



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

NYC Lab School for Collaborative Studies

High School M412

**333 West 17th Street
New York
NY 10011**

Principal: Brooke Jackson

**Date of review: January 7, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Sandra Litrico**

The School Context

NYC Lab School for Collaborative Studies is a high school with 587 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 8% Black, 16% Hispanic, 44% White, 29% Asian and 3% Multi-racial students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 15 % special education students. Boys account for 44% of the students enrolled and girls account for 56%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 94.0%.

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 | 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 | 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

The school's rigorous curriculum is aligned to content standards and offers a wide range of experiences and choice giving all students the opportunity to undertake research, solve problems and be active learners. The school emphasizes critical thinking skills in academic tasks across grades and subjects.

Impact

Higher order skills and meta-cognitive strategies are embedded into the curriculum and academic tasks so that all students including English Language Learners and students with disabilities are cognitively engaged and college and career ready.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of student work and curricula demonstrates the integration of argumentative writing across content areas. Unit maps incorporate the instructional shifts and Common Core Learning Standards and skills. The school has developed a lesson plan template, which includes essential questions, assessments, vocabulary development, student grouping, and special education and English language learner (ELL) supports. Each lesson includes guided instruction, student independent work time, collaborative work time and small group discussion.
- The school's instructional focus is to develop every student's ability to soar intellectually. Teachers craft lessons with learning targets that enable students to develop habits of learning that include collaborating, connecting, thinking, seeing multiple perspectives, taking responsible risks, questioning, observing, and reflecting.
- This year the school has adjusted the common core writing tasks to connect more authentically to the different academic disciplines. The school has created writing curriculum that includes the full scope of the common core writing standards and that prepares students for discipline specific college level writing. Students are engaged in tasks that ask them to provide analysis that draws on more than one literary text and looks at form as well as content. Students co-analyzed and authored a rhetorical analysis outline of Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech". Science academic tasks ask students to engage in research and write up the findings as a journal article.
- The curriculum is relevant and includes discussions, collaborative problem solving and connections to current affairs. The schools big ideas and shared values inform the instructional design, which incorporates aspects of the book entitled *The Growth Mindset*, which focuses on motivation and productivity, as well as social and emotional learning. The school's decision to integrate the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) provided a means to refine tasks.
- The curriculum includes tasks that require students to research and investigate. A lesson from a unit on ancient Greece asked students to use resources including Discovery Channel's *The Seven Wonders of Ancient Greece* and interactive websites on Greek theatre. Using these digital resources provides students with a full range of learning experiences.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

The staff effectively uses a wide range of assessment data to monitor student progress toward goals across grades, plan instruction, give actionable feedback and adjust curricula and instruction as needed.

Impact

- Through regular use of a wide range of relevant data, leaders and faculty have an on-going understanding of individual, group, subject and academy performance which informs instruction and organizational adjustments. Teachers' use of checks for understanding and student self-assessment lead to effective lesson adjustments and increased student mastery of content.

Supporting Evidence

- Curricular aligned assessments and grading policies provide actionable feedback to students. Teachers engage in common assessment analysis that drives curricular and instructional adjustments. A case in point is the revision of the writing curriculum to ensure that writing assignments are meaningful in curricular content.
- The school continues to provide checks for understanding in all class periods; however, they take different forms and are incorporated in different ways. "I can" statements are in use in most classes as well as self-assessment rubrics, exit tickets, daily feedback, and reflective writing.
- Formative assessments inform instructional planning, intervention and future assessments. Each day's instruction and formative assessment inform the next day's plan. Teachers engage in parallel grading and assessment so that they are able to discuss and make changes based on student performance. During regents week teachers review and revise curriculum maps in light of the fall term teaching experience and performance results.
- Staff participates in collaborative analysis of student work to gather and provide targeted actionable feedback to students. Staff created a researched writing rubric which evaluates traits including ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions presentation, and research. Students engage in goal setting and reflective portfolios. They post their areas of growth and next steps and teachers review and comment.
- Students are also assessed through quality public exhibitions of student work. In science, the living environment project involves the creation of a public service announcement video and pamphlet with reflections.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

The Danielson Framework guides teaching practices that align the curricular shifts and provide quality instruction that engages students and meets the needs of all learners, including ELLS and students with disabilities.

Impact

Teaching strategies across the vast majority of classrooms provide multiple entry points that engage all students. High levels of student thinking and participation culminate in meaningful work products.

Supporting Evidence

- The school emphasizes project based learning. Students are offered a range of work-based learning opportunities that enable them to explore interest driven pathways that connect to their course work. Teachers focus on developing students through flexible facilitation of learning, fostering independence, providing timely feedback and using student work to drive shifts in their practice.
- Research based teaching strategies such as goal setting, curricular choice, peer feedback, project based learning, digital portfolios and cultivation of growth mindsets promote student ownership of learning. Teaching skills focus on the development of content understandings and the why (rationale) and how (strategies) of any given task.
- Teaching strategies are aligned to the school's belief that students learn best when they have a deep sense of why they are doing what they are doing and when they have ample time and support to hone various strategies with which to approach any given task.
- When planning lessons, teachers always consider the range of the heterogeneous student population. They use UDL and differentiated supports for at risk students. The focus is on meta-cognition and pushing student thinking to high levels. The complexity of student task design makes student work meaningful and challenging for all students. Essential questions in a global history unit include "How did the Neolithic revolution impact the development of civilizations?", "Why did these civilizations emerge in their specific geographic location?", and "Why do we still remember them today?" Students examine the significance of political systems with regard to an individual's way of life and the pros and cons of differing political systems in the ancient world.
- All observed lessons utilized high-level questioning and student to student discussion. Students in advanced placement calculus class were asked to apply the standard steps of the optimization process to a real life situation. Students were asked to consider how calculus can be used to model the real world around us as they worked in groups to solve optimization problems. In a social studies lesson three students compared and contrasted several pieces of propaganda and one poem produced during World War I and answer "How did recruitment propaganda's representation of the experience of fighting in World War I conflict with soldier's depictions?"

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| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: | Well Developed |
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Findings

The school leader effectively communicates high expectations to the entire school community and effectively partners with staff, parent and students to ensure students' educational learning experiences prepare them for the next level.

Impact

The school has a unified set of high expectations and has developed strong relationships with students and partnerships with families to support students' progress towards college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has many different modes of constant communication with parents, which include curriculum night, parent town hall meetings, Chinese speaking family information night, assessment reports of student progress six times a year, weekly family announcements, and a school website. The school also uses a transparent learning management system that provides families with access to information about their child's progress.
- The school's culture is one of compassion and care. Teachers and administrators know all of the students and strive to develop their strategies to soar intellectually. Strategies are developed to improve everyone's reflective practices and problem solving skills so students can respond effectively to life's many tribulations. The "ruler" approach to social and emotional learning includes teaching students to recognize, understand, label, express and regulate emotion. Students use this approach along with a "mood meter" to identify their feelings and to describe the situation, circumstance or problem while resolving a conflict. Students understand that they are accountable for their learning and articulate that hard work yields growth. They are very positive about their learning experiences at the school and say that they are always challenged and supported.
- The school has a designated director of college processes and one of three other guidance counselors who also work in the college office. The school casts the college process as an inquiry project. They coach students and families to ask and explore a series of questions that will help them find the best fit. All students are enrolled in college advisory class beginning in the junior year. The school also participates in the New York City unique college fair.
- The school has created a document called *Habits of Lab Learners: Achieving Goals through Inquiry and Collaboration*. Students are taught how to make meaning and create deep understanding by developing these habits of questioning, observing closely, thinking flexibly, tolerating ambiguity, persisting, reflecting, connecting, taking responsible risks and collaborating. The students discuss the philosophy behind the habits and are given examples of how habits manifest academically.
- Modes of instruction demand a high level of independent focus and maturity. Students are expected to set goals based on cycles of formative instruction. Student led and inspired clubs meet at lunchtime and discuss and research social issues they are passionate about.

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

Teachers are involved in focused teacher teams that collaboratively analyze assessment data, student work and curricula products for making informed adjustments.

Impact

Teacher teams' engagement in collaborative practice using the inquiry approach improves classroom practice and increases student achievement. Students receive timely and differentiated support and feedback based on frequent formative assessments.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's culture of collaboration lends itself to the best practice of teaming. The school provides time in the schedule that allows teachers to maximize meeting time for planning, looking at student work and discussing students of concern. Teams are teacher led utilizing protocols, agendas and minutes that are shared through google docs and emails. The teacher teams include Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) inclusion program, grade teams, department teams, integrated co-teaching teams, inquiry teams, and attendance team and professional learning committee, among others.
- The inquiry team is using the item skills analysis data to consider the following questions: "What is the challenge for students on the particular question?" and "How can this data be used to inform this year's courses/curriculum/Regents review?" Other teacher teams have been looking at data on students who are "under the radar" to determine appropriate interventions. The ASD team conducted a case conference on a student, discussed behavioral patterns, and reviewed data on social, emotional and academic growth. Recommendations included giving the student a schedule to follow, creating an audible signal, and providing timers and prompts. The science teacher team meeting focused on ways to increase student participation and recommendations included creating designated stations with teams and taking a trip to the Hudson River. They also discussed writing in the content areas and reflected on determining where in the unit maps writing engagement will occur.
- Teacher teams share out their inquiry work and best practices. They visit each other's classrooms and conduct instructional rounds to share constructive feedback. Teachers said they have a voice in key decisions involving curriculum and lead professional development sessions. They also have opportunities to visit other schools and attend off-site workshops.
- The Spanish department team used the collaborative analysis of student work to analyze a writing task project that involved students writing articles independently and collaboratively in Spanish and creating a magazine or newsletter. They decided to modify the design of the task and change the rubric to increase the rigor. Teachers agreed to teach the craft of journalism in the unit. They also developed scaffolds including flash cards with visuals, printing out activities and lessons prior to assignment for students to review and understand.