Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The School for Human Rights

Middle - High School K531

600 Kingston Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11203

Principal: Michael Alexander

Date of review: December 10, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Jennifer Eusanio
The School for Human Rights is a secondary school with 429 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 90% Black, 8% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 4% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 95.0%.

### School Quality Criteria

#### Instructional Core

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school…</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<td>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</td>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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#### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school…</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Celebration</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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#### Systems for Improvement

<table>
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<th>To what extent does the school…</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings
School leadership utilizes a variety of sources to communicate expectations to school staff and ensure ongoing parent feedback of student progress is consistent.

Impact
Staff members are aware of the expectations and foster this understanding to articulate next steps to parents towards college and career readiness for students.

Supporting Evidence

- The administration provides several resources to convey their expectations to staff including a teacher handbook, a General Personal Responsibility Agreement, emails and other memoranda. For example, to convey their expectations around professionalism, the school requires all staff to read the General Personal Responsibility Agreement which contains information on attendance procedures, documentation protocols and school environment expectations and signed by teachers each year.

- A professional development plan created by the Staff Development Committee consists of training and support on the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Areas of support for teachers include “questioning and discussion” and “creating an environment of respect and rapport”. As stated by school leaders and teachers during school interviews, it is expected that all training provided is conveyed within the classroom and becomes a “look-for” during observations.

- The student handbook provides parents with information on the rules, how to obtain grades, the homework and grading policy as well as program offerings. For example, the handbook informs parents and students of Advanced Placement options and contact information for sign up procedures. In addition, the handbook provides a statement for ‘High Expectations for Academic Achievement’ for parents and students to read and emulate.

- Parents are provided progress reports by subject area which inform them of student progress six times per academic year. Progress reports contain information on academic behaviors such as work habits, homework and school preparation skills and, provide them with assessment results.

- Parent Teacher Association meetings, emails and phone calls as well as scheduled meetings on Tuesdays during the engagement hour provide parents with an understanding of the expectations. During an interview, one parent stated the school responded quickly when her child wasn’t performing well and as a result, is now making progress.
Area of Focus

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings
Although the school’s consistent use of assessments and rubrics for self-assessment provides teachers with relevant feedback to inform them of student understanding, practices only offer some clear portrait of mastery for students across all classrooms.

Impact
The lack of meaningful feedback towards next learning steps to increase student achievement hinders meaningful and effective academic progress for a diversity of learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, students used rubrics for a variety of purposes. For example, in one ELA class, the students used a rubric to assess the quality of their peers’ responses on a debate on the following topic, “Should Americans be concerned about National Security Agency (NSA) with regard to their privacy?” Students assessed the quality of the responses of the affirmative and negative sides using the criteria from the rubric. However, this level of peer assessment was not evident in all classes.

- Students are aware of how to use rubrics and know what their next steps are for growth. However, after interviewing students, only some students were able to demonstrate actual growth based on feedback from teachers and use of rubrics. For example, one student who was preparing for her college personal statement was able to demonstrate and discuss how she used her teacher’s feedback to improve the quality of her paper by removing irrelevant information not pertinent to the topic. The student was able to clearly show growth in her next revisions. However this feedback cycle was not apparent among all students interviewed.

- Across classrooms, teachers use questioning strategies to determine student understanding of the learning objective and took opportunities to adjust instruction. For example, in one art class, students were engaged in group activities while the teacher walked around and asked questions such as, “How should you label your pictures?”, “What is an abstract?”, and “What is nonobjective art?” After asking questions to all the groups, the teacher brought the whole group together and reviewed the concept of objective vs nonobjective art forms and discussed the rationale for the lesson. This level of assessment during instruction, which was evident in this class, was not prevalent in the vast majority of classes.
### Additional Findings

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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**Findings**

The school utilizes Common Core aligned units which integrate the instructional shifts and are refined based on the needs of students.

**Impact**

Access to curricula and tasks for diverse learners has evolved into making curricula decisions that make learning purposeful and engaging.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The school implements a variety of Common Core aligned programs including Code X and Ready Gen for English language arts for grades 6-8, and supplements the teacher created units of study in grades 9-12 with Springboard and Engage NY modules. In addition, for math, CMP3 and Go Math are integrated to form Common Core aligned units for grades 6-8, and Modules from Engage NY and Springboard supplements math curriculum in grades 9-12. Across classrooms, evidence of these programs was embedded in student work and classroom resources.

- Teacher teams review unit concepts to make adjustments to curricula. During an interview, teachers stated that the curricula is a ‘live document’ and “requires adding or taking away what we need or don’t need as well as integrating the shifts”. One teacher provided an example for this month when she is re-teaching students how to cite evidence because many of her students, including those in special subgroups, were unable to master the concept as per the most recent Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) Performance Task. Therefore, she is working on refining the unit plan to review this concept further with her students.

- A review of lesson plans and tasks indicate that teachers are aligning their units to the instructional shift of ‘evidence in argument writing’. Emphasis on standards 1, 2 and 9 in English language arts are evident in the majority of lessons which focus on developing central ideas and citing text based evidence. Listed in several lesson plans were questions and prompts to require students while engaged in task work such as, “Can you provide an example?” and “State your claim at the bottom of the poster.”
Findings
Across classrooms, questioning, prompting for student discussion and scaffolds were consistent in teacher practices yet varied in quality of rigor, support and level of independence.

Impact
Lack of ownership within work products and discussion hinders varied student subgroups ability to demonstrate advanced levels of thinking and learning across some classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- In several classrooms, teachers engaged students in task work which required reasoning and thought. However, in some classrooms, supports were limited and some students, in particular, English language learners, were not challenged. In one science class, a few students were struggling with answering the topic question. Although the teacher provided graphic organizers to support students’ thinking, the scaffold was not supportive enough to ensure their understanding of how to answer the question correctly and complete the task properly.

- During a social studies Integrated Collaborative Teaching (ICT) lesson, students were involved in group work and were asked to answer questions based on primary documents. However, students demonstrated varied levels of understanding suggested a lack of proper extensions for some students and support for others. For example, in one group, students were asked to complete a set of questions such as, “According to DuBois, what four things are African Americans being denied?” and “What is the tone of this statement?” Some students were able to respond to the questions quickly and easily with text based evidence. Other students in class had difficulty with the task even with assistance from staff members.

- During a student debate, students were provided with task cards and prompts as support for asking open-ended questions. Student facilitators assisted with debate to ensure all of them were involved in the lesson and were observed engaging one another in questioning, stating claims and supplying text evidence. The teacher was observed lightly facilitating the conversation as the students took ownership of the debate. This level of student independence and support for extended thinking was evident only in some classes.
Findings
Structured professional inquiry based collaborations aligned to school goals offer opportunities for input on instructional decisions.

Impact
Increased teacher capacity and decision making fosters stronger pedagogical practices and team building.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet weekly and have developed structures including agendas, protocols, minutes, and supplemental materials to support progress toward goals. The focus of these meetings encompasses an integration of the school goals around citing evidence and evidence based argument writing as well as the improvement of curricula reflected in unit and lesson plans.

- During a teacher team meeting, teachers used student work, data analysis and a reflection protocol to determine next steps for teaching practices. For example, as a next step, the presenting teacher was offered suggestions such as determining the students’ learning style and using this modality to adjust lessons for this particular student. In addition, it was determined that the student was a former English language learner and would benefit from the integration of vocabulary cards as well as graphic organizers with color coding into the lesson.

- Teachers are included in the school Staff Development Committee which meets to determine the professional development focus and work on special instructional projects. For example, this year, based on exam results and teacher input, the team suggested to the administration that two periods should be dedicated to English language arts and math to increase student scores on exams.

- Each teacher team is facilitated by a team leader who sets the agenda, maintains team documents and discusses issues with administration during Staff Development Committee meetings. Two teachers are attending leadership training to learn how to build effective teams using protocols such as “Hopes and Fears” and “Setting Norms.”