

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

Port Richmond High School

High School R445

**85 St. Josephs Avenue
Staten Island
NY 10302**

Principal: Timothy Gannon

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

The School Context

Port Richmond High School is a high school with 1,509 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 6% Asian, 27% Black, 44% Hispanic, and 21% White students. The student body includes 6% English Language Learners and 25% 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 87.5%.

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	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	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	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

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and staff have successfully partnered with families and systematically communicate a unified set of high expectations for all students.

Impact

Effective communication and feedback supports student progress, ownership and preparation for the next level of learning.

Supporting Evidence

- The school communicates with families via email, letters, telephone, phone blasts, school website, the school radio station (Good Morning Port Richmond), progress reports and *Pupilpath*. All parents present at the parent meeting state they have consistent communication with their child's teacher and utilize *Pupilpath* regularly to check their child's progress. The vast majority of parents had the *Pupilpath* application on their cellular phones. The school leader sends a "Raider Blast" every Sunday evening to all families highlighting weekly events and expectations for parents and students. Parents use the blasts to plan their calendars and "know when the school needs volunteers."
- Parents partner with the school community to chaperone class and college trips, transport equipment for school performances, collect resources for classroom projects, and fundraise for families in need.
- One parent shared that she reached out to the school when she was battling cancer and her daughter's grades began to slip. She noted that the school community went "above and beyond the call of duty" to keep mom informed, support her daughter and monitor her grades. The school counselor and teachers stayed in contact with mom throughout that difficult period and her daughter got "back on track."
- The school provides family workshops on transition to high school, college planning, the college application process and financial aid. Students state that the transition classes and counselor support helped them to prepare for high school and get ready for college. One senior noted that the AP courses and core classes are getting him ready for college level work.
- One student stated that he was a level 1 and 2 student and never thought he would be in an AP English class or go to college. He stated that his English 11 teacher believed in him and helped him become a stronger student and a better writer. He is now in AP English Honors and considers it "a blessing." He states that he now knows what he what he is capable of doing.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers have begun to use rubrics and assessments aligned to the school's curricula. Teacher's assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding.

Impact

Current assessment practices limit feedback to students and teachers so that teachers inconsistently make effective adjustments to meet students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Although the school has implemented the criteria for success rubric school wide, it is not used consistently across classrooms. The criteria for success chart is posted in every classroom, however, it was only shared with students and used in instruction in two of the classrooms observed.
- Limited feedback is provided to students in English Language Arts and Math classes. This feedback is usually verbal and is more frequent in AP classes. Only two out of six students interviewed were able to share written feedback on their work. Students report that they receive written feedback on their work some of the time and not in all classes.
- Of the six students interviewed, two were able to share a rubric for their assignment. One student stated that the rubric supported him in making improvements and one student stated that the teacher distributed the rubric after he completed the assignment in order for him to assess his own work.
- Checks for understanding were observed in five out of fourteen classrooms observed. Teachers have begun to ask questions that assess comprehension and push learning forward. In a science classroom the teacher asked students, "Can you differentiate between alpha and gamma rays?" and "Why should we be concerned about gamma rays?"
- In the classrooms where checks for understanding were observed adjustments to instruction were inconsistent and only some of the teachers recorded their observations to inform future instruction. In a science classroom, students flipped pink, yellow and green cards to share their level of understanding, however, the teacher did not record this information.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Curricula aligns to the Common Core Learning Standards; integrates the instructional shifts and emphasizes higher order skills across grades and subjects.

Impact

Purposeful curricular decisions build coherence and consistently emphasize rigorous habits for students including English Language Learner's and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- Curriculum maps and unit plans include Common Core Learning Standards. Lesson plans for classrooms visited include Common Core Learning Standards and activities aligned to the instructional shifts. A science lesson requires students to make predictions, support their claims with evidence and explain their reasoning. An English lesson plan asks students to prepare for a class discuss by taking notes and marking text to be used as evidence in their argument.
- Across grades and content areas, curricula include criteria for success. For example, an Algebra lesson identifies three criteria for student success: "Use eyesight and quantitative reasoning to calculate the line of best fit; use the graphic calculator to analytically find the line of best fit and analyze and make predictions about the data based on the equation of the line of best fit."
- Across grades and content areas curricula emphasize the use of student discussion and Socratic seminar. A living environment task requires students work as a group to analyze the symptoms of a patient, research and analyze the possible illness and identify the primary organs affected. A tenth grade English lesson includes two fifteen minute Socratic seminar discussions on Dr. Bennett Omalu's editorial, *Don't Let Kids Play Football*. Plans include analysis and argument questions and requirements for students in the inner and outer circle.
- Lesson plans include the analysis and annotation of non-fiction texts to support instruction. A chemistry lesson asks students to read and take notes on an article about radiation in Great Kills Park. In an English class, students highlighted and responded to questions based on articles focused on Mexican farmworkers. Articles varied in Lexile levels and word count to support varied reading levels.
- Curricula and lessons include plans to engage all students in higher order discussions. An earth science lesson includes discussions on the existence of air and how it is affected by mass, volume, density, convection and pressure. Plans identify supports to engage English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SwDs) including the use of visual aids, adapted questions, small group work and teacher guided groups.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teaching practices, student work products and discussions reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best.

Impact

Alignment of beliefs has led to high levels of student thinking and participation across classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders have articulated core beliefs about how students learn best during faculty meetings and trainings. Meetings and trainings have focused on student engagement. Core beliefs include student centered learning, less lecture and the involvement of students in their own learning. The school leader notes that this also fits into the district wide focus on the “empowered learner.”
- Teachers clearly articulate school wide beliefs on how students learn best that are informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Teachers state that students learn best in an environment that is engaging and student centered. Teachers also note that in a student-centered environment the teacher acts as a “facilitator” of learning. Across classrooms, teachers facilitated student discussion. In an English class student groups discussed art and text posted at nine stations throughout their classroom and discussed how each work of art develops the central idea of leadership and teamwork.
- Across the classrooms observed student participation was at a high level. During an algebra lesson students worked in pairs to evaluate trigonometric functions of angles. Students solved problems individually and then discussed their process with a partner. All students were engaged throughout the lesson.
- In a global history lesson students worked in groups to explain how the Mongols ruled in different areas of their empire. The teacher used a video and carousel activity to engage all students. Students in all groups participated in the carousel activity and contributed to the group charts.
- Across classrooms, student work products and discussions reflect high levels of thinking. In a science lesson students read and annotated a non-fiction article about the discovery of Ra-226 at the Great Kills Park. Students used information from the article to answer questions about gamma radiation; “Why should we be concerned about gamma particles?” and “What does radiation do to us?” Students then completed a chart on the scientific process to stabilize Ra-226.

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

Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work and have a voice in key decisions.

Impact

Collaboration and sharing of best practices has led to improved teacher practice, enhanced capacity and instructional decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- The algebra team analyzes student data and student work for targeted students as part of their inquiry study. Each team member has selected a minimum of six students in each of their algebra classes. During the team meeting, teachers shared their post assessment findings for selected students. Team members shared student strengths, errors and possible misconceptions. Teachers then recommended possible next steps. One teacher recommended a “step organizer” as a way to help students organize their thoughts. The team agreed on a date to begin using the new tool.
- Sharing of best practices has led to improved practice across grades and content areas. A grade 9 teacher noted that the five steps of close reading was used in English 9 and was shared across the grades and is now being used in English 10 and 11 as well as other content areas. Teachers note that the five-step process has helped students to organize their thoughts and write more paragraphs. An English as a New Language (ENL) teacher also noted that he has seen improvements in writing in students’ native language since implementing the five steps.
- Teachers share tools and resources across grades and content areas using Google documents. One teacher noted that increased communication has led to student improvement in writing across content areas. Another teacher noted that students in all content areas are writing more. He added that all tenth graders passed the English regents with a 65 or better and 50% of English honors students scored 80% or higher.
- After analyzing results on math regents exams math teachers decided to move from double periods of instruction for all students to single periods targeting students meeting standard and students not meeting standard. This decision placed students on either a two-term or a four-term track to take the regents exam. Teachers noted that this change allows students who need more time to go at a “slower pace” and “gain confidence” in their work.
- During the math team meeting one team member recommended adding an “approaching column” to the performance task rubric. The team agreed to include this column moving forward to give students credit for the work they are able to complete. Another member of the algebra team created and shared an annotation guide to support student understanding of word problems. The math team reviewed the guide and agreed to implement it across classrooms “right away.”