



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The NYC Museum School

High School M414

**333 W. 17th Street
Manhattan
NY 10011**

Principal: Ms. Darlene (Dusty) Miller

**Date of review: May 18, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Thomas McBryde Jr**

The School Context

The NYC Museum School is a high school with 472 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 13% Black, 41% Hispanic, 14% White, and 31% Asian students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys account for 45% of the students enrolled and girls account for 55%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 95.5%.

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	Proficient
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	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	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and faculty communicate and support a culture of high expectations for teaching, professional collaboration, and consistent communication focused on best teaching practices and the advancement of learning. Teacher teams and the broader school community establish a culture for learning utilizing the Mindset model that facilitates mutual accountability for all stakeholders.

Impact

Across the school community, professional learning opportunities for all stakeholders conveys a set of high expectations for teaching and learning and ensures a mutual accountability for all students to exceed expectations on tasks and Common Core Learning standards.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders consistently communicated high expectations for teaching and learning through regular trainings and coaching teachers around best practices aligned to the Danielson framework that are consistent with the development needs of students. This takes place through modeling, coaching cycles, and daily debriefs where actionable feedback for shifts in teaching practice is provided. The school leader also communicates high expectations to staff through the staff handbook, staff weekly professional development meetings, and through emailing feedback from observations commending positive work and identifying areas of focus.
- Teachers share that school leaders support their development through frequent professional learning focused on high expectations for all students through utilization of the professional development Mondays, inter-visitations (on-site and off-site), and ongoing feedback, allowing them to meet the schools rigorous set of expectations for teaching and learning. Teachers feel the principal increases their instructional capacity by modeling. They stated, “She demonstrated herself how to tackle complex text analysis and simulated a classroom where we became the students and allowed us to see how learning should take place from their perspective.”
- Parents communicated, “The line of communication is impeccable”, and that information is provided to them through Pupil Path, emails, parent teacher conferences, and workshops facilitated by the teacher, thus, helping them support their children at home with Common Core learning standards and the college admissions process. A parent with a special needs students discussed how teachers walked her through the Individual Education Plan process, consistently informing her about her child’s progress, identified learning goals for her child, next steps to reach the goals with relevant support at home, and help to find the best college options to meet and support her child’s academic needs.
- Students communicated that teachers consistently provide them with feedback. Students provided samples of their work that showed teacher feedback, student reflections, and revisions, made as a result of the targeted feedback provided. Students communicated that teachers have high expectations for them through the challenging coursework provided that requires them to stay after school for tutorials to receive extra support. A ninth grader stated, “The school is challenging, and I take trigonometry. I don’t like math, but my math teacher makes me believe I can do it, so I can.”

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teacher practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect the school wide beliefs of how students learn best that are informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Across Classrooms, students' are engaged in challenging tasks that reflect high levels of student thinking.

Impact

Although teaching practices were consistent across classrooms, there were some missed opportunities to extend and push student thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders shared that there is a school wide focus on the Danielson Framework for Teaching in the area of questioning and discussion. Across classrooms, students participate in high-level discussions that extend student thinking. For instance, in a ninth grade English class, teachers engaged students in a Socratic circle, which was student facilitated, for a discussion of Christopher Columbus. A group of students in the center of the room cited textual evidence from not only the main text, but also other recent texts read in class that related to the theme and students built upon each other's thinking. The rest of the class took notes of the conversation and had an observation sheet to complete on which they analyzed the arguments of the participants and memorialized the questions that arose. In some classes, however, conversations were not structured, deeply connected to a text or did not require students to cite textual evidence, thereby limiting the depth of the conversation.
- Across classrooms students engaged in rigorous class work requiring critical problem solving and citing evidence to support their claims. For instance, in a trigonometry lesson on resolving systems of inequalities, students collaborated in discovering a solution to the problem posed by the teacher and used appropriate academic vocabulary to explain their reasoning. Groups of students tried a variety of methods as the teacher circulated and supported their thinking in the critical struggle. Although most classes provided the opportunity for students to engage in rich discussion, the amount of high-level questions being asked by teachers was inconsistent. In a tenth grade Science class, the teacher asked a variety of low level questions that did not push student thinking. "What are the reasons you chose c to be a planet? What are the characteristics of a planet?"
- The principal and assistant principals communicated a heavy emphasis being placed on student-led discussion/voice, and citing textual evidence. Across classrooms teachers implemented lesson strategies aligned to the instructional focus around discussions through debate, questioning, protocols, Socratic circles and collaborative grouping. However, in some classes, the implementation of the strategies did not always allow for engagement of students in rigorous tasks. For instance, in an tenth grade Social Studies class, students were engaged in a debate that did not allow for the contribution of all students due to the absence of a structure/protocol that would allow for memorialization of ideas, equity of voice, and focused argumentation of a specific point, thereby limiting the strategy's effectiveness.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teachers work collaboratively to refine curriculum maps and lessons that are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards. Curricula and academic task are refined to push and challenge student thinking.

Impact

Students across the school 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

- Staff members create Common Core Learning Standards aligned lessons and unit plans that were critiqued and refined by peers, and were then observed by teachers and supervisors. Unit plans and lesson plans are modeled after the Common Core Learning Standards as demonstrated by the EngageNY modules and the related exemplars. Unit and lesson plans are refined utilizing and embedding lesson study, Depth of Knowledge, Bloom's Taxonomy, Cognitive Rigor Matrix and Fred Newmann's *A Guide to Authentic Instruction and Assessment: Vision, Standards and Scoring*. Several differentiation models, including Tomlinson's, are also used to tailor learning for individual students.
- Module, the program that gives Museum School its thematic focus, is an inquiry-based scheme of courses taken by grade and studied from eight weeks to a full semester. Module has as its purpose allowing students to study an area that will elucidate traditional classroom learning but that takes place in museums, houses of worship, archives and other places of learning throughout the city. Learning is inquiry-based and often non-linear in nature and includes object study through denotation and connotation where students have to create projects demonstrating mastery of skills and high leverage concepts.
- To incorporate the instructional shifts and college and career readiness skills, within units, students are asked to examine the complexity of various text and write and speak from evidence extracted from the text to support claims. The school also offers Advanced Placement (AP) course in grade 10 (Environmental Science), and three additional AP courses, Biology, United States History, Calculus, in grade 12 for college credit.
- The thoughtfully planned curricula promote higher order thinking skills and college and career readiness. In addition, activities planned provided multiple entry points and learning extensions. For example, through unit and lesson plans provided, it is evident that the school is working on infusing student-to-student discussion through the use of Socratic seminars, and teachers are embedding literacy strategies across all content. As a result of focused work around curriculum development, all students, are encouraged to demonstrate their thinking and are improving their literacy skills.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teachers analyze student work, use baseline and Regents assessment data to identify learning gaps, revise curriculum, and implement instructional strategies to support learners.

Impact

The work of the teacher team, along with school leaders tracking and monitoring student outcomes, is facilitating student progress towards mastery of learning targets and student achievement of learning outcomes.

Supporting Evidence

- Mid-year mock Regents, and mock Advanced Placement examinations, and the data/item analyses that follow, become the basis for mid-year programming changes for staff and students and for instructional adjustments. In addition, this data is used to make budgetary decisions for purchase of review material and allocations for after-school tutoring sessions.
- Curricula, unit maps, and lesson plans, are structured to be able to respond to all formative assessment data. For example: Interim assessments during the lesson and exit tickets at the end provide data for teachers to make immediate adjustments to the lesson, as well as to use the end-of-lesson data as a launching point for the next day's lesson planning. Unit assessments inform curriculum changes for the following year and skill-building planning for the following unit.
- The school is making the shift to a mastery-based model of assessment and evaluation, as inculcated through group study of Rick Wormeli, Richard Elmore, Robert Marzano, and Fred Newmann, to provide students multiple opportunities to master a standards-based objective.
- During class visits, teachers were observed checking for understanding by asking questions, canvassing the classroom, utilizing exit tickets, and conferencing with students such as in the eleventh grade History class, where the teacher spent time working with a student that appeared to be struggling with justifying the dropping of the atomic bomb. Similarly, during one of the literacy classes, the teacher circulated around the room tracking student responses, while students engaged in a Socratic circle. However, during class visits, there were limited opportunities for students to reflect on their learning and complete self-assessments of their progress. Students shared that they receive rubrics with their major assignments, but stated that they typically self-assess after receiving feedback from their teachers after submitting their first draft.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teachers are engaged in inquiry based, structured professional collaborations that are aligned with the school’s goals and promote the implementation of Common Core learning Standards and the instructional shifts. Teacher teams consistently analyze classroom practice, assessment data, and student work across grade levels and content areas.

Impact

Teacher Team collaborations promote the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts, improve teacher practice, and lead to shifts in instruction and promotes student mastery.

Supporting Evidence

- Weekly large-format meetings are used for whole staff study of texts (*Fair Isn’t Always Equal; Core Six; The Skillful Teacher*), which are later processed by department teams. These meetings are also used to study assessment and rigor to further the instructional focus, to study Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts, and to study Advance. The large format meetings are also used to build transparency and consistency, the foundation of trust, which is the focus as communicated by the school leadership.
- The Teacher Leadership Team takes the role of steeping itself in all professional development initiatives such as Common Core, Advance, lesson study, assessment, and rigor, and then devising a plan of explanation, demonstration, and discussion with department and grade teams. Department teams look together at student work, do item analyses of all mock exams, create units and curricula, and plan assessments for each subject and grade. The department teams are guided by the data that prompts each undertaking.
- During the departmental chair’s team meeting, the team used a protocol to analyze student work to assess the strengths and weaknesses of student’s argumentative essay writing. As a result of the analysis, it was determined that planning and outlining should be a unit focus to improve student writing. Consequently, the English department adjusted the curriculum to infuse outlining and students’ writing and planning improved as evidenced by higher scores on the writing rubrics of subsequent essays.