



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

DeWitt Clinton High School

High School X440

**100 West Mosholu Parkway South
Bronx
NY 10468**

Principal: Santiago Taveras

**Date of review: April 15, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Tracie Benjamin-Van Lierop**

The School Context

DeWitt Clinton High School is a high school with 1,705 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 9% Asian, 31% Black, 53% Hispanic, and 4% White students. The student body includes 22% English Language Learners and 18% students with disabilities. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 81.2%.

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	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	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	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

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

Impact

Staff members are held accountable to meeting set expectations. Parents understand expectations and their children's progress toward those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leadership team promotes accountability within their team and staff through one-to-one meetings. The principal meets individually with the cabinet members and the assistant principal's meet independently with teachers in their respective small learning communities to discuss accomplishments, student scholarship goals, and teacher areas of improvement and growth based on components of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*.
- During the school year, school leaders have provided trainings in support of the school's focus on unit and lesson planning, student engagement and discussion. Reflections from teachers focused on insights as a result of the professional development cycle, concepts that are most applicable to the teacher's practice and questions related to the specific session.
- The school maintains a log of communication with families from each of the six small learning communities that indicates that 78% to 97% of families are connected with the school. In order to address the lower communication connection rates in the different learning communities, a parental outreach team works with families and teachers. Positive letters are sent home to families regarding student progress. A parent resource book was created in collaboration with Good Shepherd Services to increase awareness of additional supports that are available for families to support their children academically. During the parent interview, the group agreed that PupilPath, an on-line monitoring system, has been a great resource for them to monitor their children's academic performance and read teachers' comments.
- A parent of a student who started the school year in November and had attended two other high schools stated, "My daughter is now being successful and knows that feeling, which she didn't experience prior to coming to this school and I believe a lot has to do with the principal."

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

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

Impact

Limited feedback is provided to students and teachers regarding student achievement. Teachers inconsistently make effective adjustments to meet students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of student work in folders and on classroom bulletin boards showed that feedback included check marks, post-it's with comments such as "good job" and "excellent" and limited feedback toward next steps for students. On a student new learning reflections worksheet, there were questions from the teacher asking the student, "Like what – can you elaborate?" and "Telling him to do what?"
- Feedback on a student's rhetorical analysis essay included areas of strength and suggestions for improvement that stated, "You need to work on making your topic sentences more clear and concise. Moreover, you might have considered the following topic sentence for the second body paragraph." However, a student's Advanced Placement (AP) free response exam question with limited answers had no feedback.
- During an English Language Arts (ELA) lesson, students worked in groups to create a thesis statement based on *Macbeth*. Some students decided to work independently and looked to the text to support their statements while other students' copied notes from each other as the teacher circulated around the room checking-in with students without any adjustment in instruction. Conversely, in an AP course, students assessed themselves and their peers by reminding each other of the importance of referencing the text to support their answers as required in the task. The teacher moved throughout the groups to ensure the objectives were being met. When the teacher encountered a group whose conversation was focused on whether an idea was controversial or practical rather than supporting their thoughts based on the text, the teacher asked, "How are you supporting your thoughts?" and the students refocused and referenced the text.
- A review of meeting notes between the principal and an assistant principal included a support plan for English Language Learners (ELLs) for the ELA Regents exam and New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT). The notes also included the total number of students, eighty-five, the number on track to graduate, twenty-seven, and the number of students who are almost on track, forty-six, accompanied with an individualized action plan to support each student.
- Teachers have started incorporating instructional objectives into their lesson plans this school year and there is an increased focus on checks for understandings and how this informs their instructional practice. A teacher commented, "As a teacher that has not focused on literacy, I'm now collecting writing samples to inform my Do Now activity for the next day. I also am including exit slips in my planning".

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

Impact

Purposeful decisions are building coherence to promote college and career readiness for all students across grades and subjects, including ELLs and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- The school community has focused on ELA instructional shifts two and three, knowledge in the disciplines and staircase of complexity, respectively. In math, the focus is on instructional shifts three and four, fluency and deep understanding, respectively, to target the needs of their overall population and meet the expectations of Regents and AP exams. In order to meet the literacy needs of students with disabilities and ELLS, 18% and 22% of their population, the school introduced *Achieve 3000*, a program that provides differentiated instruction daily, which has resulted in an increase in student Lexile levels. The leadership team provided documentation of student completion of activity goals to support the growth in Lexile levels from September 2015 to April 2016. According to *Achieve 3000* data, student success performing activities using selected strategies have ranged from 75% to 100% and the students of one of the school's English as a New Language (ENL) teachers have shown the most growth nationally.
- Some teachers use the Understanding by Design (UbD) unit template in its entirety or components of the template. An ELA unit on Iran through Marjane's eyes focused on citing strong and thorough textual evidence that supports inferences and analysis of the text and a point of view or cultural experience as reflected in a piece of work from outside the United States of America. One of the performance tasks included writing a persuasive essay to the members of the French government, taking a position on a law that bans the veil worn by Muslim students in public schools. Students had to agree or disagree with the law and support their position based on researched articles and then debate their position in class. The unit included comments from teachers related to the school's instructional shift focus, such as "Consider stair casing the Lexile levels of the supporting texts so that students are exposed to different difficulties of text."
- The school uses *EngageNY* for their math curricula. A geometry lesson plan on solving word problems using sine and cosine included Webb's *Depth of Knowledge* level three and four activities, tasking students with defending their answers, questions for discussion, and assessment using a Writing is Thinking through Strategic Inquiry (WITsi) question, and a reflection of the lesson section for teachers focused on learning and instructional gaps.

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 that is informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and the instructional shifts. Across classrooms, student work products and discussions reflect uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact

Although teachers plan opportunities for discourse into their lessons, teaching practices that are aligned with the belief systems are still developing so that all students are not fully engaged in high levels of thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's instructional belief is that students learn best by doing and when instruction is connected to real world experiences and informed by Danielson *Framework for Teaching* components 3c, engaging students in learning and 3d, using assessment in instruction. "Some teachers are doing this work and some are not.", as reported by the leadership team. Additionally, the leadership team stated, "We spend a lot of time sharing best practices happening in the building with the expectation that instructional strategies will continue to build."
- During a science lesson on the use of concepts of density and heat energy to explain observations of weather patterns, the aim asked, "How do we draw and interpret isobars?" The lesson was teacher centered and included low-level and closed-ended questions such as, "What are isotherms?", "Who agrees?", and "Is this the actual pressure?" A student was asked to locate Detroit on the map with the intent to discuss the difference in pressure and the impact it has on weather. However, most of the time was spent locating Detroit and not discussing the pressure.
- An ELA lesson including the WITsi strategies centered on character development of Lady Macbeth and Macbeth. It tasked students with reviewing the events of the play, selecting two quotes to use as evidence to support or prove a thesis statement, and writing the quotes on the bottom of their poster paper. Students collaborated in groups on annotation of the text, however, their discussions remained at surface levels and there were limited connections to the text to support their statements other than the quotes written on the poster paper.
- Students collaborated during a math lesson on finding the derivative that involved the teacher giving them a problem and having them work together in order to find solutions. The teacher circulated throughout the classroom to ensure students were engaged in discussions that produced meaningful problem solving solutions.

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations on teams that may be loosely connected to school goals and the 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 use of an inquiry approach is developing across teams. The work of teacher teams is developing to improve teacher practice and the achievement of goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- During a review of the ninth grade performance data, teachers learned in one of their small learning communities that out of seventeen students only one student passed all subjects. They realized there was a need to look deeper into their instructional strategies. For example, in social studies, teachers of different courses are now working together, communicating about their units, and sharing ideas to improve pedagogy as evidenced by a unit that includes comments made using track changes. One teacher shared, “Our goal is to increase student engagement and the professional development we’re being exposed to is helping.”
- Teachers on the science team stated, “Our lessons are changing and we are getting students to think differently.” An earth science teacher commented, we’re using Castle Learning, [an on-line review, assessment, and data reporting program] to assist us in reviewing performance data and we’re able to see where students are really struggling.” Teachers from various departments also noted that they are now using the New York City Department of Education’s on-line platform, Special Education Student Information System (SESIS) to inform their instructional practices for students with disabilities as it relates to direct instruction and highlighting student strengths while also being cognizant of student challenges. Although teachers are becoming aware of the need to meet students where they are performing academically, their efforts do not yet typically result in improved teacher practice.
- The school has adopted WITsi Wednesday’s as a way to increase teacher buy-in to try some strategies such as analyzing student work to improve sentence expansions and improve capitalization and punctuation across the content areas. “We have some teachers who are seeing the benefits of the strategies and are using them and there are some teachers who were resistant and are starting to come around”, stated a WITsi team member. Teachers noted how a recent intervisitation to another high school has assisted them in seeing how the strategies can improve the quality of student writing and the benefits of ensuring fidelity to the writing structure. The team also commented on hearing from other schools about the growing pains that their teachers experienced and how they resulted in improved student achievement. Teachers reported, and the ninth grade student work shows, growth in their writing from when they started the program in November to April. Student writing has moved from focusing on sentence fragments to sentence expansion including increased details and elaboration of thoughts.