



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

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**Automotive High School**

**High School K610**

**50 Bedford Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11222**

**Principal: Caterina Lafergola**

**Date of review: May 27, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Cyndi Kerr**

## The School Context

Automotive is a high school with 348 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 55% Black, 40% Hispanic, 3% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 29% special education students. Boys account for 96% of the students enrolled and girls account for 4%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 79.2%.

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

## Area of Celebration

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

Teacher teams are developing in their use of an inquiry approach. Teams are also engaged in the analysis of assessment data and student work products.

### Impact

Teacher team collaboration is beginning to promote improved instruction by teachers and academic progress by targeted students.

### Supporting Evidence

- The grade 9 teacher team is implementing a “Writing is Thinking through Strategic Inquiry” (WITsi) approach in which the team meets twice weekly to review writing samples for a focus group of students. Short-term, specific mastery goals are set, gaps are identified, and curricular and pedagogical decisions are made to address the gaps. Student work is analyzed for both mastery of a targeted writing skill and understanding of the content, with teachers giving each other feedback on the quality of the work in relation to outcomes expected from the writing collected. Based on this analysis the teachers make decisions on next steps. As an example, minutes of a meeting by the social studies team indicated that the teachers collectively analyzed student work from a common assessment and identified content to be re-taught to students.
- In an observed grade 9 teacher team meeting, teachers used a protocol to analyze year-end data on the team’s goal of increasing students’ ability to write sentences and paragraphs. They compared the data from the baseline writing assessments with students’ present level of performance on a writing assessment. The teachers reviewed students’ ability to use the writing stems of “because, but, and so” in their grade 9 content classes. Teacher’s noted that the data showed that some of the targeted students demonstrated improvement in marking period results and attendance.
- In discussing the work of teacher teams, teachers noted that their efforts are primarily focused on “making sure we’re on the same page” in regards to pacing, curriculum and assessments, as well as conversations about how students are doing.

## Area of Focus

<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 school's instructional focus that is informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Across classrooms, some teaching strategies provide multiple entry points into curricula that promote high levels of student engagement in challenging tasks.

### Impact

Teaching practices across classrooms do not yet fully reflect the school's beliefs about how students learn best. Students demonstrated uneven levels of higher order thinking in their work products and participation across classrooms.

### Supporting Evidence

- Some teacher practice is becoming aligned to the school's instructional focus which is, "If teachers create and implement measurable instructional objectives that are supported by appropriately scaffolded learning activities aligned to Common Core Learning Standards, and include multiple opportunities for students to express their thoughts in writing before engaging in discussion, then there will be an increase in student outcomes." In the electronics class the teacher asked higher-order questions, utilizing wait time and actual car parts to demonstrate key concepts while pushing students to use content specific vocabulary. However in an engineering class, students were tasked with programming a digital robot, which only required them to enter numbers into the program. The teacher did not provide time for students to reflect on or summarize the concepts that were being learned.
- In an English language arts class in which the aim was, "How does the author use literary elements to develop central ideas?" students were asked to find additional supporting evidence from a text. They created a written response by going back to annotate and share their answers using the sentence starter, "My evidence supports the central idea of the passage because ...." In a history class, the teacher modeled how to annotate key concepts on a Regents exam and then asked questions to guide students' next steps in writing timed responses that include historical facts and impact statements. In other classes however, the learning objectives were not always aligned to instructional outcomes, nor were students always provided with opportunities for guided practice and multiple entry points. In a science lab class with the aim, "What do I need to know to be successful on my lab practical?" the content learning objective was clear. However, while the students were organized to rotate in lab stations, the teacher often provided the answers to questions in the task.
- In a math class where all students engaged in matching quadratic functions with the appropriate graph, graphing calculators were used to produce a digital representation of the graph so students only had to find the printed image on the work sheet that matched the digital one from the calculator. When asked how they could check that their selection was correct, students referenced what the calculator displayed.

## Additional Findings

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

The school's curricula does not yet fully demonstrate alignment to relevant standards across grades and content areas. Some academic tasks reflect planning that emphasizes rigorous habits and higher order thinking.

### Impact

Some students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, are provided with access to Common Core aligned academic tasks. Curricula and tasks do not always illustrate learning activities designed to promote higher order thinking by all learners.

### Supporting Evidence

- The principal uses instructional coaches from the School Renewal Initiative (SRI) team to work with specific lead teachers, in the context of weekly meetings, to begin implementing EngageNY in math and grade 9 English language arts. The principal reported that "the math sequence has been changed from a one year sequence to a two year sequence based on assessments of student needs and based on wanting students to go deeply in the content while giving them more time." The school is testing two sequences for Global History, one via blended learning and one traditional, to see which model is best. The school reported that, so far, there is a 50% pass rate in the blended learning class compared to the 14-17% pass rate last year.
- In a lesson plan for an engineering course, an objective was listed as, "Teach robot linear movements by writing software in robot cells". This task required students to enter numbers into cells. Other than stating, "A brief summary will be done close to the end of class", there was little in the plan that outlined how students would synthesize their efforts or evidence mastery of the standards used to inform the lesson.
- The school has a full sequence of automotive courses and the principal reported that a new sequence is being added to accommodate students who require remediation in academic subjects. This was also seen in a document titled, "A Summary of Changes to the Automotive Repair Program." Through curricula for the sequence of automotive classes students are able to learn about topics such as the components of an engine and are able to gain access to an internship with the New York Police Department Fleet Service. Students are also able to go on to college for automotive studies or to study mechanics.

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

Assessments and rubrics are beginning to drive feedback to students and teachers across classrooms. Some assessment practices reflect ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

### Impact

Students receive feedback outlining next steps towards improvement of their performance on some tasks. Teachers do not consistently make effective adjustments to meet all students' learning needs.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders reported that teachers check for understanding using various methods, such as entrance and exit slips, teacher observation and questions, and rubrics. There is also a school-wide grading policy that is included in the teacher handbook. However, across classrooms visited, teacher assessment practices inconsistently included checks for understanding that yield meaningful information about students' needs. In the ninth grade English and the Global Studies class the writing assignment showed a student checklist at the bottom of the assignment. In the Algebra 1 class, for example, the teacher checked for understanding by asking students to explain the meaning of "linear" versus "exponential." The teacher asked, "What about sequences? What type of sequences make it linear?" The students also responded to the teacher's questioning around the vocabulary word "recursive." Several of the students were able to justify their work.
- In the electronics class, the teacher asked students, "As the Freon travels through the cabin, what's happening to the heat? Where's it going? I want a complete answer." Students were not able to provide the correct answer. In response, the teacher picked up actual car parts and positioned them near each other in a manner that represented their interconnectedness within a car. Then the teacher re-phrased the question and students were able to respond with, "The heat gets absorbed by the Freon." Similar checks for understanding leading to real time adjustments to instruction were not observed consistently across classrooms.
- A review of student work and discussions with some students revealed that feedback, which outlined next steps toward improvement, was limited. For example, a student shared a short answer response from a foreign language class where the feedback recommended that she should use more details. Another student shared an assignment for which he was to write a creative response to a specific period in history. He stated that his feedback was that he was "too historical and needed to be more creative". He was able to give examples of how he could do that. However, feedback on tasks seen in other content areas, such as math and science, did not consistently reflect clear and actionable next steps.

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

School leaders continue to develop structures to communicate and provide support for high expectations to be met by all staff in alignment to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. School staff is working to further develop the level of detail and clarity to prepare students for the next level.

### Impact

Communication of expectations combined with targeted supports for staff and students is beginning to shape accountability for staff and student learning. All students are not consistently aware of their status towards college and career readiness.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders provide guidance to staff through a staff handbook and students receive a handbook detailing high expectations for their learning. The principal also has a newsletter that communicates upcoming professional development supports and assessment calendar items. There is also a professional development calendar, aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, which reflects instructional expectations and professional development activities to support all staff towards success in achieving the expectations.
- The school uses Skedula, an online data portal, to record student grades and store progress reports. Progress reports are distributed every three weeks. Students interviewed stated that the progress report is mailed and sent home. Some students stated that they use PupilPath to see their attendance and grades. Guidance counselors also visit classes to support students in understanding graduation requirements. Guidance staff also participate in grade team meetings to support teachers in keeping students on track towards meeting expectations for successfully completing academic work and attending school.
- Teachers are in the process of developing a culture of learning that communicates high expectations for students. In the grade 9 teacher team, high expectations for student work are precise and rigorous. These teachers are using the “Writing is Thinking through Strategic Inquiry” approach to generate explicit tasks involving conjunctions and subordinate clauses. After gathering the resulting student work, teachers carefully analyze the product and provide actionable feedback to students. One student said “we write stories, turn in a draft, and switch with our classmates to get feedback using a rubric.” When asked how he knows what to improve on in his writing, another student reported that he gets, “feedback to improve the writing and how to help build on it.”