

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Murry Bergtraum High School for Business Careers

High School M520

**411 Pearl Street
Manhattan
NY 10038**

Principal: Lottie Almonte

**Dates of review: March 4 - 6, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Marisol Bradbury**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Murry Bergtraum High School for Business Careers is a high school with 1466 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 44% Black, 42% Hispanic, 2% White, and 10% Asian students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 77.6%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The administration's effective use of technology, budget, coaches, partnerships, teacher assignment, professional development and student programs support the academic, social and emotional needs of students. (1.3)
 - The school's instructional goals focus on college readiness, literacy, technology, and Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) aligned curricula and teaching practices. The purchase of various software programs and materials, including Castle Learning, Empower 3000, and Revolution K-12 allows teachers to provide a more differentiated instructional approach to help students and reinforce learning. Every classroom has a Smart Board and teachers incorporate the use of technology in their daily practice. The principal has allocated per session funding for teachers to teach after school academic and extracurricular activities. The Regents preparatory program, tutoring, Saturday school, clubs, sports and activities offer opportunities for academic reinforcement and credit accumulation towards graduation while strengthening the culture of the school, as evident by the comments students made such as, "There are so many opportunities for us during and after school," and, "We are lucky to have so many options, I take AP courses, I am a member of the law program and student government." The partnership with Syracuse University helps students earn college credits through its diverse college course offerings. Due to the partnership's success, the principal created a Ninth Grade Academy, which will expand to grades 10, 11, and 12. As a result of this partnership, last year, almost 100 students graduated with over 30 college credits in addition to the 15 students who were admitted to the university free of cost, and the one million dollars worth of scholarship funds. The administration is collaborating with Baruch College and North Carolina Central University in order to open three new academic pathways to college. The partnership with the American Museum of Natural History allows the school to become the training hub for six to seven student teachers from the museum who provide one on one student support while exchanging practices and strategies with teachers. In order to develop the instructional and leadership capacity of assistant principals and teachers, the principal established additional partnerships. Assistant principals meet with their respective mentors from Cambridge once a month. Through the use of their Circular 6 Assignment, a professional activity agreed upon by teachers and administrators, teachers meet daily to design and plan curriculum. Consultants from Kagan and National Training Network work directly with teachers on literacy and numeracy. Teacher leaders lead the work of colleagues and engage in instructional rounds. As a result of this shared planning time and training from the consultants, teachers design engaging lessons that include scaffolds and rigorous tasks such as writing argumentative essays that include evidence from multiple and complex texts.
- School leaders and staff consistently communicate high expectations and offer feedback, guidance and supports aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching to prepare student for the next level. (3.4)
 - The principal and assistant principals consistently communicate the expectations for teaching based on the Danielson Framework and reinforces key elements through newsletters, conversations and follow

up emails. After reviewing the feedback provided to teachers, the principal asked assistant principals to offer more timely and actionable feedback. Assistant principals review the Citywide Instructional Expectations and the instructional shifts during their department meetings, emphasizing the seven principles of effective instruction. Teachers have the option to complete a pre-observation form that asks teachers to reflect on the components of an effective lesson plan, including CCLS, literacy, aligned objectives, assessments, and ideas to refine and improve the lesson. Teachers are asked to reach out to students who need additional academic support. As a result of the support, training and conversations, teachers include the CCLS in their lesson plans, infuse literacy and technology in their instruction, and monitor student progress and behavior in a focused manner as evidenced by the student evaluation form, grade and academic intervention conferences, the argumentative writing focus across disciplines, evidence-based units across disciplines, and the effective and frequent use of Smart boards, laptops and computers by teachers and students.

- The school offers various programs intended to promote college and career readiness. The annual College and Career Day and Night exposes students to a multitude of colleges, universities and careers. The guidance counselors and college advisors meet with students and their families throughout the year to review the financial application process. Teachers, guidance counselors and college advisors help students with their college essay and resume writing. Partnerships with the Borough of Manhattan Community College, Baruch College, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, New York University and Syracuse University also offer services such as college courses, tours, financial aid and guidance. The implementation of the Syracuse University Project Advance Academy offers a large selection of college level courses, creating more diverse challenging course offerings. The university professors, dean and coordinator are in the school available to students to offer college advisement and academic support. Students, their parents, and families are welcomed into the university from the beginning of the program. Once students are accepted into the program, parents attend a “Meet and Greet” where they are made aware of the curriculum, and throughout the year the director of the program shares a weekly email to parents and conducts events to showcase the academic progress of their students. As a result of these practices, students and families receive guidance about college admission, 120 students earn 36 college credits, and 15 students go directly to Syracuse University at no cost to their families, thereby creating more opportunities for students who could not normally afford a college degree.
- School leaders frequently observe teachers using the Danielson Framework in order to capture strengths and challenges, offer feedback and design professional development opportunities based on observed patterns. (4.1)
 - During the month of November, the principal and assistant principals analyzed the data from Advance. They learned that indicators 1e, 2b, 2c, 2e, 3b, 3c, and 3d fell within the ineffective and developing levels of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Since then, they have aligned the professional development and offered actionable feedback to support Domains 2 and 3. Teachers receive evidence, actionable next steps and resources, including ARIS, follow up meetings and additional support from consultants and instructional coaches. For example, observation

reports state evidence and evaluator's notes such as, "the instructional purpose of the lesson was not communicated to students or the tasks they would be engaged in," "Students were not given opportunities to explain their learning," and "No rubric present." The feedback for priority areas of growth is specific, including comments such as, "Clearly communicate the instructional purpose of the lesson to students including where it is situated within the broader learning," "You may group students according to skill or content strengths /weaknesses," "Present students with visual model/exemplar of a question along with a rubric," and "Throughout the class time, ask pre-selected clarifying questions to diagnose evidence of comprehension and learning." Principal and assistant principals direct teachers to ARIS and assign one-on-one support with assistant principals, coaches and consultants. Teacher-leaders facilitate protocols to look at student work in order to help teachers refine lessons and curriculum and, in turn, teachers volunteer their lesson plans to be evaluated through protocols used during whole staff professional development. The principal norms and calibrates the teacher evaluation process by inviting her assistant principals to conduct observations together. Thus far, they have identified different levels of teacher support, including one-on-one support by the assistant principal, one-on-one support by a consultant, and group meetings led by the literacy coach. In addition to providing support, school leaders monitor the progress carefully, hold teachers accountable to expectations, and make decisions about programming and scheduling based on teacher talent. Each assistant principal is responsible for the learning opportunities and accountability system within their departments, while the principal has established learning opportunities and accountability systems for her assistant principals through the norming, retreats, weekly check-ins and reviews of teacher practice goals. Thus far, assistant principals have become more effective in using the Danielson Framework for Teaching to provide actionable feedback while teachers have made progress in implementing literacy strategies, use of Smart boards, and designing lessons aligned to the units of study. These systems of targeted support and accountability offer clear expectations for all and improve teacher practice, which in turn offers learning that is more aligned to CCLS.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to align curricula and tasks to CCCLS so that they consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills across grades and subjects and for all students with disabilities and English language learners. (1.1)
 - The school has placed an emphasis on the academic skills of reading, writing, crafting evidence-based claims using primary and secondary sources and effective participation in Socratic seminars. In their respective departments, teachers are in the process of aligning curricula to CCLS. Some unit modules list the CCLS for reading, writing, content, speaking and listening. The Global History and Geography curriculum includes New York State Standards, CCLS addressed by tasks, key ideas from the New York State Social Studies Framework, conceptual understanding, themes, essential questions and topics. In a Global History and Geography II class, students were asked to identify patterns of geocentrism and heliocentrism, determine the central idea from primary and secondary sources while reflecting on policies in a society that bring about long-term change. However, these types of tasks were inconsistent across the school. The English teachers are piloting the

module on evidence-based claims and using a scaffolded approach so that students begin with the process of writing from the first person point of view, create collaborative semantic maps, respond to overarching essential questions, and annotate differentiated informational articles in order to introduce evidenced based claims. However, the reading level selection and tasks in English courses across grades inconsistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills. The math teachers work with the National Teacher network in an effort to design challenging curricula and tasks. In one trigonometry class, students worked with peers differentiating and integrating exponential functions that had bases other than e . Students discussed, showed evidence and proved their work. However, across other math classes, tasks continue to be of a more procedural, less rigorous nature. While planning rigorous curricula and tasks happens in some classrooms, it has not yet systemized across departments, thus limiting student access to rigorous curriculum and opportunities for all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, to articulate their thinking, defend their ideas and adopt rigorous habits of learning.

- Strengthen teaching practices to provide high quality support for all students in order to reflect the common belief that students learn best by being engaged in challenging tasks so that work products reflect higher order thinking. (1.2)
 - The principal articulates the belief that the instructional work of the school should be designed to meet the literacy needs of students, with a focus on CCLS. While some lesson plans follow a workshop model by listing the CCLS, a Do Now activity, a mini-lesson, guided practice by the teacher followed by independent practice, group practice and connections, there were lesson plans that included similar elements but failed to include opportunities for reading, writing, application, discussion, data sources and connection. In some classrooms there was evidence of reading, writing, discussion and technology, such as the display of essays and corresponding rubrics and assignments involving comparing, contrasting, and use of multiple sources to develop argumentative essays. However, with the exception of some teachers, evidence of CCLS as it relates to daily planning and teacher practice has not become fully consistent across the grades and disciplines, thus limiting opportunities for students always to engage in rigorous activities that produce meaningful work products aligned to CCLS.
 - The quality of student work products and discussions varies across the school. In one geometry class, students had specific roles within their groups and had the choice to demonstrate their ability to differentiate and integrate exponential functions and use exponential functions to model compound interest and exponential growth. In their groups, students discussed how they derived to the solutions and shared their thinking process. They were encouraged to share the explanation, not necessarily the answer. Students applied the properties and evaluated the solutions before agreeing to share with the large group. In one social studies class, students, in pairs, read excerpts from the bible and Aristotle, identifying and researching key terms. As the teacher introduced new concepts, students, independently and collectively, elaborated on the new ideas and discussed the implications before supporting their perspective on the traditional views of the universe. Students worked independently, in pairs, and in whole class-group reading, writing, researching, discussing and citing evidence from multiple sources. This, however, was not the norm across classrooms; in

other math classes, students were asked to solve math problems in a procedural manner via activity sheets. In English classes students read, annotated, and cited textual evidence, however, there were limited opportunities to engage in complex text discussions. The uneven opportunities across grades and disciplines for students to demonstrate high level thinking inhibit their chances to be college and career ready.

- Strengthen the use of ongoing checks for understanding and common assessment practices in order to consistently make effective adjustments in response to student learning needs across classrooms (2.2)
 - Teachers in their departments create and use common assessments, such as midterms, final examinations, mock Regents, and Regents exams in order to assess students' performance and readiness for state testing. For example, the social studies department created a final assessment that replicated the document based, short-answer questions part of the Regents exam. The analysis allowed teachers to identify units to be reinforced while administrators regrouped students at the end of the term and identified intervention supports for students who performed below average. The English department works with the Literacy Design Collaborative program and uses their informational/explanatory teaching task rubric as well as the New York State Regents Examination in English to evaluate argumentative writing. The English department uses the English as a Second Language Testing Program to assess students' linguistic skills. While departments use common assessments aligned to the State standards, the use of these common assessments vary across disciplines and the results do not consistently measure progress towards goals and have not translated into the adjustment of curricula and instruction. While using the results from these interim assessments to provide academic interventions has had positive outcome in some disciplines, there are still many other Regents results that continue to demonstrate below average performance, thus the inconsistency across disciplines has not allowed administrators and teachers to use data effectively so that all teachers can adjust and refine instruction.
 - While teachers state the aim and objectives of a lesson, the checks for understanding and formative assessments, including exit slips, pair-share, summary, questioning, and written tests do not consistently capture individual student progress towards desired results. Assessment techniques include rapid questions at the end of the guided practice, group work, and exit slips at end of the lesson, which are often answered by the same students. In addition, lesson plans do not consistently include differentiation plans for specific students or groups of students and purposeful groupings. In many classrooms, students are assigned the same tasks and activities neglecting to provide additional entry points for students who struggle academically and preventing higher performing students from advancing to the next level by not offering a more complex, rigorous task. As a result of not being able to use formative and summative assessment on a daily basis, teachers cannot make effective decisions about lesson design, tasks, and assessments, thus widening the achievement gap as they are missing opportunities to offer informed and targeted scaffolding and extensions.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Murry Bergtraum High School for Business Careers	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