



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

**Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning**

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2014-2015**

**School for Legal Studies**

**High School K477**

**850 Grand Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11211**

**Principal: Ms. Rosemary Vega**

**Date of review: March 6, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Superintendent Karen Watts**

## The School Context

School for Legal studies is a high school with 641 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 49% Black, 47% Hispanic, 2% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 14% English language learners and 19% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48 %. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 78%.

## 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>Proficient</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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Developing</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>Developing</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>Celebration</b>	<b>Proficient</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>Focus</b>	<b>Developing</b>

## Area of Celebration

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

School leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations that are connected to a path to college and career readiness and offer ongoing feedback to help families understand student progress toward those expectations. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations for all students.

### Impact

The school community is consistently made aware of graduation benchmarks, and knows what is needed to work towards college and career readiness. As a result, families are beginning to support students towards goals and students are prepared for the next level.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders consistently communicate high expectations that are connected to a path to college and career readiness by a print rich environment that celebrates student mastery on all Regents exams.
- During collaborative Wednesdays, teachers reach out to parents to keep them informed of student progress. There is also a pathway to graduation night where the graduating cohort is informed of their graduation status and what they still needed to complete. The college advisor speak with cohorts of students at town hall meetings so that all students are made aware of graduation and college requirements and academic pep rallies are held during the year with motivational speakers to keep students on track.
- There is a highly visible Core Course grade tracker to reinforce credit accumulation and graduation requirements that students specifically fill out twice a year, but continually reference throughout the school year.
- There is a uniform configuration of bulletin boards with student work, where rubrics and next steps are posted. The school also has an honor roll system visible around the building, with a gold benchmark, grades of mastery on Regents exams, and graduation requirements.
- The school collaboratively produces a monthly newsletter to inform the school community of expectations, upcoming events and the school's instructional focus. The school uses Pupil Path for parent access to grades and assignments. Syllabi and report cards are sent home to parents. At the parent meeting, they were all in agreement that the school does extensive outreach in regard to attendance and lateness.

## Area of Focus

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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### Findings

Distributed leadership structures are developing to support leadership capacity-building and to include teachers in key decisions that affect student learning across the school. Although teacher teams analyze data, this has not resulted in improved teacher practice or progress towards goals for groups of students.

### Impact

Although there is evidence that teachers meet, there is not yet a structured plan in place to support this collaboration to heavily impact student learning or to consistently support teacher development.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers participate in the teacher leader quality partnership program (TLQP) at City Tech where they receive teacher in service education focused on becoming better teachers of STEM courses.
- Teachers meet afterschool on Wednesday in grade and subject meetings to plan for the alignment of their lessons to the school's instructional focus. Though instruction in the classroom is becoming aligned to the instructional focus, is not yet embedded in practice across classrooms.
- There are distributive leadership structures in place such as assistant principals, teacher coordinators, teacher leads, grade advisors, grade leaders and student and parent leaders who all work to ensure the smooth functioning of the school. However, teacher teams do not meet regularly during the school day to common plan in a structured way, therefore missing opportunities to build accountability. Lead teachers are in place; however, they are not yet strategically meeting during the day with teachers on their teams to conduct intervisitations to further inform instruction and impact student learning.
- The school has minimal common planning time during and after the school day to analyze assessment data and student work in teams.

## Additional Findings

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

Across classrooms, teachers' assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment. Assessments are loosely aligned to curricula and provide limited feedback to students.

### Impact

Although next steps are posted, the quality of the feedback is not yet consistently actionable, limiting its impact on student progress towards mastery. In class checks for understanding and student self-assessments are not consistently utilized across classrooms, resulting in missed opportunities to make adjustments to meet students learning needs.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers create assessments to measure students' progress on Common Core skills such as citing evidence or ability to solving multistep real world questions. However, students did not have opportunities to routinely use rubrics to improve their own work or to give feedback to peers on their work.
- Teachers use the Lexmark scanner to grade student work so that they receive item analyses of the results. Teachers can use the results to improve instruction; however lack of regular and ongoing inquiry does not give teachers the opportunity to use this data effectively and in a timely manner.
- Although lesson plan templates include reflection questions, there is no evidence that the teachers use these questions to check for student understanding during the lesson so that they can make real time adjustments to instruction to address students' learning needs or to make adjustments to future instruction.
- Next steps on posted student work did not provide actionable feedback that was clearly aligned to the expectations of the rubric.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### **Findings**

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards, integrate the instructional shifts, and make purposeful decisions to build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students.

### **Impact**

As a result there is a curricular coherence across grades and subjects and disciplined inquiry, as well as attention to how students learn best, such as inclusion of rigorous college and career ready tasks and differentiation.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Teachers utilize the curriculum resources on Engage NY to ensure that the curriculum is aligned to the Common Core. The professional development they received from the network instructional coach helped to ensure their curriculum was aligned to NYSED standards.
- There is use of a uniform lesson plan template school-wide that emphasizes an attention to differentiated learning and includes a reflection protocol for teachers to encourage adjustments. Included in each lesson plan is an essential question, learning objectives and exit slip. These strategies support coherency across classrooms and rigorous instruction.
- The school's instructional focus of student-centered instruction that allow for student voice during discussions and opportunities to demonstrate mastery in written work products was evident in the planning documents. Teachers engage students in rigorous tasks that students are expected to complete throughout each unit.
- The school has CTE programs, a 4-year Law Enforcement Academy and a 3-year Computer Forensics program, where students engage in law-related and computer forensics investigative work-based learning.
- The school offers college level courses such as AP English and Composition, College Writing, and Computer Forensic courses that have been approved as college preparation through the NYCDOE and College Now courses at CUNY's City Tech. The students are exposed to legal careers during the very successful Law Week held annually at the school.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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### **Findings**

Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to the curricula and beginning to reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts. Across classrooms, scaffolds for all students are inconsistent in providing access to the challenging curricula.

### **Impact**

Some students are not challenged to work to their full potential, thereby limiting opportunities for them to engage in academic tasks that further promote higher-order thinking skills and ownership of learning.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Classroom observations demonstrated that teachers are prepared with lesson plans that are aligned to their curriculum maps. Some teachers engage students in learning activities such as a panel discussion, Socratic seminar or an argumentative writing activity where students respond to a text-based question by making a claim, supporting the claim with evidence from the texts and explaining their reasoning around their choice of evidence.
- Blackboard configurations were uniform across classrooms as well, providing coherency of instructional expectations. Classrooms were print rich with the school's instructional focus and displayed student work.
- Although the maps and lesson plans show an attention to differentiation, observation of classrooms yielded this as being inconsistently demonstrated. For example, in the science classroom, students were all reading the same article and working independently. There was a lack of supports to target student need or extend learning.
- In the math class, although the teacher included real world application, the lesson was teacher-centered and students were not afforded opportunities to engage in peer to peer discussions.
- In one class, there was an effective gallery walk activity. During the walk students engaged each other by commenting on each other's work. However, across classrooms there was an inconsistent level of critical thinking and participation. Not every class observed offered student choice and opportunity to voice through the use of higher level thinking questions.
- Lesson plans have a reflection protocol at the bottom, but there was no evidence presented that these were referenced or this data collected and used at professional learning to support teacher development.