is important to a runners body."
- A teacher shared her lesson adjustment based on a review of formative assessments during the teaching of "What is a Marxist response to the idea of the American Dream?" The teacher modified the lesson so students could argue the merits of Marxist Communism through discussion rather than initially apply the Marxist lens to understand the Red Scare. The teacher noted students increased their understanding of Marxism through the change in lesson delivery by approaching the curricula with a different viewpoint.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff and provide training. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations for all students and offer ongoing detailed feedback and guidance/advisement.

Impact

A system of accountability for high expectations exists which supports teachers and prepares students for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of several APPR forms and insight from building leaders and staff reveals that articulation of high expectations related to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* occurs during professional development time, grade-level planning meetings, and in written feedback on evaluation forms. An English Language Arts department agenda highlights staff will identify specific and concrete instructional strategies to include in their own practice to assist students at each level to achieve improved argumentative writing. Additionally, evaluation forms from the principal include feedback suggesting, the teacher can “increase student engagement and independence” in their class through “structuring lessons to allow students to spend a majority of their time applying the skill learned in the mini-lesson.” Another evaluation form noted that although “the Common Core Algebra 2 curriculum is challenging” school leaders are “confident that [they] can implement it effectively.”
- Students communicated that they feel they are being consistently communicated high expectations that prepare them for their future as noted by one student who said, “the teachers serve as a catalyst every day because we learn from the feedback and we better ourselves based on our critique while being constructive.” Other students communicated similar sentiments regarding their awareness and preparation for the next level. A grade 9 student shared she wants to be a lawyer and her guidance counselor informed her that “there are programs with the school and summer internship opportunities,” although she has not “signed up yet for the wide array of options.”
- The entrance of the school lobby is decorated with giant poster printouts listing the names of all students recognized for their achievement in honor roll each respective marking period and for having achieved “awesome attendance.” Additionally, postings throughout the school halls offer information to students related to extracurricular opportunities such as summer internships and college and career readiness programs. One bulletin specifically informs students of the “Road Map to College Success” by each grade level. Information provided to grade 9 students includes working hard in class to get good grades, take the most challenging course you can, and participate in pre-college programs. Grade 10, 11, and 12 suggestions include: references to the PSAT, SAT, ACT, summer programs, resume workshops, school and community volunteering, college essay review, and visits to colleges, fairs, and presentations.
- Students who do not achieve the school’s successful score, 90% or above, on the English Language Arts (ELA) Regents in grade 11 are required to attend an English Regents Boot Camp offered by the school to help them learn and practice techniques and skills that will prepare them to retake the exam.

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

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations that have strengthened teacher instructional capacity and promoted implementation of Common Core Learning Standards. Teacher teams systematically analyze key elements of teacher work including classroom practice, assessment data, and student work.

Impact

Inquiry-based collaborations have resulted in school-wide instructional coherence and increased student achievement for all learners. Additionally, teacher team work has resulted in shared improvements in teacher practice and mastery of goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- When asked, all teachers shared that the inquiry process has positively improved their teaching practice. New teachers noted that the inquiry team has enabled them to grow in their unit planning and sharing of best ideas through the inquiry cycles which strengthen unit plans since feedback provided by colleagues allows for a clearer application of the *Understanding by Design* approach. It also was shared by new teachers that they can ensure that their students are getting what is necessary to prepare them for the next grade level. Veteran teachers communicated that they are continually growing and the inquiry team serves as a sounding board for ideas. Since implementing the inquiry teams three times per week, the staff has noted that the Regents results continue to climb towards near mastery for all students.
- Adjustments to curriculum are often accomplished during inquiry meetings as noted by teachers. One example included the recognition through data analysis that students were not performing as well in the poetry unit as in other content areas. The staff administered a mock ELA Regents exam after pairing poetry chronologically with the topics in the social studies curriculum and saw an increase in student engagement and understanding.
- During an inquiry team observation, staff focused on “diagnosing student strengths and weaknesses” through reviewing various levels of argumentative essays previously submitted by students. Using the rubric and student samples representing a wide array of scores from a six to a two (mastery to poor performance), the team diagnosed instructional strategies that will benefit students at each level. All team members were provided individual copies of student work and a chart to track skills, misconceptions, and next steps. Team members shared out misconceptions of what one student was able to do as opposed to another, such as “have strong claims supporting connections...although they both have the structure.” Another member shared out, “Although they both use simple transitions, [student name] did not have a rebuttal so his claim is not strengthened and he doesn’t defend his claim well, even though the elaboration is stronger in the weaker paper.”
- Teachers believe one function of their inquiry team work is to give them “the opportunity to look at student work, get ideas, collaborate, and make sure we are leading into the next grade and not repeating each other’s unit plans.” Teachers in math and ELA target specific students, especially students with disabilities and English Language Learners, by using diagnostic data to drive their lessons strategically with grouping and to provide extensions into the curriculum. Teachers shared this was previously not done.