Department of Education
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Pace High School

High School M298

100 Hester Street
Manhattan
NY 10002

Principal: Ms. Yvette Sy

Date of review: April 16, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Thomas McBryde Jr.

The School Context

Pace High School is a high school with 422 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 28% Black, 45% Hispanic, 2% White, and 10% Asian students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 40% of the students enrolled and girls account for 60%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 92.0%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
To what extent does the school…	**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		
To what extent does the school…	**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		
To what extent does the school…	**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

Findings
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff and provide training to support growth towards those expectations. School leaders and staff effectively communicate and partner with families to support students on their path to college and career readiness.

Impact
Clear expectations regarding professionalism, instruction, communication aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, and professional development, result in a culture of mutual accountability. A system of reciprocal communication with parents results in partnerships that support student progress towards expectations

Supporting Evidence

- Parents shared that in collaboration with the school, parent workshops are given throughout the year around understanding high school academic requirements, promotion criteria, and graduation requirements. In addition, Teacher Ease and progress letters that are sent to them during the middle of each marking period communicate student academic progress and the guidance counselor works with the families to devise a plan to support the student in achieving academic success and preparing for college. Parents communicated, “My child would not have made to college without Pace. Teachers taught him how to be accountable, independent, and take initiative through the high expectations they placed on him and challenged him to rise and meet.”

- School leaders and staff make the Danielson Framework for Teaching an authentic part of practice and pedagogy and create a teacher evaluation system that incorporates reflective meetings, collaboration, and a portfolio process. The system supports teachers and allows for honest conversations between staff and administration. All teacher observations are rated using the eight competences chosen by the state, and teachers meet with the administration during their initial structured review to identify the focus competencies from the eight around which they build their goals and portfolio. These chosen competencies form the rating for the final review.

- Students communicated that teachers have high expectations for them and support them in achieving their goals. “When I came in four years ago, I couldn’t do much. But, now I can complete high level texts analysis and read through various lenses and perspectives.” Students also stated, “Teachers force me to think differently and challenge me in ways that shape a new perspective or cause me to have clear evidence to substantiate my thinking.”

- Teachers engage in action research projects facilitated and supported by the administration to push their instructional practice and ensure they are able to provide rigorous quality instruction to the students. Teachers stated, “We are allowed to choose outside sources to improve our skills and address individual needs. Action research helps us to know we too are also constant learners.”

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula, teacher pedagogy reflects the belief that students learn in different ways, and students have choices in how to demonstrate their mastery of knowledge.

Impact
The school's inherent beliefs about how students learn best result in the adoption of the three layer curriculum model which creates multiple entry points for students to showcase multiple intelligences and learning. Students also engage in discussion to push and challenge thinking, though in some cases there are missed opportunities for students to demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher use of questioning and discussion techniques varied across classrooms. For example, in a science class, the teacher was observed circulated around the room to check for understanding while students were actively engaged in their classwork and asked a variety of questions at various levels, "Why did we box in these trials? What data tells us we have reached maximum capacity?" However, in a math class, the teacher lectured while presenting information projected on the board and provided minimal opportunities for students to engage in discussion about the math concepts and take ownership of their learning.

- The structure of class discussions provided students with inconsistent opportunities to engage in peer-to-peer discussion. For example, in a writing class, students had the opportunity to work in groups and engage in discussion about how to improve point of view drafts and make recommendations utilizing the rubrics. The teacher led students through a series of activities that supported them in gathering textual evidence for an essay on Ancient Greek plays. As part of the rubric provided, students assessed each other's drafts to determine if they had included textual evidence to support their position. However, in a math class, students were observed working on scale factor problems with minimal peer-to-peer conversation observed.

- Across all classrooms students demonstrate cognitive engagement and higher-order thinking through their participation in rigorous curricula and academic tasks that are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. All students have access to this rigor and are cognitively engaged, regardless of their performance level. During an English lesson, students engaged in a discussion/debate around the concept of class separate from wealth. Students were asked to substantiate their claims using evidence obtained during the *Great Gatsby* book discussion in order to make relevant connections to the topic.

- The activities in most classes were scaffolded and provided multiple entry points, including learning stations utilized in a social studies class, collaborative group work in most classes, Tiers of Educational Enriching Experiences program, and skill-based learning based on student intervention of growth through the SETSS program. Additionally, students received graphic organizers across classrooms and were encouraged to participate in class discussion. Teachers embedded reading strategies such as annotation and summarizing to help students with gaining access to difficult text. Not all classes strategically provided multiple entry points and extensions. During an algebra lesson, all students had the same problems and some finished early because they were not challenged.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed

Findings
Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are emphasized in curricula and academic tasks, are embedded in a coherent way across grades and subjects, and are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact
Across all classrooms students demonstrate cognitive engagement and higher-order thinking through their participation in rigorous curricula and academic tasks that are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of curriculum maps, units of study, and lesson plans across content areas reveal that students consistently complete rigorous, higher-order thinking tasks that require students to develop logical arguments supported with evidence, analyze information from multiple sources, and apply concepts to real world applications. All plans identify multiple entry points so that all students, including students with disabilities, can access Common Core and content standards. Students take courses at the college level and are offered various AP courses to achieve college credit.

- Inquiry teams focus on improving the academic performance of the students performing in the lowest third. Teams engage in action research projects in which they focus on student assessment data and student work. This ongoing refinement strategy for curricula and academic tasks based on looking at student data and work is evidenced in universal access and cognitive engagement across classrooms.

- The school strategically integrates the instructional shifts into the three layer curricula. Across grades and content areas, higher-order skills are emphasized and embedded in performance-based anchor projects and social action research culminating projects, which require students to do in-depth research papers/projects, present them to a panel of staff, students, and community members, and answer key content questions. The assessment tasks scaffold student critical thinking, presentation skills, analytical skills, and writing/revision skills.

- A review of curricula documents revealed purposeful planning aligned to the school instructional focus of increasing literacy across all subject areas through reading and argumentative writing with the focus on claims and counter claims. For example, tasks from social studies unit plans asked students to defend a position using evidence from a variety of primary and secondary sources. Tasks in mathematics asked students to solve problems and defend their answers in writing using evidence.

- Lesson plans from Honors Writing course contained tasks that require students to analyze informational text, referencing English language arts (ELA) instructional shifts 1: balancing informational and literary text, and 4: text-based answers. Annotation was seen across numerous documents as a means for text analysis and increased reading comprehension.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
Across classrooms teachers use or create assessments and rubrics that are aligned to the curricula. Across classrooms teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact
Assessment results provide students and teachers with actionable feedback regarding student achievement. Teachers consistently make effective adjustments to meet all students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of student work showed that teachers write rubric-based feedback to students that includes next steps. There was also evidence of student self-assessment. For instance, in an English assignment students revised their writing using different colored highlighters to identify rubric evidence for their own score.

- Across classrooms teachers consistently checked for student understanding during instruction and created structures for students to assess their own thinking. For instance, during a Social Studies history lesson, as students rotated among stations answering different sets of questions for different documents the teacher circulated around the classroom to assess student progress. As part of the activity students were required to reflect on their answers and their own understanding before handing in the assignment.

- In classrooms observed, teachers consistently used a variety of methods to check for understanding, such as, exit slips, one-on-one conferencing with individual students as well as groups of students, and purposeful questioning. For example, in a math class, students were asked to write individual reflections about how today's lesson built upon what they had previously known on the topic of the equation of a line. In a social studies team teaching class, both teachers conferenced with specific students as well as groups of students to ensure they understood the task and were using each other and the texts as resources for completing the assignment.

- During advisory, advisors provide and discuss student data so they know where they are at all times. Raw data is obtained and the advisor uses the data to discuss in Tiers of Educational Enriching Experiences (TEEE), a structured way of analyzing qualitative assessments, to see if students need additional support in the various content classes. All students participate in TEEE so anonymity is created. TEEE classes and levels of support change quarterly based off of data.

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

Findings
The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations that have strengthened teacher instructional capacity and distributed leadership structures are embedded.

Impact
As a result of the collaborative teams, teachers continually make strong key decisions that support student improvement and strengthen teacher practice.

Supporting Evidence

- Department teams are run by teachers who serve as experts in content and facilitation. These meetings are driven by protocols and almost always include the observation of student work products. A teacher shared, “the leader, systematically follows a protocol which includes sharing relevant grade level events, challenges, successes, discussing students who are not being successful, and following up with student concerns from the prior week.”

- Teachers shared that they have been doing lesson studies in all teams across all content areas. One teacher shared, “We introduce what we have been doing and look over the lesson. We give each other feedback and have conversations about how it went, how it can be improved, and have interdisciplinary conversations where domains overlap.” During a team meeting, teachers used a protocol to analyze student work and engage in questioning to analyze the student work and teacher practice. “Was there any background pre-teaching of complex vocabulary?” Teachers provided feedback to each other and concrete next steps to improve instruction in order to yield high quality student work.

- Teachers reported that the administrators really support their professional learning by providing them with time so that they can continue scope and sequence work, planning, assessment design, and curriculum revision. In addition to their once a week meeting teachers and administrators shared that inquiry teams meet consistently. For example, teachers shared, “When we meet in inquiry, it’s not only high stakes assessments that we are reviewing, and that we are using to drive instructions. We also look at daily lesson plans and more informal formative assessment that we are reviewing every day …even across disciplines.” From the inquiry meetings, adjustments have been made to the curriculum and assessments to include document-based question writing utilizing graphic organizers.

- Teachers stated that the school professional development team has a representative from every content area. Teachers share feedback with school leaders about specific content area needs and school leaders combine that feedback with data from common assessments and observations to create professional development for teachers. In the summer of 2014, the Professional Development Committee met and worked to design the professional development plan for the year. The committee is co-chaired by a teacher and an administrator. The Professional Development Committee met over the summer to analyze school-wide data and reflections from the faculty. From these data and feedback through a digital survey, the committee determined the instructional focus, *Using Assessment in Instruction*, and the Action Research Inquiry Professional Development plan.