



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

American Sign Language and English High School

High School M047

**223 East 23rd Street
New York
NY 10010**

Principal: Watfa Shama

**Date of review: February 12, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Jo Ann Benoit**

The School Context

The American Sign Language and English School is a high school with 169 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 28% Black, 64% Hispanic, 5% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 24% special education students. Boys account for 36% of the students enrolled and girls account for 64%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 86.7%.

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	Focus	Proficient
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	Additional Findings	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	Additional Findings	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	Celebration	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

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

Findings

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based professional collaborations, analyze student and teacher work and play a role in the structures for distributive leadership which are embedded in the school's culture.

Impact

Participating in these collaborations affords teachers the opportunity to strengthen teacher practice, increase student mastery towards goals and a role in key decision making which affects student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers work collaboratively at the grade and department team levels to analyze student and teacher work. Facilitation responsibilities are shared during the teacher teams enabling all teachers an opportunity to lead colleagues in their work. Teachers usually start their meetings with a reflection on what is going on in the classes as a way to inform each other of student work and to informally receive feedback on teacher work. During teacher meetings, teachers look at student work. For example during the teacher team observation, the ninth grade teachers looked at the thematic essay from the last US History and Government Regents exam, how students fair with it and how they can support students. The teachers looked at a couple of students' papers, shared low inference notes around what they are able to do, what they are lacking and possible next steps. For one student, the teachers decided to provide her a sample essay, have her pick out/identify the different parts of the essay and then have her do a self-analysis.
- Teachers participate in and lead grade teams and department teams, and facilitate the work of the following committees: professional learning, programming, grading policy, and testing, among others. Teachers fill out a survey which enables them to choose the professional support they will receive. They provide professional development to their colleagues that help move teacher practice. Teachers decided to work on the Danielson Framework for Teaching once a month to become experts in certain components. They then work with peers as critical friends to help strengthen teacher pedagogy. Teachers spoke about the impact this collaboration has had on their practice. For example, the action research work they do helps them to identify trends across grades, focus the planning, better group students, and in the future to develop a cross content lesson plan for the history and English classes to promote coherence.
- One of the most meaningful collaborations teachers have participated in and shared is the project on shadowing. Every staff member shadowed a student this past school year. Based on the analysis of their notes, teachers decided to bring about change in their pedagogy and in the content they taught. Some of the changes they plan to implement as a result of this experience are to get students moving more in classes, to give enough time for reflections, to make projects more creative, organize more trips to build students' background knowledge and make content more interactive and even institute more town halls to build the culture within a grade and across the school.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to curricula and reflect a belief about how students learn best. Teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula for all students.

Impact

Teachers' practices promote consistent and varied multiple entry points into the curricula and thus encourage student engagement in challenging and higher-order thinking tasks. Additional planning is needed to ensure that students across the vast majority of classrooms experience high levels of participation and ownership of the work.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teachers focused on cooperative learning structures as students worked on tasks that allowed them to demonstrate higher-order thinking skills. In an American Sign Language (ASL) class, students worked with a partner or in small groups to rehearse the stories they developed around a natural disaster before presenting it to the class. This lesson allowed students to develop their ASL proficiency in story telling as well as develop their content knowledge around natural disasters. In another class, students were also working in groups at four different stations to measure humidity levels once they've taken down their data while their thermometers were dry and then wet. They would then use that information to answer the question "does wind affect humidity?"
- Across classrooms, teaching strategies consistently provided multiple entry points into the curricula. In all classrooms visited, students were working with classmates and/or with the teacher. Teachers used a variety of strategies to get students to participate in the class activities: in one math classroom, the students were standing in a circle with one of the teachers, passing a ball to each other as they were answering prompts such as "if you think you can say a pair of angles are the same [looking at student made geometric figures] and you can say why, you can get the ball to talk", from the teacher. Other teachers used collaborative/group annotation in a social studies class and another used a graphic organizer on the board that students were also filling out as the teacher was probing students for answers.
- While students participated in classwork across classrooms, a few students' participation did not reflect high levels of ownership. A few students were repeatedly called upon to answer questions put out to the entire class. Across classrooms, students' levels of participation were hindered by teacher-centered lessons. Although most students were working in cooperative learning groups, many needed their roles defined as they were not sure of their role in the group's work.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula integrate and are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, the content standards and the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order thinking skills and are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

There is coherence in the curricula and tasks developed across grades and subject areas. Students have access to the curricula and grade level work and are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- Throughout the grades and subject areas, teachers use materials from Engage NY and the scope and sequences to help guide and bring coherence to their work. In addition, they use a lesson and unit template developed by them which helps bring clarity in the expectations for all (teachers and students).
- The school ensures curricula and academic tasks are rigorous and appropriately challenging for students. School leaders ensure units integrate the standards and shifts by providing professional development to teachers around the Japanese lesson study structures and with professional development with Lucy West. The school adapted an early release schedule on Wednesdays to allow teachers to refine curricula based on student work and other data. To maintain rigor in the curricula, the school infuses performance series types assessments, and Regents exam materials to the curricula. Teachers work in committees to ensure projects are rigorous with Depth of Knowledge level questions three or four.
- Curriculum maps are submitted by teachers every month in order to receive feedback from the administration and ensure they are appropriately differentiated for students based on the latest data at the school. In addition, teachers use Kagan's cooperative learning structures to engage students and provide them with supports from peers during class activities.
- Students have the opportunity to demonstrate their learning and thinking during publishing parties. To prepare for those college level presentations, teachers' plans include note taking skills (Cornell and Harvard notes), plans to use visuals, high and clear expectations, engaging and complex texts, and vocabulary development strategies throughout lessons.

Findings

The school uses and creates rubrics and grading policies and utilizes common assessments to determine student progress towards goals, and teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self and peer assessments.

Impact

Teachers use data to make curricular adjustments to meet all students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses Performance Series, Regents exams and Mock Regents' item analyses, Scantron, and Edperformance, among others, to analyze student work and their progress towards the school's goals. 50% of students are CODA (deaf and hard of hearing) and the analysis of the data helps to differentiate and plan appropriately for them and the rest of the student population.
- Teachers consistently differentiate in their planning and in the classroom, the content, process and product in order for students to have access to the curricula. Teachers differentiate assessments and the presentations of content, as well as modifying student work groups based on data. Teachers re-present rubrics in different forms, such as grids or checklists, to make them student-friendly. These practices provide students with access to the academic tasks and ultimately to college and career readiness. All in all, the graduation rate has increased for the last three years from 68% to 69% to 70%.
- Teachers check for understanding in the classroom by walking around, asking clarifying and probing questions, having students peer and self-assess, and using the do now and exit slips. In a social studies class, as a teacher was looking at the work of the groups, he asked questions that would help him determine the level of the students' comprehension of a text. He asked "The proletariat followed an ideology. What do you think it is?" When a group was struggling with the word "agrarian", he asked them what the word reminded them of. The students answered "agriculture" then he added "what does agriculture deal with?"

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------	-----------------------

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the staff, students and families. Teachers, in turn, communicate high expectations to students and provide clear and focused supports.

Impact

There exists a culture for learning at the school that promotes mutual accountability for the expectations. Families are partners in the work to support student achievement and students own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- School administrators have high expectations for the staff professionally and as they support students' socio-emotional development. Staff members receive professional development on the Japanese lesson study, Lucy West's methods, Kagan's cooperative learning and mindfulness. A \$15,000 grant was secured to ensure teachers receive support from the Lineage Project as the school is looking to incorporate mindfulness practices in all of the classrooms. As the administrators are looking for teachers to rise up to the expectations, they are also providing targeted support to ensure teachers work in a culture of mutual accountability.
- Moreover, to help promote mutual accountability in teachers' practice, teachers are expected to play an integral role in the life of the school as learners. All observations are videotaped and teachers use the data and the Danielson Framework for Teaching to self-assess during post observations. Teachers also support one another during intervisitations and during teacher teams. Every staff member has also taken a senior under their wing to ensure he/she finishes his high school career with support, encouragement and care if needed. The expectation is that all students will graduate and each teacher should be intimately involved in this accomplishment.
- Students are also expected to be responsible for their education as they look to life beyond high school. They have the opportunity to take AP courses, College Now courses, and afterschool technology courses that promote team work and 21st century skills like website design. Seniors engage with alumni who return to the school for panel discussions around life after high school and specifically college life. 83% of 2014 graduates are in college this year. Grade teams also participate in college visits and students attend a college summit.
- Parents spoke of the school's open door policy, and ongoing communication which has helped them become full partners in their children's academic careers. Parents, as well as students and teachers, use Teacherease to track students' progress and determine next steps for the students. Parents have shared their experiences with the changes that the school's processes have brought about in their and their children's lives, from happier children who want to be in school to them feeling empowered whenever they speak with any staff members. Parents shared that concerns or inquiries are always answered, regardless of parents' communication limitations. They also took the time to explain that this progress and development of trust was a long-term effort between the community and the school.