



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

Benjamin N. Cardozo High School

High School Q415

**57-00 223rd Street
Queens
NY 11364**

Principal: Gerald Martori

**Date of review: May 12, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Claudette Essor**

The School Context

Benjamin N. Cardozo is a high school with 3,648 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 44% Asian, 21% Black, 19% Hispanic, and 15% White students. The student body includes 5% English Language Learners and 11% students with disabilities. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 93.3%.

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 | Additional Findings | 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 | Focus | 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 | Celebration | Well Developed |
| 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

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|---------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: | Well Developed |
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Findings

School leaders and staff create a culture of high expectations for teaching and learning across the school. All staff members communicate high expectations to, and partner with, families to support all students in meeting the expectations.

Impact

Effective communication of and support for high expectations result in strong partnerships among staff and families. There is shared accountability for improving teacher pedagogy and student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders communicate high expectations through a school-wide instructional focus on instruction that maximizes student thinking and engagement in learning. Teachers stated that school leaders constantly articulate explicit instructional expectations, through memos, conversations at staff meetings, newsletters and bulletins. School leaders use reviews of instructional plans, observations of lessons and analysis of student data, to hold all staff accountable for all expectations. Teacher reflections on their professional goals and practices illustrate that teachers hold themselves accountable for improvement in pedagogy and student achievement. One teacher reflected that he will “continue to implement a variety of questions to challenge students cognitively” and strive to maintain “an environment where students initiate higher order questions”.
- School leaders support all teachers towards success in meeting or exceeding instructional expectations through school-based professional learning activities, including workshops, lesson studies and inter-visitations. All teachers receive ongoing support in planning and delivering student-centered instruction, using assessment during instruction and effective questioning. Additionally, effective co-teaching practices and strategies for successful implementation of instruction aligned to Common Core and Regents Standards are part of professional learning for all staff. Many teachers participate in off-site professional learning events and turnkey what they learn to peers. For example, teachers reported that with 68 Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classes, they attended off-site workshops on creating inclusive classrooms, especially in relation to English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.
- Families stated that they are regularly invited to workshops and conferences, where they receive an overview of curricula and learn about classwork, homework, and graduation requirements for their children. They noted that staff members communicate expectations to them through text messages, telephone calls, and the school’s website. One parent reported that families partner with teachers, guidance counselors, college counselors, and other staff, to present workshops that inform families about college trips, financial aid, and requirements for college applications. Another added that families are well aware of expectations for their children as some parents serve as volunteers in the College Office and others serve as guest speakers at special events. Student performance data posted on Skedula, an online data portal, further support staff partnerships with families to accelerate student progress towards meeting expectations for the next level.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

While teachers consistently use data from assessments to generate feedback about student performance, assessment data does not consistently yield a clear portrait of student mastery of skills across content areas. Varied use of checks for understanding by teachers and student self-assessment are not yet evident across a vast majority of classrooms.

Impact

Although all teachers provide feedback on student performance, at times, feedback is not actionable and meaningful. Assessment practices do not routinely result in all students' awareness of their next steps and teacher adjustments that effectively address all students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers of core subjects such as English, math, science and social studies administer Common Core-aligned assessments to evaluate student mastery of targeted standards. Some teachers also administer mock Regents assessments aligned to the curricula for their discipline. Further, in January 2016 teachers administered Regents exams to eligible students. There are also teacher-developed assessments, including final exams in individual classrooms. The principal indicated that teachers continue to work on full alignment of all assessments to curricula to further determine areas of proficiency as well as gaps in student learning across grades and disciplines.
- All teachers of core subjects use Regents-aligned rubrics to assess writing and teachers of English Language Learners (ELLs) use rubrics from New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) to assess student progress towards mastery of targeted skills. Some teachers were also observed using exit slips or conferring with students individually in small groups and making notes. Some teachers follow up on their findings by re-stating concepts, asking questions and/or reviewing teaching points. For example, after assigning a graphing task and noting some errors on students' papers, the teacher of a Living Environment lesson stopped the lesson to remind students to label the axis and dependent and independent variables on their graphs. Similar checks for understanding with immediate follow up on findings, during instruction, were not noted in a few of the other classrooms visited.
- A majority of students stated that they use rubrics to peer-and self-assess regularly. In reflecting on a Living Environment assignment, one student noted, "I did not do well because I did not use my lab reports as part of my review for the quiz." Another student said, "I need to push myself harder by putting some of my notes on flash cards and taking practice quizzes online." Although some feedback evident on students' work consisted of teachers only circling portions of the rubric, many student work samples showed rubric-based feedback to students, via teacher comments with next steps for students to improve their work. On a thesis assignment about perceptions of women in *The Great Gatsby*, the teacher commended the student for using "convincing and relevant data and evidence to back up the claim" and advised her to "check MLA [Modern Language Association] for correct citation of works cited."

Additional Findings

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| Quality Indicator: | 1.1 Curriculum | Rating: | Proficient |
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Findings

All curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and illustrate the integration of instructional shifts. Through horizontal and vertical planning, teachers collaborate to develop rigorous tasks for all learners.

Impact

All students have access to curricula designed to promote college and career readiness and academic tasks consistently provide opportunities for all students to demonstrate higher-order thinking, across grades and subjects.

Supporting Evidence

- Modules of *EngageNY* curricula supplement curricula in core disciplines and content from the New York City scope and sequence and Common Core-aligned texts guide inquiry-based instruction in social studies and the sciences. Collections of novels, supplemented by magazines, historical documents and newspaper articles, provide content for literacy-based projects and writing tasks across grades and content areas. Each curricular unit includes a Common Core-aligned rubric for assessing levels of student mastery of content and skills and suggested strategies for all students to have access to curricula and tasks across disciplines. For some courses, a “Calendar of Lessons” further specifies the topic, sub-topic, theme, aim, objectives, New York State Standards, and time-frame for each lesson in the unit, contributing to coherence of curricula for the relevant content area.
- In addition to units of instruction for day-to-day core content classes, there are curricula for Regents level work across a range of courses. For example, teachers create units and tasks linked to a variety of texts to provide content for biology, physical science, social science and math research classes. Further, curricula offerings include content for five Advanced Placement (AP) courses in science and social studies, four in math, three in English, and two in foreign language, all of which are designed to build student readiness for college and careers. Curricula for courses such as portfolio art, music, dance, college writing, and English Senior Thesis, as well as for a financial literacy and a physical education leaders program, further infuse college and career readiness content and tasks for all learners. Content for the DaVinci screened arts program, a Mentor Law program and a journalism program round out curricula offerings.
- Driven by applications of *Universal Design for Learning (UDL)* principles and school-wide instructional priorities such as high-level, evidence-based discussions and argumentative writing across classrooms, lesson and unit plans illustrate tasks designed for both enrichment and acceleration of students across diverse ability levels in all classrooms. A project for an American History course required students to research and analyze an event which could be considered a “Turning Point” in the history of America, and explain how and why the event was a turning point in American History. A task for ELLs in an English class required them to write a thesis essay about domestic violence faced by women, as part of their reflections on class readings from varied articles and the book, *A Streetcar Named Desire: A Play*. In both cases, the plan included bulleted guidelines for the task, including timelines and steps for each phase of the task and requirements such as proper citation of sources used and a minimum number of typed pages for the final product.

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| Quality Indicator: | 1.2 Pedagogy | Rating: | Proficient |
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Findings

Across classrooms, instructional practices illustrate use of multiple entry points and scaffolds to engage all learners in rigorous tasks and high-level discussions.

Impact

Across classrooms, students participate in challenging learning activities that evoke high levels of thinking and participation in learning and generate high quality work products across disciplines.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teachers challenge students to learn new concepts and skills as they work in groups or independently. In a mixed grade Public Speaking class, students were directed to write a response to one of three writing prompts for a persuasive speech. The task involved students examining and using the concepts of ethos, pathos and logos as devices to persuade others to do something. Using one of the prompts, students independently wrote a paragraph and shared papers with a partner before presenting a speech to the whole class. One student shared her argument for her parents to give her a car, another argued that she should be allowed to go to a college away from home and a third represented someone arguing for a pay raise. Students critiqued each other's paper and those who were not presenting listened to detect whether the presenters employed examples of ethos, pathos and/or logos in their writing/speaking.
- In several classrooms, lessons demonstrated student use of questioning and discussion to engage their peers in making claims, presenting counterclaims, and refuting evidence cited in support of a position on a given topic. In an ICT English class, students engaged in peer-to-peer questioning and discussion about abuse of women by their spouses, based on their readings of articles about that topic. The students sat in groups reading segments of a play on that topic and making notes about ways in which the author uses tone to convey his message to the reader. Within their group, they discussed the reading and questioned each other about vocabulary, events and the author's purpose. Then they stated points from their learning and fielded questions from peers in a whole class share. By contrast, only a few students in a Global History class interacted with peers during the observed period as the lesson emerged as a teacher-student-teacher question and answer session.
- Instructional strategies challenge students in some classrooms to participate in learning through differentiated tasks. In an ICT history class, the teacher created stations across which groups of students rotated as they investigated "the cause of the Arab-Israeli conflict". At one station, a student led the lesson using a PowerPoint presentation to deliver a mini-lesson about Zionism. Another group of students read related articles to respond to questions on a handout, while a third group engaged in shared reading with one of the teachers in the room. Students gathered information about the plight of the citizens involved in the conflict between the Arabs and Israelis, as they moved from station to station during the lesson. Similar practices led to equally high levels of engagement in a geometry lesson, where students visited peers in other groups to get help with any problem they did not do correctly, while the teacher looked on.

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

Teachers meet regularly to analyze their practice and share strategies for improving teaching and student achievement. Distributive leadership structures facilitate teacher collaboration with school leaders to make decisions about school-wide priorities.

Impact

Through teamwork and shared leadership structures teachers collaborate in sharing strategies to improve staff and student achievement and provide input in school-level decisions about teaching and learning.

Supporting Evidence

- On Mondays and Thursdays, teachers meet as grade or department teams, engaging in activities such as developing curricula, creating learning goals, designing assessments to measure progress towards the goals, planning curricular and instructional adjustments, and sharing best practices for improving teaching and learning. Teams identify topics and skills that need to be taught or re-taught, based on findings from student work and performance data. Some teams also engage in inquiry-based work that targets skills building for students in the lowest third. Teacher reflections on their instruction and intervention cycles indicate that they are focused on gathering additional data to assess the impact of strategies used to date on school goals and to continue to improve their practice daily.
- During the Quality Review, a team of general education and special education teachers examined samples of student work from a practice English Regents exam. The task required students to write an essay that focused on how an author uses a literary element, such as characterization, to develop a central idea in a text. Using the applicable New York State English Regents rubric and an anchor essay response to the task, participants took turns sharing noticings, asking questions about the work, outlining learning needs evidenced in the work, and generating ideas for re-teaching. The team created a plan for follow-up work with the students whose work samples were examined. Next steps included use of a graphic organizer to help students frame their writing, more illustrations and discussions of model essays, and creation of a handout with dos/don'ts to guide students in responding to similar tasks on the June 2016 ELA Regents standardized assessment.
- During both team meetings, teachers stated that colleagues such as the many guidance counselors, program coordinators, deans, college advisors, college counselors, and all members of the Professional Development Committee, meet regularly with school leaders, providing for shared leadership and teacher voice in school-level decisions. These teacher leaders provide input in decisions about activities such as the selection and development of curriculum materials and evaluation of instructional practices. They work directly with their colleagues and school leaders in helping to generate school goals, design assessments, guide data analysis, support student advisement, and promote school improvement. School leaders credit teamwork for the levels of growth by teachers in relation to some of the targeted components of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, as evidenced in their observations of lessons. School leaders also presented data showing a majority of students improving in levels of scholarship across the three marking periods, to date, and January 2016 ELA Regents data reflecting a 90.7% pass rate across students in all sub-groups.