



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Quality Review
Office of School Quality
Division of Academics, Performance, and Support
2013-2014**

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

**Middle College High School at LaGuardia Community
College**

Q520

**45-35 Van Dam Street
Long Island City
NY 11101**

Principal: Linda Siegmund

Dates of review: December 9-10, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Juan Mendez

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Middle College High School at LaGuardia Community College is a high school that consists of 492 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 79% Hispanic, 8% White, 8% Asian and 5% Black students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 93.8%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school's mastery-based learning approach is embraced by all teachers, who incorporate suitable strategies that allow students multiple opportunities to demonstrate success. (1.2)
 - Teachers and administrators utilize mastery learning rooted in performance and portfolio-based assessment that incorporates project-based learning and ensures student understanding of critical competencies. For instance, several mathematics classes challenged students with rigorous mathematical problems and reinforced student learning through enrichment activities that were monitored through a Delta Math software program. Moreover, teacher practices are informed by the engagement competencies from the Danielson Framework for Teaching which encourages project-based learning approaches that require students to apply concepts learned and make their learning visible. Another mathematics class featured student groups designing mini-golf courses that required students to apply mathematical fluency and deep understanding aligned to the instructional shifts. Over the past year, the Learning Environment Survey (LES) validates that teachers are able to motivate and excite students about learning with a .4 increase in the area of engagement.
 - Teachers create innumerable opportunities to enhance student learning which allows for individual and small group support. Revision time is incorporated across classrooms as detailed in student work products where editing is apparent. Student production of evidence-based responses in English and social studies classes become stepping stones to full immersion in the writing process. Student essays are repeatedly revised until a satisfactory level of achievement is ultimately reached. This tactical effort has led the school to elevate its rating in the category of progress from a D to a C on the New York City Progress Report.
- The principal's informed use of resources is embodied in the school's instructional goals, which exemplify a strategic approach to meeting the needs of all students. (1.3)
 - The administration strategically uses resources to provide students with opportunities to create meaningful performances or portfolios. A joint venture with adjacent LaGuardia Community College and its Liberty Partnership program has allowed the school to strengthen student performance-based activities. This includes trainings in salsa dance techniques, poetry workshops, and use of state of the art science labs. Additionally, collaboration with nearby International High School at La Guardia has allowed the school to experiment with shared cohort college classes such as Literacy and Propaganda. The school plans to introduce new collaborative courses such as Reading Biography in spring 2014. This effort results in meeting the school's expectation that "all students graduate with a minimum of 24 college hours." More importantly, 85% of students are passing the college course in which they are enrolled.

- The principal calls upon vetted educators to teach college classes so greater access can be provided relevant to the rigors of college and career readiness. A restructured bell schedule caters to student interest in college courses which allows them to enroll in these courses as part of their school program. Moreover, this approach aligns with the school's 2012-2013 CEP goal, which emphasizes a school-wide effort to "improve college preparedness by increasing the number of 10th grade students enrolled in college courses at LaGuardia." School leaders monitor attendance in college classes through intervention at monthly Early College Administration team meetings, as well as through LaGuardia's web-based attendance portal. These interventions allow instructors to hold themselves accountable for student progress. As a result, opportunities for internships and enrollment in college classes have increased significantly.
- Students, parents and staff appreciate the school's focused effort to maintain a supportive and respectful environment that strengthens the development of students' academic, social, and emotional growth. (1.4)
 - School leaders create an optimal environment that supports the development of discipline and overall student well-being. The principal's reasoned theory of action rests on the notion of building a culture of success while mediating potential issues. Advisory period serves as a conduit to elicit student voice where they participate in decision making to initiate, guide and lead school improvement efforts. Advisory classes teach students to manage conflict through communicative means. These classes condition students to the process of reporting concerns directly to guidance counselors. One student pointed out that, "Teachers or guidance counselors intervene well before any incident occurs." As a result, the school has experienced a substantial decrease in the number of incidents and suspensions.
 - School leaders personalize attendance supports through ongoing family outreach to maintain an exemplary attendance rate. A paraprofessional with a degree in psychology, three guidance counselors, and a social worker buttress efforts around attendance. Communication to parents is prioritized by all stakeholders to minimize student absenteeism through telephone calls, text messages, emails, and letters. One parent stated, "The school views parents as an integral part of the school, which inspires students to do better." The strength of the tri-fold relationship between faculty, students, and parents is bolstered by what the principal describes as "Attendance profiles that are sent home and reviewed with teachers." Additionally, student advisors conduct parent trainings on a monthly basis around such topics as the college process, transfer credit options, and socio-emotional development of students. Students are continuously motivated through an "aura of inclusion," where each and every student feels welcomed and needed. This has led to an attendance rate that exceeds 91% as well as an 'A' on the School Environment score on the 2012-2013 New York City Progress report.
- Teachers' ongoing checks for understanding, coupled with a thorough analysis of assessment data is consistently used to gauge levels of student performance. (2.2)

- Teachers collaboratively develop and use assessment tools to consistently monitor student growth. Rubrics are widely shared and posted on grading platforms, such as Engrade, to make criteria more transparent for students. These rubrics allow feedback to be both clear and actionable, as students are frequently required to revise the majority of submitted work. Teachers conduct itemized analyses of student submissions to drive curricular reform. This has resulted in the spiraling of identified competencies and the refinement of project-based assessments.
- Across classrooms, ongoing checks for understanding allow students frequent opportunities to self-assess. Google Docs is used as a means to produce and assess e-portfolios in grades 9 and 10. Freshman and sophomores consistently reflect on their progress through the use of this web-based platform. Furthermore, portfolio reflection rubrics contain distinctive criteria that add clarity to portfolio expectations. Additionally, teachers use assessment outcomes to adjust and plan instruction. The urgency behind the redesign of curriculum maps was prompted by both a thorough analysis of student data and the Common Core standards. This ongoing adjustment allows teachers to target all students' needs as evidenced by a 7% increase in the 6-year graduation rate.

What the school needs to improve

- Further develop rigorous performance tasks in all content areas to promote higher order thinking and target the needs of diverse learners, enabling all students to meet Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). (1.1)
 - School leaders organize the integration of CCLS in the form of curriculum maps and performance tasks however, many of these performance tasks lack critical characteristics that comprise college readiness. An abundance of research papers exemplified text-based responses where sources were frequently unclear. For instance, several student research papers contained Uniform Resource Locators (URLs) in parentheses as citations. Although students are quoting from multiple sources in their writing, these references are not consistently made clear through the use of in-text citations. Additionally, bibliographies or works cited pages were missing from student research papers. Although Advanced Placement students are far more accurate in effectively citing sources, the school's integration of the instructional shift that calls for students to write from sources is limited. This gap in curricular coherence has resulted in a 4% decrease in the percentage of students at the college readiness threshold on the English Language Arts Regents Exam, as the college readiness percentage on this exam has dropped from 24% to 20% over the last year.
- Expand the work of teacher teams to ensure that curricular decisions at the team and classroom level are geared to directly improve student achievement across all grade levels. (4.2)
 - Interdisciplinary-based inquiry teams meet two times a week to examine school data and pinpoint areas for improvement. This ongoing collaboration serves to meet the needs of students as evidenced in the latest team-driven curriculum mapping initiative. Although teacher-led

inquiry work is done to support the school's curricular goals, teacher teams inconsistently use professional dialogue to explore and document progress relevant to instructional goals, including the adaptation of newer pedagogical approaches aligned to CCLS. The principal notes that, "Student work is examined to evaluate if the assessment was clear or whether the content assessed was covered in the curriculum." One teacher team spent an entire period reviewing the performance of a single student, a senior who had failed the English Language Arts Regents Examination. A teacher explained that, "seniors are our priority." This prioritization of select student work during team analysis results in an uneven effort to drive student achievement across all grade levels.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School Name: Middle College High School at LaGuardia Community College					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 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	
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 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	
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 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	
Quality Review Scoring Key								
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed	