



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**New Voices School of Academic & Creative Arts**

**Middle School K443**

**330 18<sup>th</sup> Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11215**

**Principal: Frank Giordano**

**Date of review: December 10, 2014  
Lead Reviewer: Teresa Caccavale**

## The School Context

New Voices School of Academic and Creative Arts is a middle school with 531 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 15% Black, 44% Hispanic, 34% White, and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 21% special education students. Boys account 33% of the students enrolled and girls account for 67%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 94.8%.

## School Quality Criteria

<b>Instructional Core</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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	<b>Celebration</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
<b>School Culture</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>

## Area of Celebration

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Well Developed**

### Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to curricula and reflect the school's belief that students learn best when they use academic language in discourse and express their opinions.

### Impact

As a result of the school's well-defined and enacted instructional beliefs, student discussion and work products reflect high levels of thinking participation and ownership

### Supporting Evidence

- An 8<sup>th</sup> grade Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) Humanities class studying immigration engaged in a close reading of the article: *Immigration is Hurting the U.S. Worker*, focusing on the essential question; "Do the benefits of immigration in America outweigh the issues it presents?" Students identified the author's central idea of each paragraph and in discussion with their partners, analyzed the development of the article's central idea, and evaluated the soundness of specific claims made based on textual evidence. Students then used this information to create a T-chart of both benefits and issues surrounding immigration and took a position, writing in response to the initial essential question posed. Additionally students in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade Regents level Humanities class analyzed their work using a graphic organizer in order to make their argumentative essay claims stronger in terms of logical reasoning and relevant evidence. They worked independently to use text evidence from several articles to support their conclusions in distinguishing against a counterclaim. Meanwhile, the teacher conferred with students who needed additional support.
- During a 6<sup>th</sup> grade math class students collaborated with their partners to create their own measurement division problems by drawing models, creating problem situations, and solving. Students strategized on various methodologies and steps to solve problems including the use of common denominators and conversion of mixed numbers to improper fractions. Scaffolds included a five-step chart, graphic organizers, and plastic fraction tile manipulatives for students who required a concrete model or had difficulty making accurate sketches to show their work.
- A 7<sup>th</sup> grade science class was observed constructing, identifying, and describing two chemical bonds to determine if they were ionic or covalent. Students used the vocabulary associated with matter to enhance their discussions with precise language and created Bohr models from information they had charted regarding the transfer or the sharing of electrons.
- Collaborative student groups of four were observed working independently to follow the procedures on a lab sheet while dissecting the flower of an Asiatic lily blossom in an 8<sup>th</sup> grade science lab class studying how plants reproduce sexually. Written student work illustrated students' understandings of how the structures of the lily plant increase the probability for successful reproduction and continuation of the species.

## Area of Focus

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations for instruction and create opportunities for professional learning and support, as well as partner with families to support student progress towards college and career readiness. The school continues to prioritize finding new ways to improve outreach to parents to deepen their understanding of curricula.

### Impact

The school's consistent conveying of high expectations and provision of quality supports ensure that students and families, understand expectations and that students are prepared for the next grade level, as well as on a solid path towards college. The school's on-going effort to continually improve communication is resulting in new avenues of communication and new parent workshops to address missed opportunities for improving parents' comprehension of standards and curricula to expand their support of their children in school.

### Supporting Evidence

- Parents indicate that the school has very high expectations and is committed to the academic and arts programs equally. They state that they have open communication with the teachers through Engrade, e-mails, letters, and parent meetings. Parents also indicated that the administration and teachers are proactive in addressing their concerns.
- The school sent out welcome letters to the parents from each grade department outlining expectations around the year's work and offers ongoing workshops, and meetings across the year. Parents came to meet the teachers and get an overview of the curriculum, assessments, accountability systems and expectations for each subject area. Parents stated that they find the teachers to be invested with their children and invested in helping parents understand the curriculum unit content across the year.
- Students state that they are challenged by the work and that the school prepares them for the next grade and high school. One student said that the teachers and her peers push her to work harder. Teachers meet with students during lunchtime to help them prepare for their high school auditions. Additionally, there is a great deal of collaborative planning between content and service providers that ensures targeted student academic and social-emotional support.
- The school is in the process of developing a survey to identify what skills parents want to build on to encourage student support at home. Parents are able to identify skills based on conversations with their children at home regarding solving complex math problems and the process their children go through in writing claims and counter arguments. Parents, however, express the need for continued support in learning what they do not yet understand about the CCLS.
- Building on the best practices currently implemented by the math department, the school is currently developing a newsletter to ensure that parents understand the CCLS curriculum, and have information on upcoming units of study and unit goals, so that they can support their children more fully toward meeting academic expectations.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

Strategic curricula decisions made by administration in aligning curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts have resulted in coherence within and across grades and content areas promoting college and career readiness. Teachers use student work and relevant data to make adjustments to curricula and tasks that ensure high levels of cognitive engagement for all learners.

### Impact

Lessons and tasks across content areas are developed collaboratively and are planned in a coherent way to provide all learners in all classrooms, including English language learners and students with disabilities, with opportunities to demonstrate high levels of thinking through rigorous curricula, cognitively engaging tasks, and rich discussions.

### Supporting Evidence

- The instructional shift of text-based answers to support claims is embedded in units of study, impacting the work through the development of close, shared reading routines. For example, in Humanities, students read leveled non-fiction texts and evaluated argument and specific claims made in the text and assessed whether or not the reasoning was sound and evidence was relevant.
- In Math, performance tasks that embed multi-step higher order thinking strategies impact teacher practice and student learning as student work in partnerships to create and solve challenging multi-step word problems and teachers gain valuable insight into student thinking. Lessons and tasks attend to rigor, conceptual understanding, procedural skills and fluency applications. The Integrated Alex math-on-line program individualizes the identification of needed concept and foundation building for each student in order to achieve positive outcomes in terms of CCLS. Additionally, teachers use math tasks from the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) Common Core Resource Library and Engage NY, as well as employ manipulatives including plastic fraction tile sets and fraction towers for students who prefer and/or need a concrete model to support creating written solution. These supports ensure that that all learners are working at their level, maximizing their learning and success.
- Science classes the focus on problem solving and application of scientific content in students' daily lives. The principal stated, "Students are not only expected to master the content, but more importantly have to be able to demonstrate their ability to synthesis, analyze and draw conclusion based on that mastery of content."
- The school offers six Arts disciplines: Music, Dance, Chorus, Theater, Graphic Arts and Visual Arts. The exposure they receive as 6<sup>th</sup> graders gives them a foundation in the Arts as well as a beginning understanding of what it entails to be a serious student in that discipline. At the end of 6<sup>th</sup> grade the children then choose an Art form that they will major in for the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. The two-year intense study prepares many of them for continued studies in high school and beyond. Additionally, arts teaching artists make connections to literacy and mathematics.
- Related services are carried out inside the classrooms through a push-In model that includes on-going guided practice, modeling, and scaffolding giving all students access to a challenging curricula and opportunities to demonstrate higher-order thinking.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, the use of assessments, rubrics, student self-assessments and ongoing checks for understanding allow for a clear portrait of student mastery and meaningful feedback to students.

### Impact

The school's systems to monitor progress through deep analysis of data gathered from various assessments and during instruction allow teachers to consistently refine unit and lesson plans to meet all students learning needs and to provide students with feedback, thus making them aware of their next learning steps.

### Supporting Evidence

- Grade departmental meetings and whole department planning meetings are scheduled weekly in addition to the contractual professional development time after school. Teachers constantly ask themselves what is working and what needs to be adjusted to meet the students' needs. For example during the 8<sup>th</sup> grade math team meeting teachers' analysis of student work in graphing linear equations showed that students struggled with the concept of determining the four general types of slope from a graph of a line, an equation, and from two specific points on a line. The teachers realized that the lesson did not provide enough time and support for students to comprehend the new material and that additional lessons needed to be added for students to understand this concept.
- All assessments are discipline specific, aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), and administered on an on-going basis. Students evaluate their progress, at the end of each unit in every discipline through use of a CCLS aligned rubric and by reflecting on teacher feedback.
- There is consistent evidence of student work being self-assessed using common rubrics and through feedback from teachers. In all classes observed students wrote an exit slip to explaining concepts and skills they felt they had successfully learned or to identify areas where they needed additional support. For example, in math one student wrote that he needed additional support in applying the concept of unit rate to solve real world problems, which precipitated a student-teacher conference on proportions and double line diagrams. Similarly students working on a graphing project used a graphing project rubric to rate themselves on accuracy, domain range, organization, and overall design and creativity.
- Students indicated that they have opportunities to reflect on their own work as well as their peers' work by giving peers both verbal and written feedback. One student stated, "In humanities we work independently ... exchange papers and give each other comments ... this shows me what I need to work on to improve."
- Ongoing checks for understanding within daily lessons include focus questions, exit slips, teacher observations, and conference notes. Teachers collect data and modify instruction either during the course of the period or during follow-up lessons. For example, after assessing student work during a 7<sup>th</sup> grade math lesson, the teacher gave the students an additional two minutes for group work. Also, she provided direct support to those students struggling with the math concept of the lesson while the remainder of the class worked on activities with multiple entry points including differentiated math problems and questioning that provided access at their skill level.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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**Findings**

Teacher teams are using an inquiry approach to learning that creates distributed leadership with a strong lens on student achievement.

**Impact**

The work of teacher teams and teacher leaders has strengthened teacher’ instructional capacity and resulted in instructional cohesiveness and improved student achievement.

**Supporting Evidence**

- All teachers meet twice weekly in department and grade meetings, work collaboratively to set expectations, and develop curricula and assessments. Teachers were observed analyzing student work and setting goals for re-teaching. Grade level teams review all tasks and ensure alignment to the CCLS. Questioning and discussion techniques are a focus across all disciplines. According to the data in the School Quality Guide, 80% of students feel that their school offers enough variety of programs, classes and activities to keep them interested in school. Additionally, the school is exceeding State and City measures in the areas of student achievement and closing the achievement gap, as well as meeting targets in progress for all students.
- Teachers interviewed stated that teacher meeting time is “invaluable”, as they have been successful in analyzing student work and setting goals for re-teaching, adjusting and refining assessments, searching for grade-level complex texts, reviewing lessons and identifying areas of misunderstanding, developing rubrics and assessments, designing questioning and discussion strategies, and reviewing tasks and ensuring alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards.
- During an 8<sup>th</sup> grade math team meeting, teachers reviewed recent data to assess students’ understanding of a math unit in order to set new learning targets, building from students’ current level of understanding. Teachers explained that they solve problems they intend to teach before presenting them in class and calibrate together so that they are able now to better anticipate students’ misconceptions and learning needs and make critical adjustments to curricula and lessons improving students’ mastery of goals and course outcomes.