



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning**

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Manhattan Business Academy High School

High School M392

**351 West 18th Street
Manhattan
NY 10011**

Principal: Karen Polsonetti

**Date of review: March 3, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Caron Martin**

The School Context

Manhattan Business Academy is a high school with 427 students from grade nine through grade twelve. The school population comprises 29% Black, 61% Hispanic, 4% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 61% of the students enrolled and girls account for 39%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 84.0%.

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	Celebration	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	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	Additional Findings	Well Developed
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	Additional Findings	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

All curricula is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. Through both horizontal and vertical planning, teachers utilize a variety of data streams in order to refine tasks in a coherent manner ensuring all learners, including students with disabilities and English language learners are able to demonstrate high levels of thinking.

Impact

All students experience a meaningful curriculum that promotes authentic writing, complex problem solving and a chance to develop talents which showcase their learning in multiple ways. Through careful consideration of learners' needs when selecting and adapting curricula that is Common Core aligned, all students, are engaged in academic tasks which emphasize rigorous habits across grades and subject areas.

Supporting Evidence

- Manhattan Business Academy (MBA) has established a “culture of refinement” where by all curriculum plans, aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards are reviewed prior to implementation. Quarterly, teachers revise plans in response to feedback from department and grade team meetings, ensuring instruction prepares students for college and career pathways that provide multiple entry points based on need, interest and abilities. Feedback from peers on a 9th grade Literature curriculum plan include, “Be ready to teach culture” in reference to essential questions asking students to examine cultures and how they impact lives while another comment offered stated, “Task is not *open* because it is specific”, when addressing the planned performance based assessment.
- In eight out of eight lesson plans reviewed, all included variations of differentiating instruction to both modify instruction for students who need additional assistance as well as extending and challenging the content for those which require increased rigor and engagement. For a ninth grade Earth Science lesson, the teacher identified differentiation in an “up/down” manner, “Differentiation Down: Rough outline of the paragraph is written as part of the class discussion using the lab handout; Differentiation Up: Students further expand on their writing by comparing physical properties of oxygen with those of hydrogen.”
- All teachers utilize an online *Café* to memorialize and revise unit plans and lesson plans prior to the delivery of instruction. Special Education teachers and English as a second language (ESL) providers then go online and modify or enhance lessons based upon the needs of students with disabilities and English language learners. In a revision of an 11th grade Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) earth science class, teachers added additional academic vocabulary to the content vocabulary in an effort to assist students with first understanding of whether or not fracking gas should take place in New York City. Teachers recognized they must consider the academic language first in the earth science text as it presents a challenge for the students and impacting conceptual understanding
- In order to establish cohesion of instruction over the course of years and account for shifts in teaching staff, MBA has created a year consensus map for every subject area. All consensus maps include the yearly essential question, topics for units of study, topic essential questions, essential understandings, common core standard alignment and standards of practice where required.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, pedagogy is aligned to the curricula and demonstrates a shared school-wide belief about how students learn best, through care, collaboration and cultivation informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and discussions at the team and school levels. While teaching strategies reflect strategically provided multiple entry points, supports and extensions to the curricula that meet the needs of learners, inclusive of students with disabilities and English language learners, there is inconsistent practice in deepening discussions to demonstrate higher levels of student participation and reflection.

Impact

The coherence of teacher beliefs supports all students to be engaged in cognitively challenging tasks across classrooms. However, uneven implementation of discussion strategies and protocols resulted in missed opportunities for higher level reflective discourse and ownership amongst students exclusive of teacher moderation and facilitation.

Supporting Evidence

- MBA believes that students learn best through cultivating their love of learning, caring for each one as an individual and collaborating with one another in the school community in providing a college preparatory instructional model. In particular, these beliefs can be demonstrated in the four year advisory program where by students are connected with the same adult (advisor) all four years at MBA and receive either a formal Sociology or English credit upon completion of the course.
- While Webb Depth of Knowledge level 3 and 4 prompts are addressed in all lesson plans for classrooms observed and Depth of Knowledge accountable talk posters were observed in all classrooms, in only 6 of the eight classrooms visited, students were observed freely discussing the content present, posing their own designed questions and questioning one another on their thought process. During an observation of a 10th grade English class, students were engaged in a Progressive Era Socratic Seminar debate whereby the teacher, in the role of Mother Jones, moderated much of the debate amongst the other 8 students participating in various Progressive Era roles. However, in a Business class, students were freely discussing, in groups of 3 and 4, the financial practices of specific business and whether or not they needed to adjust their expenditures and how those adjustments would impact the bottom line; the teacher was rotating between groups listening, sometimes asking probing questions to the group and recording notes on student conversations.
- A small group of teachers developed a “Discussion Protocol” where all students must defend their positions using accurate and strong evidence during class and small-group discussions. This discussion protocol was posted in all classrooms visited and referred to by students in some classes during their guided conversations.
- Lesson plan reflections are an integral part of the instructional process at MBA. Following an ICT earth science lesson, both teachers captured the following information in their reflection, “85% of students were visually able to verbally locate epicenters and write down their step by step procedure. Possibly after the teacher models, have the students model to one another in their groups then move to the independent work.”

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-----------------------

Findings

Across all classrooms, teachers and students use a variety of formative and summative assessment practices to provide students with meaningful actionable feedback. Through the practice of common assessments and tracking student progress across grades and content areas, all students including those with disabilities and English language learners, demonstrate increased mastery.

Impact

All teachers develop a broad picture of their students' strengths and areas for growth and use this information to adjust curriculum resulting in informed decisions that impact student progress across all classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- Once a quarter, all science, social studies, English, and business teachers assess learning through a Common Core Learning Standards aligned writing assignment that requires students to draft and revise in response to teacher feedback such as: “Daniela you need to have your question, introduction and purpose just as you did with the outline,” when reviewing a science lab report writing assignment. In another English Performance Based Assessment, *Geeked for Greek*, the teacher provided rubric aligned feedback such as: “Writer uses the hero’s journey logically to develop the story” accompanied with handwritten feedback, “Nice, good characterization. Wording is little confusing, who and what made the day?”
- MBA has had improved Regents scores. After completion of the action research cycle in June 2014, there was a 24% increase in the January 2015 Global Regents scores from SY 2012-2013 to SY 2013-2014.
- Teachers grading policy reflects the schools focus on content mastery, with 75% of the grading policy measuring growth in content and skills and 25% measuring the MBA Habits of Work. The Habits of Work include effort, contribution in class, persevering, and tolerating ambiguity; essential skills MBA teachers felt couldn’t be captured in content knowledge or skills. Students spoke of these habits through the encouragement and attention they say is paid to each of them through the teacher/student relationships each day.
- Following the submission of PBAs and Performance Based Tasks, all teachers come together to provide feedback on how each cycle went and where they can improve and adjust curriculum for the following cycle. Feedback from a social studies teacher on the Unit Plan that led up to one PBA stated, “Good introduction to the concept of trade-off, they have to use the claim/counterclaim and evidence, but how can we use the DO NOW and Exit Slips to make increased connections to their lives and today’s society?”
- Lesson plans from classes observed demonstrated the use of data from prior days tasks or assessments to drive instructional adjustments for students with disabilities and English language learners; from one lesson plan reviewed, “... for today, graphic organizers will be modified to include notes to direct them to their previously filled out and scaffolded organizers in the “folder notes” box. Groups today are heterogeneously grouped and different from yesterday so that each student, regardless of level can be “experts” from yesterday.”

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

Findings

School leaders, staff, parents and students all participate in fostering a school culture that consistently communicates and engenders high expectations for current and future achievement. Through the use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching, school staff sustains school wide expectations that inform instructional guidance and support preparing students for the next level.

Impact

Clear expectations and communication result in students, their families, and all teachers having a deep personal investment in the success of every student informed by systematic progress checks and clear paths for college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- During the observation of a 9th grade team meeting, members discussed evidence from one student's Common Core writing assignment. Teachers identified strategies for supporting a singular trait to increase student mastery of writing that would span across content areas. This team meeting protocol has resulted in improved student gains as evidenced by student work products. One student demonstrated attempting the standard on the September baseline assessment and exceeded the standard in the January 2015 administration of being able to show accurate understandings of the readings by using evidence from texts. Students echoed the expectation of critical thinking and writing research and essays across all classes.
- MBA's advisory program also provides all students from entry in 9th grade to 12th grade graduation a tiered approach to college and career readiness. In the initial quarter, 9th grades begin to explore themselves as learners and how to develop an individual action plan of how they'll rise above diversity. 10th grade follows with the exploration of human services and giving back. Advisory is then used in 11th and 12th grade years to explore and research potential colleges, craft personal statements and then finally, Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FASFA) completion, college application and investigating the importance of personal finance throughout the college years.
- When asked what the school values, parents overwhelmingly stated, "The school values learning and student welfare. They understand that home is where it starts and they encourage us to collaborate with them often." Another parent stated that she appreciated the college guidance meetings for her daughter whom is in 10th grade and liked that college meetings are tailored to the grade of the students and their parents since needs change from year to year.
- During the student meeting, all students stated they receive feedback on their work "all the time from every teacher." Feedback varies from pupil path entries, rubrics and statements on submitted writing assignments and drafts. Another student stated, "You can't skip anywhere or anything in this school. Teachers care about our grades and success just as much as we do; and we are the students, they aren't getting the grades."

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

Findings

All teachers are engaged in collaborative inquiry based professional development teams focusing their efforts on the three instructional buckets of collaboration, cultivation and care of student learning. Distributive leadership structures afford teacher teams the opportunity to make key decisions about teaching and learning through the analysis and revision of curriculum and student work products.

Impact

The work, frequency and variation of teacher teams provide all teachers with opportunities to engage in shared leadership and professional collaboration resulting in improved teacher capacity and student outcomes across the school community.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers participate in three teams; grade level, content area and advisory. After systematic analysis of student work products, the 9th grade team observed that their collaborative efforts to improve students' use of evidence (Trait 3) were undermined by students' weaknesses in reading non-fiction text (Trait 1). In response to this, the 9th grade teachers after systematic analysis of student work products, the 9th grade teachers spent two weeks trying their own approaches to improving the trait and then, at a weekly meeting, developed a shared approach that they could all immediately implement.
- When asked what the school values during a teacher team meeting, in addition to responses around student learning and development, teachers stated, "Collaboration and inquiry are high valued and the school schedule reflects that. We meet multiple times a week to work together. Our Assistant Principal is an instructional genius. Karen [principal] is really good at finding what we want to do [with our students] and supporting us in the work."
- School leaders structure all three teacher teams so that leadership is distributed amongst the staff thereby ensuring that all teachers are provided teacher leadership opportunities. In addition to the grade level, content area and advisory teams, teachers also facilitate and serve on the cabinet team, attendance team and professional development team.
- Teacher teams utilize a looking at student work and action research protocols as a method of bring shared accountability to the collaborative meetings. Typical tasks during these meeting times include developing subject-specific reading strategies so students improve their ability to read non-fiction texts and analyzing mock Regents outcomes to collaborate around next instructional steps. Teachers discuss ways to improve student content knowledge understanding and ways to build skills specific to a Regents exam and/or reviewing samples of student work and progress reports. Teachers also use this time to come up with next steps to improve student outcomes and teacher capacity.