



**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**

**High School of World Cultures**

**12X550**

**1300 Boynton Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10472**

**Principal: Ramon Namnun**

**Dates of review: December 11-12, 2013**

**Lead Reviewer: Elaine Lindsey**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

High School of World Cultures is a high school with 392 students from 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 10.50% Black, 79.10% Hispanic, 1.30% White, and 6.10% Asian students. The student body includes 60.20% English language learners and 0% special education students. Boys account for 54.60% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45.40%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 86%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- School leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals to improve student learning. (1.3)
  - One of the school's instructional goals is to increase Regents pass rates and the number of Advanced Regents diplomas. As such, the principal strategically used funds to support after school and Saturday Regents prep programs, fund academic trips to enhance instruction and purchase Skedula to provide on line tracking of student progress for administrators, teachers, parents and students. The school is 90% English Language Learners (ELLs); therefore the principal continues to increase the integration of technology in classrooms by purchasing additional laptop carts to allow hands-on interaction with text and iPads to use as textbooks for the 10<sup>th</sup> grade cohort. As a result, there has been an increase in the number of Advanced Regents Diplomas.
  - The school's hiring practices and teacher assignments supports the school's instructional goals to increase performance. Administrators serve as the hiring committee and hiring decisions are decided by the team in collaboration with the principal. The team has developed a specific set of criteria aligned to the school's instructional goals for new hires. For example, all new hires must be comfortable with a 90% ELL population, must speak two languages and present a demonstration lesson to the team. New hires are selected based on the team's final evaluation. In addition to screening new staff to support instructional goals, decisions are made to support student performance by reducing class size. As such, the principal hired an additional physical education teacher to keep class size at a minimum. Consequently, class size averages 25 students per class providing more opportunities for groupings and interventions that effectively support access to learning opportunities that lead to college and career readiness for all students.
- Students and staff appreciate the school's focused efforts on maintaining a safe and inclusive environment that supports students' academic and social emotional growth. (1.4)
  - The school's collaborative and inclusive approach to culture-building, discipline and social-emotional support results in a safe, nurturing and cohesive community where there is mutual respect amongst staff and students. Celebrating student success through principal and assistant principal's honor roll, assemblies for most improved, perfect attendance awards and senior awards assemblies is encouraged to support students' personal growth. Students stated that their voice is heard through their involvement in student government and town hall meetings to discuss concerns. Recommendations are submitted and taken into consideration by the principal. As a result, a petition for one day without school uniforms, more school trips and a change in uniform attire from Khaki to black pants was granted supporting personal growth for students.

- Students are well known and supported by the staff and administration upon entering the school. The principal conducts the first meeting with all students to discuss expectations and to set the tone for the school year. Additionally, each student is assigned a coaching teacher who serves as their advisor and works to personalize their educational experience by setting goals and meeting with coaching groups every Wednesday and Thursday to discuss progress. Each coaching teacher is responsible for a group of 15 students who are assessed and tracked for progress throughout the school year. Coaching teachers review assessments, conduct one-to-one conferences and develop action plans to aid their students throughout the school year. Additionally, coaching teachers serve as student advocates, work closely with the guidance counselors and also provide additional social emotional support. All students agreed that their coaching teacher is someone they can go to for assistance.
- Professional collaborations across grades and disciplines enable teachers to reflect on student work, improve instruction and develop leadership skills to improve student achievement. (4.2)
  - The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations. Teacher teams meet daily during the 5<sup>th</sup> period for common planning and inquiry work. During a 9<sup>th</sup> grade English as a second language (ESL) team meeting, teachers gathered to review and discuss students who represent the three levels of ELLs; advanced intermediate and beginners in their classes. Team members used the *Surfacing Student Thinking Protocol* template to analyze a sample of each student's work to develop strategies to support teachers in developing meaningful tasks to provide multiple access points for all learners. The strategies are shared with the community through Google Docs and monthly school-wide meetings to improve instruction and increase students' academic performance.
  - Teachers work collaboratively with the school leadership and have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning. For example, teacher teams collaborate with the administration and make decisions around protocols for analyzing student work, scheduling time for teacher team meetings, professional development, and coaching teachers. This year, teachers decided that students would have "coaching" teachers in lieu of advisory. Thus, enabling coaching teachers to develop strategies to engage all learners in the learning process, track a group of students' progress across disciplines and support students through the college process.

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

- Continue to develop curricula to include rigorous Common Core aligned units and tasks that consistently include critical thinking skills, evidence based discourse and higher order work products. (1.1)
  - Teacher teams are at the beginning stages and are in the process of aligning curricula to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and integrating the instructional shifts. Departments have obtained curriculum from another high school and are currently refining tasks and units to meet the needs of their students. English language arts (ELA) classes are using

Fontas & Pinnell to work with their lower level ELL students. Teachers meet twice per week with a group of 13-15 students to assess student progress for further curriculum and unit refinement. However, a lack of a CCLS aligned curriculum hinders the school's ability to create coherence across grades and subjects that promotes college and career readiness for all students.

- Curricula and tasks inconsistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher order skills. In an ELA class all students are given pictures and asked to write the name of the item at the bottom of the picture. Students identify pictures of ants, grasshoppers and the sun. Students work independently and are then asked to come to the board to write their answers and share with the class. In a Government class all students were asked to read text, discuss and circle and list key words. Upon completing the task, students are required to summarize in 1-2 sentences. Lessons and tasks do not consistently demonstrate rigor, thus limit the school's ability to cognitively engage all learners in higher order skills in preparation for post-secondary opportunities.
- Deepen the level of instruction so that lessons and tasks consistently engage students in critical thinking with multiple entry points that extends opportunities for all students to learn and achieve at high levels. (1.2)
  - Students respond to teacher questions across classrooms; however the types of teacher questioning was typically lower level basic recall that lacked rigor to push students to think critically. For example, in a U.S. History class students were asked "Did Mexico cause the war or the U.S.? Why do you think they caused the war? " However, they were not required to support their answers with evidence from the text. In an Algebra class students are asked "Is there any relationship between rate of change and slope?" "What is the slope?" Additionally, group work activities were not consistently differentiated to support multiple entry points for all learners. In most classes students were given identical tasks, thus hindering the school's ability to challenge all learners in order to produce higher order work products in preparation for college and careers.
  - Student work products and discussions across classrooms reflect uneven levels of student thinking and participation. Visits to classrooms revealed lessons that were typically teacher centered resulting in limited opportunities for student interactions, inquiry, accountable talk and student to student discussions. For example, in a chemistry class students are asked "How does atomic radius change as we move down in a group?" "Why?" "How does atomic radius change as we move across a period?" Draw a data table of atomic number and radius for period three elements. In an English class the teacher asked the class, "Where was the first Thanksgiving in the United States?" "Do you remember the story?" "Where did they come from?" Student responses were generally directed to the teacher with no follow-up or inquiry from fellow classmates, hindering discussions that consistently push high levels of student thinking and participation aligned to the school's instructional goals to increase student performance across all subject areas.

- Improve the use of varied assessment data to inform instructional adjustments, analyze student performance, with ongoing checks for comprehension in order to apprise students of next learning steps. (2.2)
  - Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments and rubrics to provide feedback to students. Departments are in the process of creating common rubrics aligned to the Common Core to assess students' performance and provide actionable feedback. Students are provided with rubrics before starting an assignment; however use is inconsistent and feedback is not actionable or sufficiently specific to offer a clear depiction of mastery of the school's chosen standard. Teachers are being trained in various assessment strategies such as Fontas and Pinnell, mid and summative assessment and how to create rubrics to assess students' work. As a result, learning steps, as well as the teacher's ability to determine appropriate instructional approaches that address levels of understanding of all students are limited.
  - Across classrooms teachers' assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding that lead to on the spot adjustments. Checks for understanding are usually general with rapid fire type questions that allow for choral or one student responses without further query. For example, in a U.S. History I class students are instructed to work on exit slips in their groups or with a partner. In a Trigonometry class students are asked "How do we get 90 degrees?" "How can we find the measure of a right angle?" Questions and answers are predominantly teacher-to-student and usually do not lead to student self-assessment, as evidenced in classes visited. Consequently, the inconsistent use of ongoing checks for students' understanding and the lack of students' self-assessment limit prospects for teachers' effective adjustments to curricula and instruction, in order to meet all students' learning needs, including ELLs and SWDs.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

High School of World Cultures	UD	D	P	WD			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>		X					
<b>Instructional Core</b>							
<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					
<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 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				
<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 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				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>