

# **Quality Review Report 2012-2013**

**Landmark High School**

**High School M419**

**351 WEST 18 STREET  
New York  
NY 10011**

**Principal: CARON PINKUS**

**Dates of review: April 30 – May 1, 2013  
Lead Reviewer: Marisol Bradbury**

## **Part 1: The school context**

### **Information about the school**

Landmark High School is a high school with 421 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 18% Black, 75% Hispanic, 2% White, and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 16% English language learners and 19% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 79.5%.

### **Overall Evaluation**

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school aligns curricula to state standards and the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) creating academic tasks that consistently emphasize higher order skills and literacy to accelerate student progress. (1.1)
  - Lead teachers support all content area teachers to ensure that course and unit maps address relevant CCLS, include similar planning elements such as implementation timelines and summative tasks, as well as student work samples and data that inform instruction. The school has an alternative approach to assessment as a member of the New York Performance Standards Consortium and is mindful to align portfolio project requirements to the revised curriculum maps. After a review of the results from the Performance Based Assessment Test (PBAT), teachers within departments identified specific areas of focus for the units of study. The English language arts (ELA) and social studies departments learned that students struggled with citing evidence from text to support written arguments, while in science students needed to become more proficient in determining central ideas in non-fiction text. Reading assessments confirmed that many students read below grade level, therefore the school included more challenging text sets aligned to learning needs in unit plans, with an intentional focus on active literacy strategies through the use of targeted reading and writing approaches and formative assessments. As a result, students experience multiple common core aligned units of study in order to deepen literacy and further their preparation for college and career pursuits.
  - Units of study culminate in projects, and courses culminate in portfolios that incorporate inquiry based learning through the exploration of multiple perspectives, student choice of authentic problems, disciplined-based literacy skills, and applications of learning to real world situations. For example, the math portfolio of an 11th grader included two projects entitled “The Survival Project”, which showed skills in trigonometry, and the “Bouncing Ball Investigation”, which showed his understanding of the use of graphs, tables, and logarithmic equations. The student described the problems in trigonometry and how they applied to real life events. Through this portfolio, the student was able to establish a theory, conduct research, and apply mathematical concepts, such as the use of the hypotenuse of angles and the Pythagorean Theorem resulting in the opportunity to demonstrate high level thinking and conceptual understanding, as well as the ability to take ownership of the learning.
- The principal's effective use of resources supports the school instructional goals and meets students' academic, social, and emotional needs. (1.3)
  - The principal has purposefully partnered with organizations, hired additional personnel, and used resources to support the school's instructional goals that include literacy development, improved attendance, culture, and curriculum, as well as professional development. A part-time literacy specialist was hired who coaches and teaches reading interventions, facilitates professional development and pushes in to ELA and social studies classes. In addition, students receiving Academic Intervention Services (AIS) are scheduled for reading support classes three times per week during the school day.

Through the United Way Grant the principal hired two social workers, and one attendance teacher to provide outreach to those students with low attendance records. Furthermore, two full time guidance counselors were hired to help increase social and emotional support via advisory and counseling. Consequently, the attendance rate has increased from 79% to 81% and there was a 69% passing rate on the ELA Regents examination during the month of January, showing an 18% increase from 51% passing the previous year, which includes the January, June, and August administrations.

- After assessing the school's progress report, the principal learned that students were not earning enough credits by the end of the year; therefore, a trimester schedule was implemented to maximize student learning time so that students could accumulate additional credits. In addition, at the end of trimester two, teachers assessed student progress and determined which students needed to be programmed during their last trimester for credit recovery, academic intervention services during the day, or an accelerated program, thus allowing students to have additional time and support to learn the material and advance achievement. In order to provide additional support for teachers and students during school time, the daily schedule was modified so that classes are 60 minutes in length and department teams have common planning time every day. As a result of these structures, 72% of students are on track to accumulate 10 or more credits by June, as compared to 65% of students last year by August, and students are programmed and supported based on their academic needs and progress.
- School leaders use, frequent cycles of observations aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching to provide effective feedback to teachers resulting in professional growth. (4.1)
  - The principal created an observation schedule based on the instructional capacity and seniority level of teachers. Untenured, ineffective, and developing teachers receive twice as many observations as their counterparts. An untenured ELA teacher received three formal observation reports and six formative observations. A new teacher who struggled with classroom management techniques was visited weekly by the assistant principal and given direct guidance on setting routines, structures, and holding students accountable for their actions resulting in the establishment of clear expectations and an effective classroom environment. Simultaneously, the assistant principal shares the transcripts of lessons to probe teachers on the use and level of questioning techniques leading to a heightened awareness of questioning strategies and improving the capacity of all teachers in this area.
  - The principal created a template that captures teachers' strengths and challenges aligned to the Danielson Framework competencies including: 1e: Designing Coherent Instruction, 3b: Using Questioning and Discussion techniques, 3c: Engaging Student in Learning, and 3d: Using Assessment in Instruction. The components of the template include teacher actions, student actions, strengths, questions, and actionable feedback. At the completion of a classroom observation, teachers are asked to reflect on their practice based on evidence and its alignment to the Danielson Framework. In turn, the principal has scheduled coaching support, classroom inter-visitations, and frequent observations and feedback sessions with teachers to further support next steps in order to improve instructional practice. As a result of this process, three teachers

moved from “needs improvement” to receiving two satisfactory observations, and teachers are implementing a more reflective and effective practice focused on student work.

- The principal has established focused school level goals that are tracked for progress and serve as guide to develop teacher capacity and accelerate student learning. (3.1)
  - There are five school-wide goals that drive the work and effort of the adults in the building, each of which includes an action plan, year long professional development, and evidence of impact, which is assessed throughout the year. The action plans include time and space for stakeholders to reflect on the impact of their work. For example, after assessing the progress being made by students receiving AIS, the principal provided additional guidance, counseling, and attendance interventions to further support their achievement. In addition, the support of the literacy consultant was increased to include all teachers after assessing the impact of work with the practice of ELA teachers. Furthermore an analysis of the results from the MacGinities Assessment indicated that the lowest level readers would benefit from additional reading support throughout the day. To focus on the specific needs of these struggling students, teachers across grades infuse the literacy strategies of retelling, inference, read-aloud, and summarizing. This evidence of the school’s reflective practices and collective effort supports the most struggling students with their academic needs, thus students are exposed to lessons that promote literacy. These improved practices signified an 83% progress in ELA regents’ examinations by all students.
  - School leaders and teachers analyze student and teacher work to assess the effectiveness of their instructional practices. This was evidenced by teacher teams’ selection of an inquiry focus and a target population; teacher leaders facilitation of professional development on the stages of the inquiry process; the use of the tuning protocol during teacher team meetings; teacher participation in the inter-visitation process; and the support of administrators through scheduled meetings with team leaders twice monthly in order to develop leadership capacity and facilitation skills. Additionally, there is school wide professional development twice per month to discuss the work of teams, share best practices, analyze student data, develop rubrics, and create base line assessments and tools. As a result teacher team work has become more structured, and students in the inquiry focus group have displayed progress across all teams using the rubric. In Social Studies, 75% of students made at least one level progress in one category on the rubric; 63% of students made at least one level of progress in two or more categories on the rubric; and in Science, all students made at least one level of progress in at least one category on the rubric.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Strengthen teaching strategies to consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula so that all students demonstrate high levels of thinking. (1.2)
  - Teachers develop thoughtful lesson plans consistent with the school’s belief in actively engaging students in meaningful work, yet in some classrooms, questioning, grouping and scaffolds were not effective in assisting students in order to access the tasks. In several math classes visited students were presented with real-life scenarios, such as

arranging rope to figure out how many rectangles with a certain perimeter could be generated, to build towards more sophisticated problems and validate multiple solution paths; however this type of scaffolded activity was not consistent across classrooms. During an ELA unit of study students were asked to provide evidence on how characters use power by selecting quotes from texts including *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *Animal Farm* and apply these ideas to modern-day scenarios created by the teachers. Although students were able to match quotes with appropriate characters and scenarios, there was not enough evidence of students' understanding of the central concept of the character's positional power, making their ability to support their ideas with excerpts from the complex text difficult. In a good number of classrooms, activities provided different entry points to approach open-ended tasks however; there was inconsistent evidence of appropriately challenging tasks in order for students to engage in learning according to their academic level.

- Portfolios and projects demonstrate students' mastery of skills and learning through the presentation of content knowledge by defending perspectives using evidence from research. However, on a daily basis student work products and discussions showed inconsistent evidence of students challenging one another, through critique, analysis and interpretation of results. In some classes, students read non-fiction texts to support a position, as in one science class where students had to use multiple sources of evidence, including expository text and experimental data to develop a conclusion on "distinguishing between acids and bases through physical characteristics". However, in this and other classrooms there was little evidence of students probing their peers and challenging their findings, resulting in missed opportunities to promote high levels of student thinking, and participation.
- Expand current assessment practices so that instructional decisions capture the extent of students' learning and next steps in response to all learning needs. (2.2)
  - Teachers, across grades and subjects, use the consortium rubric and craft portfolio rubrics to assess student' abilities to create, organize, and defend a thesis, as well as analyze text, and make connections between text and other pieces of literature. These performance indicators capture students' progress towards meeting consortium standards in order to be promoted to the next level. Upon calibration of the rubrics utilized, math teachers added a performance level and modified the language to reinforce student's ability to generalize, predict, apply, and use mathematical equations in order to increase the rigor of the curriculum. These refined rubrics were present throughout the math classrooms and the team meeting; however, there was inconsistent evidence that these modifications yielded positive outcomes with all students, specifically students with disabilities (SWDs) and ELL's, thus preventing the ability to demonstrate increased performance or mastery.
  - Teachers use projects and portfolios as summative assessments to determine achievement levels of unit standards as well as for grade level promotion. Teachers use their own observation of student work and ask comprehension questions as a form of checking for understanding. In addition, there was evidence of teachers collecting exit slips and student self-reflection, although clear evidence that students are aware of their next learning steps in order to improve academically was not noted,

hindering increased academic achievement, as well as teachers' ability to adjust instruction accordingly to meet student needs.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Landmark High School	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score			X				
<b>Instructional Core</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula, including the arts, physical and health education, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?			X				
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by a research-based, common teaching framework and is aligned to curricula, engaging and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?		X					
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?			X				
<b>School Culture</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X				
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve them?			X				
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet students' learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			X				
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X				
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching with a research-based, common teaching framework and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?			X				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			X				
5.1 Evaluate the quality of school- level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?			X				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed