

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

High School for Media and Communications

M463

**549 Audubon Avenue
Manhattan
NY 10040**

Principal: Dr. Ronni Michelen

**Dates of review: October 29-30, 2013
Lead Reviewer: Anthony R. Lodico**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

High School for Media and Communications is a high school with 550 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 13% Black, 82% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 29% English language learners and 20% special education students. Boys account for 61% of the students enrolled and girls account for 39%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 80%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Unit plans and curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and purposefully designed to promote college and career readiness for all students. (1.1)
 - Unit plans, curriculum maps and performance tasks are aligned with CCLS and incorporate the instructional shifts. The school leaders and teachers integrate interim assessments, adjust learning activities for diverse learners, and develop supplementary learning opportunities into unit plans for meeting the needs of all students. School leaders review unit plans, and ongoing feedback is given throughout the development process to ensure that all units address learning needs of all students. Teachers and administrators use Google Docs to work on the curriculum unit revision process, and further provide each other with ongoing feedback. For example, in a unit plan for 10th grade English language arts, feedback is continuous and specific to refine the learning activities to include tasks for annotating texts, citing evidence, peer review, self-assessment, scaffolding and integrated collaborative teaching strategies. Teacher collaboration, data analysis, and the study of baseline assessment results increase teachers' instructional strategies in refining lessons and assignments to ensure that diverse learners, including English language learners and special education students, are engaged and have access to rigorous and cognitively challenging work.
- School leaders make organizational decisions to utilize budget, scheduling, space and resources to support the school's goals and improve student achievement. (1.3)
 - Leadership makes organizational and budgetary decisions to ensure the alignment of school goals to meet students' learning needs. Investment in technology and other resources support the work for improving student engagement across classrooms as evident in meaningful student outcomes. School leaders use school funds to ensure that all classrooms have computers, SMARTboards, and laptop carts to supplement classroom instruction and student learning. Professional development sessions focus on improving teaching practice, and effectively integrating technology in the classroom. A new media room supports instruction and professional development. Additionally, the school leadership invests in Skedula with 2012-2013 school year as the pilot year. This year, the school leadership expects teachers to consistently use Skedula and Pupilpath across classrooms and subjects to enhance communication with students and families. The school leadership and teachers invest in the Advanced via Individual Determination (AVID) Program to foster a culture of college and career readiness, which complements the school's work in aligning curricula to the CCLS. As a result, 60% of the ninth grade class is in at least one AVID class. The school leaders' goal is to increase the number of AVID trained staff each year, hence increasing opportunities for more students to be immersed in high level tasks that promote college and career readiness.
 - Staff and student scheduling enables teachers to meet weekly in departmental teams and Professional Learning Communities (PLC). The PLC teams are organized by grade level. Teacher leaders facilitate PLC meetings and their schedules have allocated time to meet, strategize, and

plan. As an outgrowth, the 10th grade team further engages in developing teaching strategies to support students' ability to effectively develop claims and counter-claims. Through consensus, the team goal is to create a common language across disciplines for increasing the level of supports for students' academic growth.

- Students and families value the school's commitment in fostering a collaborative, safe, and respectful school community that supports students' academic and social emotional needs. (1.4)
 - Teachers, administration, and staff support students and families in a variety of ways. Parents say that in addition to receiving interim progress reports, they also receive information about their child's progress by mail, email, and texts. While students benefit from the access to Pupilpath/Skedula to get immediate feedback about their progress and grades in classes, parents are still learning how to use Skedula. As a result, the school organizes workshops to ensure that parents have support in attaining their log-on information, learn to navigate the system, and are able manage all the resources attached to this tool to support their children more effectively. This year, the school continues the work in nurturing a safe and supportive learning environment. The assistant principals, guidance, and security staff work together to ensure that the school takes more proactive measures managing discipline, misbehavior, and conflict. College trips, assemblies, student government, and peer mediation are other positive features of the school that students and parents consistently mention as being key to students' success and supporting academic achievement. For example, student leaders spearhead a collaborative effort creating the Adopt-a-Freshman, anti-bullying, and other community service programs. Trained peer mediators include students who may have struggled academically and socially in their earlier grades. As a result, these students are now mentors and role models for current students in the lower grades.
- Across the school, teachers participate in professional collaborative teams to foster effective teacher leadership and thoughtful pedagogical reflection to increase student achievement. (4.2)
 - Teacher teams meet weekly by department and grade in structures called Professional Learning Communities (PLC). This year, the facilitation of the PLC grade teams shifts to teacher leaders. The PLC structure fosters teacher leadership, enhances teacher capacity to lead shifts in pedagogical practice, and increase student opportunities to be cognitively engaged in all subjects across grades. Assistant principals facilitate department meetings. In an English department team meeting, the team analyzes the effectiveness of an argumentative writing rubric, its relationship to CCLS, the performance task, and use student work to capture evidence for their next steps. The teacher teams express how the time affords them to share best practices and develop strategies to support their work in creating rigorous units and tasks. As a result of teacher team work and collaboration, teachers' leadership and instructional capacity is strengthened, thus ensuring improved work products.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that teaching strategies and instructional tasks across classrooms consistently meet the needs of all learners to promote higher order thinking, student engagement, and rigorous work products. (1.2)

- Some of the classrooms observed used questions to promote accountable talk, enabling teachers to assess and check for understanding. For example, an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) geometry class, teachers thoughtfully group students. Students self-assess their learning during independent practice, reach group consensus, and present the rationale supporting their findings. Similarly, in an English 3 class, students work in groups to analyze photos, develop and categorize their questions as open or closed, and further make connections linking the photos to their study of Things Fall Apart. The teacher monitors student to student interaction to evaluate students' understanding of the text and their interpretation of the photographs. In both classes, teacher purposefully plan students groupings resulting in maximum student to student interactions, accountable talk, peer assessments, and self-assessments. However, in other classes, students copy notes, and respond to teachers' questions which are primarily recall questions. In two instances, teachers ask rapid fire questions limiting the responses to few students, and offering no wait time for students to either think or engage in discussions with peers. Although curriculum is aligned to the CCLS and the instructional shifts, sufficient strategic supports are not evident in some classrooms, hindering the engagement of all learners to take ownership of their learning and work.
- Enhance assessment practice across grades and subjects to make effective pedagogical and curricula adjustments across classrooms for meeting the learning needs for all students. (2.2)
 - The administration and teacher leaders analyze New York City Baseline Performance Assessment results. Students perform lower on Traits 2 and 4, elaboration, and counter claims. Hence, teacher teams across grades and discipline focus on developing pedagogical practices to increase students' ability to write effective arguments, support claims, counter claims, and effectively use evidence to support statements. Daily teacher assessment practices include tests, quizzes, checks for understanding, exit slips, and questioning of students. The feedback students receive on their work products is inconsistent. While some of the feedback clearly outlines next steps and expectations, other forms of feedback are limited to check marks, one word responses, or a grade posted. The school's formative and summative assessments practice is not consistently impacting the work in analyzing student academic learning, and shifting pedagogical practices to meet the learning needs of all students.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: High School for Media and Communications	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score			X	
Instructional Core				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
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?			X	
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?		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	
School Culture				
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports 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 those expectations?			X	
Systems for Improvement				
<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 student 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 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection?			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	
Quality Review Scoring Key				
UD Underdeveloped	D Developing	P Proficient	WD Well Developed	