



Quality Review Report

2014-2015

P.S. 35

Elementary-Middle-High School M035

**317 West 52nd Street
Manhattan, NY 10019**

Principal: Marta Rojo

**Date of review: April 21-22, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Beverly Ffolkes-Bryant, Ed.D.**

The School Context

Manhattan High School is an elementary, middle and high school with 242 students from grade kindergarten through grade 12. The school population comprises 54% Black, 41% Hispanic, 3% White, 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 8% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 78% of the students enrolled and girls account for 22%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 67.3%.

School Quality Criteria

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

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

High expectations are consistently messaged to staff via the use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching (DFT) in trainings and other modes of communication. Workshops and performance updates keep families apprised of student progress towards college and career readiness.

Impact

Structures that support the school's high expectations generate buy-in and accountability amongst staff, students and their families, thus providing a clear path towards increased student achievement and college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- All stakeholders consistently convey high expectations through the policies and practices that drive high results from students. For example, each administrator is responsible for a cohort of students and use a "Diploma Requirement Worksheet", which is an individual student's tracking sheet. This gives the credit accumulation, grades, report cards, transcripts and attendance. They use this sheet for one-to-one meetings with both students and parents. Students as well as their parents make the claim that this sheet is a motivating factor that results in the rising Regents diploma graduation rate at the school.
- Parents are appreciative of opportunities to engage the students, which include trips to colleges and participation in college summits. Many spoke of the reason for choosing this high school was that it had a vocational department attached to the academic department, which was important in case they didn't get accepted to a college. For example, the school uses Co-Op Tech for students who are interested in a particular shop and the Academic Skills Center, which has job opportunities and starts the vocational assessment for students. Parents also like the school's commitment to the high expectation for all students to be college and career ready upon graduation.
- There are various ways the school sends a consistent message to families on their expectations and their role in assisting their children to advance. Monthly newsletters and calendars as well as the school's website, which details the curriculum being taught, student success rates as well as photographs of school events. There is also an Auto-Dialer telephone system that constantly calls parents about their student's progress. As a result, there is a consistent message to parents on expectations and their role in assisting students to advance.
- The home-school connection is strengthened through workshops, which is a consolidation of the Manhattan District 75 parent coordinators, who pool their resources together to provide parent workshops borough-wide. Parents expressed how they have received flyers regarding the various workshops about academics and tips to help their child at home. They mention how they receive a lot of literature and hand-outs based on the workshop's focus. These workshops allow parents to keep on top of their child's curriculum and participate in planning their next steps for student achievement.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

While the school uses common assessments, there is a need to develop a cohesive system to the gathering, analysis dissemination and use of data at whole school, grade and individual student level.

Impact

By developing this system, the school will be able to examine patterns and trends of all relevant subgroups in order to take timely action.

Supporting Evidence

- Current grading and reporting systems allow teachers to decide on criteria for numerical assessment of student work products typically by teachers or by department. In addition, there is no formalized classroom assessment system, such as, conferencing and use of rubrics, consistently embedded in classroom practice to regularly assess student learning. This lack of coherence in assessment practices inhibits teacher teams and individual teachers from identifying more granular strengths and needs of student subgroups in order to group instructional strategies and improve student outcomes.
- While individual and team of teachers do create common assessments aligned to curriculum and instruction, classroom level student outcome data is inconsistently analyzed, limiting opportunities to differentiate instruction.
- Although rubrics were evident in some classrooms, they are mainly generic and does not accurately give insight as to the strengths and next steps for the students. Also, teacher comments are not granular and therefore does not facilitate student and school improvement. In turn, students are generally not able to fully explain what they do well and do not understand next learning steps to do better. This hampers the school's capacity to explicitly identify individual student's strengths and areas of need.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Students benefit from a standards-based curriculum. Higher-order skills are consistently emphasized for all learners across grades and content areas.

Impact

The school's curricular decisions promote college and career readiness for all learners. Across grades and content areas, academic tasks push student thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- Two years ago, the school developed a Pacing Calendar for the entire school year. They have allotted six weeks for each unit to be taught, a place for the unit overview, rational and enduring understanding and the Common Core Learning (CCLS) targets. In addition, there is a space for the essential questions, and the workplace/career readiness skills. This Pacing Calendar has been developed for all four core content subjects. There is an emphasis on the teaching of academic vocabulary in every content area, with a curriculum-writing piece.
- Since it is the school's goals to have all students attend post-graduate school, all curriculum coursework meets Common core Learning Standards (CCLS) with the further expectation that all students meet or exceed the 44 credits required for a Regents diploma. The instructional shift at the school that have taken place over the past five years have created an instructional core that aligned with the needs of the students and the CCLS as evidence by a 75% increase in the number of graduates over the last five school years as compared to the five previous years.
- Teachers are being reinforced the school's instructional focus of "*questioning and answering*" through workshops emphasizing Danielson's 3B. Teachers have been given Webb's Depth of Knowledge wheel, which is posted on teacher's classrooms. Administration has also given teacher a "*Higher Order Thinking Skills Question Template*." It is the principal's expectation to have enough prompts to provide higher-order questioning.
- During professional development at the end of the 2013-2014 school year, the staff reviewed the instructional focus examples from the 2013-2014 school year. (Citywide Instructional Expectations 2013-2014, page 5) The staff reviewed all relevant student data and then voted on the most important area for their students. The results of the staff survey indicated a need to focus on language development. These findings are supported by a review of the item skills analysis from the June 2014 ELA Regents. (Item Skills, Comp. English tab) A review of the data indicates that students correctly answered 84% of the questions aligned to a listening standard, as opposed to 69% success rate on question aligned to a reading standard. This is why the school made their instructional focus on developing academic vocabulary in the content area, on the belief that if students know vocabulary, they can understand and answer questions. CCLS for Mathematics states "The high school standards specify the mathematics that all students should study in order to be college and career ready. For example, a math lesson states "Use trigonometric ratios and the Pythagorean Theorem to solve right triangles in applied problems."

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Pedagogy provides consistent instructional supports, including questioning and discussion techniques. The use of strategic entry points and extensions foster deep reasoning in student work products.

Impact

Across classrooms, curricula extensions support students to produce meaningful work products that give students the opportunity to undertake research, solve problems and are more active learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Students in classrooms across the school were engaged in learning activities. Folders and samples of student work on display show authentic activities. For example, a final assessment from an English class, students had to answer one of two questions based on the book “*Metamorphosis*” by Franz Kafka. The two questions were, “*What does Gregor’s metamorphosis into a bug symbolize? (Or what was Kafka’s intention for changing Gregor into a bug?) Cite details to support your point*” or “*Do you believe Gregor actually was a bug or a human? Explain your conclusion using details from the text*”. As a result, students articulate that teachers provide them with activities that require them to think.
- In the ten classes observed, all children were engaged in their lessons. Five out of the ten classes utilized higher-level thinking skills. For example, in an English class, students were discussing the play, “A Raisin in the Sun” and Langston Hughes’ poem, “A Dream Deferred” and correlating it to the social studies theme of racism in housing in America during the 1950’s. This leads to a school environment conducive to school-wide achievement.
- High-level questioning and discussion includes a “Staircase of Complexity” where teachers use questioning and discussion techniques using the student’s basic knowledge and then raising that level. This was evident in a Living Environment lab where students were discussing the food chain and primary /secondary decomposers, with the teacher starting the discussion with which animal in New York City would eat a mouse when then progressed to a discussion of bacteria and its evolution from the beginning of civilization. This provided the teacher with additional insights for student’s next steps.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Staff across the school welcome opportunities to participate in collaborative inquiry and professional development. Leadership structures provide a means for teachers to have input on key decisions about curricula and teaching practice.

Impact

The work of teacher teams has strengthened instruction and raised learning outcomes. Shared leadership structures build capacity to improve student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Each cohort inquiry team selects a “teacher-leader” who facilitates the meeting and is responsible for the team’s red folder which contains student work, the minutes, the collaborative analysis worksheet as well as the Individualized Student Work Analysis Template. These folders are collected by administration for feedback and to plan the next focus for inquiry. This shared leadership has led to the staff establishing a school-wide structure of identifying, targeting and assessing students to increase learning outcomes to be used consistently throughout the school.
- Creative programming has allowed cohorts of teachers to meet on a weekly basis to analyze data, share best practices, co-plan lessons and conduct collaborative inquiry. Teacher team meetings are scheduled depending on the week and the needs of the students. Tuesdays are dedicated for teachers to discuss the socio/emotional needs of the students. Wednesdays is for cohorts to meet for academics in their content areas and look at student work. Teachers stated that they believe their input will be the key to prompting change in their teaching practices and as a result will accelerate student learning.
- All of the staff is involved in two teams, the grade cohort team, which concentrates on the socio/emotional needs of students in that particular grade and the grade cohort academic team, which concentrates on the content area and inquiry. Each team follows an agenda created in conjunction with the administrative team. Having these two teams ensures coherence and consistency across all grades throughout the school as well build a reflective collaborative community that focuses on improved student learning.
- The administrative team is the main hub of the school, made up of the principal, assistant principals and the literacy coach, who was part of the district’s professional development team whom the principal hired. They provide team facilitators the “Wednesday’s inquiry focus” as well as analysis from student’s credit accumulation, attendance data, Regents line item results, progress towards graduation and the correlation among these data points. This process builds distributive leadership amongst teachers and create optimum opportunities conducive to both teacher and student success.