



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

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**John Dewey**

**High School K540**

**50 Avenue X  
Brooklyn  
NY 11223**

**Principal: Kathleen Elvin**

**Date of review: May 14, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Michael Prayor**

## The School Context

John Dewey is a high school with 2,002 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 28% Black, 20% Hispanic, 15% White, and 37% Asian students. The student body includes 23% English language learners and 5% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 87.5%.

## 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>Focus</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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</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 consistently communicate high expectations and provide staff training connected to the elements of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. School leaders and staff consistently communicate high expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness and offer students and families' ongoing guidance and advisement supports.

### Impact

Ongoing feedback helps families and students understand their progress toward meeting expectations and prepare students for the next level. Staff training has led to a system of accountability for high expectations around professionalism, instruction and communication.

### Supporting Evidence

- Conversations with students and parents indicated that the school uses Pupil Path to provide them with clear and detailed information regarding students' progress as well as ongoing verbal communication with teachers and administrators. Parents described instances when their children struggled with particular subject areas, and received after school tutoring, which led to improvement in their assessments and grades. Although they indicated a need for more teacher involvement in parent activities, parents feel the teachers know their children and support them consistently. Students stated that they felt the school was a community and there were many opportunities for student leadership in activities such as the Spring Fest, student government, and clubs.
- A school wide professional development plan consists of a workshop menu, aligned to the Danielson indicators, and centered around the school's instructional focus *on increasing the rigor of reading instruction and student engagement*. For example, a PD calendar shows a series of House and grade meetings with topics such as "Questioning: Technique and Content", "Fostering student discourse in the classroom", and "Teaching reading across the content areas."
- School leaders and staff offer guidance and advisement supports through specific interventions planned by teacher teams and staff. For example, after examining marking period course grades, students who struggled the most were targeted for additional interventions. These interventions included additional review of homework assignments, one-on-one support with reading comprehension, outreach to parents, peer to peer tutoring, and language supports.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Developing**

### Findings

Across classrooms teaching practices included questioning and scaffolds, but entry points and high levels of student discussion and work products was uneven.

### Impact

Across classrooms, student work products and discussions reflect uneven levels of student thinking and participation, including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs).

### Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula leading to uneven demonstration of higher order thinking in work products. In an Advanced Placement (AP) US History class student were asked to compare and contrast the lives of women today to their lives 100 years ago. They were asked to independently read an article titled, “Gloria Steinem argues the case for constitutional change”, and respond in writing to the following, “What are the myths about women that need to be dispelled?” Although a few students were able to complete the task without additional supports, most students struggled with the reading, leading to only six out of seventeen students completing the reading or writing response. During the subsequent turn and talk, several students were not able to share out and two students were sitting alone.
- Classroom observations demonstrated uneven levels of engagement with appropriately challenging tasks. For example, in a tenth grade English Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class students were required to write a well-developed paragraph about the impact of superstitions on everyday lives based on a reading titled, “Psychology of Superstitions.” Students worked independently to read the article and complete a graphic organizer which asked for “reasons why people have superstitions” and the “advantages and disadvantages of superstitions.” Although some students were able to respond to the prompts and shared interesting portions of the text, very few students were able to write the culminating paragraph.
- Across classrooms, student work products and discussions reflect uneven levels of student thinking and participation. For example, in an English as a second language (ESL) class students worked to write arguments on the pros and cons of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs). Students were asked to identify the main idea in an adapted NY Times article titled, “How I got converted to G.M.O. food.” Students were prompted to make a claim and provide supporting and opposing evidence. While some students were able to complete the task with claims such as, “GMO’s are safe and important” and evidence such as, “There is scientific information that genetically modified foods are safe”, many students were not able to complete the task. Although the teacher provided extended time and stated, “They only needed to provide two pieces of evidence”, students still struggled with time to complete the final task.

## Additional Findings

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

Curricula and academic tasks are aligned to the Common Core Standards, integrate the instructional shifts, and consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills to support a variety of learners.

### Impact

Purposeful decisions have resulted in coherence, and promote college and career readiness for all students across grades and subject areas and for ELLs and SWDs.

### Supporting Evidence

- A review of curricular documents demonstrated evidence of alignment to the Common Core and the integration of the instructional shifts through an emphasis on increasing reading rigor across the curricula. This is accomplished through the inclusion of non-fiction readings, anticipation guides, text framing, and pre and post reading activities into the curricula. A 12<sup>th</sup> grade writing unit includes prompts for students with thought questions such as, “What is one concept that resonates most strongly with you? Why?” The culminating project asks students to create a proposal to influence the United Nations to pass legislation for the protection of indigenous people.
- School leaders and faculty make purposeful decisions to build instructional coherence and promote college and career readiness. English language arts (ELA) and science curricula have a greater emphasis on non-fiction texts and argumentative writing. Social studies units incorporate more reading and rigorous texts. Academic tasks in math increase opportunities for real world application and problem solving. According to an Earth Science lesson plan, students are asked to read a Los Angeles Times article titled, “A Man Made Plastic Ecosystem May be Damaging the Ocean.” Students cite evidence from the article to discuss the effects of plastic burning and how it contributes to climate change.
- Curricular documents provided evidence of emphasis on rigorous habits and higher-order skills, including for ELLs and SWDs. A 10<sup>th</sup> grade Global lesson plan expected students to analyze a thematic essay on the topic of apartheid. The lesson included an anticipation guide with true and false statements on the topic to use as a tool for discussion with a partner. In order to engage ELLs and SWDs, lesson resources included a modified version of the rubric and a graphic organizer to organize evidence according to the rubric components.

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

Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics and grading policies, yet teachers' assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

### **Impact**

Teachers' assessment practices results in limited feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. Teachers inconsistently make effective adjustments to meet students' learning needs.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Teachers use rubrics, grading policies, and assessments across some classrooms; however, these practices often provide students with limited feedback regarding their achievement. For example, the school has developed several classroom trackers including a Daily Assessment Chart to track the progress of Do Now's, objectives and classwork. In addition, the school developed an Objective Rubric, which tracks mastery of the lesson objective, and a Classwork Rubric, which tracks student on-task behaviors for the day. However, the use of these tools to track progress and provide actionable feedback is not yet consistent across classrooms.
- Across classrooms, teachers' assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of student self-assessment or effective adjustments. In a 10<sup>th</sup> grade geometry class students worked with partners to analyze and grade a sample student response of a composition of transformations. The teacher circulated to groups checking for understanding by asking, "How would you approach looking for a mistake? What did he do? Did we find any mistakes?" However, several student groups struggled to complete the task. The teacher explained the difference between conceptual and computational errors; however, students still struggled with several concepts and techniques needed to use the rubric to grade the sample student response.
- Across classrooms, there was evidence of ongoing checks for understanding; however, this practice is not yet consistent. For example, in a science class on DNA and the Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) students were assigned a three-page worksheet on the topic. The teacher projected the first page of the worksheet on the screen and proceeded to read, explain and fill-in responses to the worksheet while students copied down her responses from the board. A subsequent turn and talk prompt asked students, "Tell your partner what the four nucleotides are." Some students turned to each other and said, "A, T, C, G". The teacher then asked students to complete the rest of the worksheet independently and quietly.

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

Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students whom they share. Distributed leadership structures are in place allowing teachers to have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

**Impact**

Professional collaborations have resulted in progress toward goals for groups of students and effective teacher leadership has positively affected student learning across the school.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teacher teams follow a *question analysis and action plan protocol* when analyzing assessment results. For example, after examining the results of the recent Living Environment Mock Regents exam, the science team conducted an item analysis that included the key concept, most wrong answer, identified misconceptions, and key skills for each question. Subsequently, the team decided which actions to take next with regard to instruction, monitoring progress and communicating results and feedback to students on the results.
- Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work to improve progress toward goals for students. During a senior House inquiry team, teachers conducted a case conference on two students. They discussed academic weaknesses observed in an essay task such as analysis and citing of textual evidence and academic strengths such as organization and clear body paragraphs. Teachers then discussed interventions and next steps for these students, which include underlining text with a focus, paraphrasing text, citing quotes, providing a graphic organizer for document-based essays.
- Conversations during teacher meeting demonstrated that distributed leadership structures and teachers have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school. New teachers are provided with a mentor teacher to collaborate on instructional planning and coaching support. Teachers also conduct inter-visitations in order to share best practices. Teachers have had a key role in implementing a Restorative Justice program as well as creating new course electives for the following year. This was done through a programming survey where teachers ranked their interest in offering courses such as Health Occupations, Film and Media, and Biomedical Technology among others.