



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Landmark High School

High School M419

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

Principal: Caron Pinkus

**Date of review: April 16, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Rafaela Landin**

The School Context

Landmark High School is a high school with 396 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 21% Black, 71% Hispanic, 2% White, and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 16% English language learners and 25% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 79.0%.

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	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	Celebration	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	Proficient
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:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

The school uses common assessments aligned to the school chosen curricula to provide feedback on students' performance, determine student's progress and adjust curricula and instruction.

Impact

Students receive feedback from teachers that helps them improve their performance across content areas. The school has developed and implemented systems and structures that help teachers monitor students' progress and make adjustments to address the learning needs of all students.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has created common assessments to measure students' progress, such as performance based assessments tasks (PBATs) that are developed in all department teams by teachers and are administered to students three times per year. These assessments are aligned to the Common Core State Standards, and a task specific rubric is used to provide students with actionable feedback to advance learning. Additionally, a committee of teachers reads the students' work and scores the work using a literary criticism panel rubric. Feedback is provided to students on the written work as well as on the oral presentation. For example, a grade 12 student's English performance based assessment task titled *Scars and Souvenirs*, received an overall performance grade of distinguished based on the written and oral presentation of the portfolio task. The student received written feedback on the presentation and discussion, the content organization, and the supporting evidence that the student cited when responding to questions and building the argument and analysis.
- The school wide assessment plan aligns with the school curricula to provide ongoing feedback to teachers and students. The plan demonstrates that the school administers assessments such as end of unit assessments in all content areas five times per year. Additionally, conferencing during work time and exit tickets at the end of each lesson are used to measure daily progress of students and to identify areas of student need that inform instructional decisions and adjustments. For example, the math team made revisions to the math curriculum after observations during math instruction revealed that students gave up quickly when solving complex, multi-step problems. The team decided to focus on the mathematical practices during daily math instruction.
- Teachers collaboratively check for student growth and progress toward school goals, and the results of their data analysis are used to adjust curricula and instruction. For example, after an analysis of an end of unit in math showed that students were struggling with problem solving strategies, the math team developed a series of lessons to model common problem-solving strategies to use across the grades. Teachers worked on modeling for students how to organize the data, make diagrams, and solve less complex but similar problems.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, strategies are aligned to a shared set of beliefs around how students learn best. Teachers consistently provide different entry points to engage all learners and student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact

In most classrooms, coherence in teaching strategies and scaffolded support ensures cognitive challenge and engagement in rigorous tasks that promote higher order thinking. However, student ownership of learning was not evident in some classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms visited, students were observed engaged in challenging tasks requiring high level thinking, with teachers engaging most of the students in discussions to deepen their understanding of the content. For example, during a grade 10 math lesson, students were asked to investigate the height, width and length of the file cabinets in the classroom and then derive a formula for its calculation. Additionally, students were asked to work in groups to create a drawing with calculations that illustrated their thought process in solving the problem. To ensure different entry points into this lesson, the teacher provided students with a do now activity where students had to guess the number of post-its needed to cover a picture of a file cabinet and then explain in words or a picture how they arrived at the estimate. Other students placed the post-its on the file cabinets in the class to find the height, width and length of the file cabinets and then come up with a formula as a group. In a grade 10 integrated collaborative team teaching writing class, the teachers asked the students to answer a do now question in their notebook. The do now question was posted both on the smart board and on the whiteboard. For students who struggle with copying information from the board, slips of paper with typed do now questions were provided to engage all learners in the task.
- In most classrooms visited, students had opportunities to build critical thinking, participation and high level work products and to engage in rigorous tasks on their own, in pairs, or in groups. In a grade 11 Chemistry class, students were observed working in two stations to determine if the law of conservation of mass was followed. Each station had guiding questions such as, "Did the reaction between baking soda and vinegar obey or violate the law of conservation of mass? Why or why not?" Students conducted experiments, discussed their findings in pairs and in groups, wrote chemical equations, and answered questions such as, "Why do we need to balance chemical equations?"
- Across classroom visits, students participated in discussions by responding to teacher-generated questions or teacher led discussions. While students were observed in small group instruction in most classes, teachers facilitated the learning, providing scaffolds and high level questions to engage students in the learning and press their thinking by asking questions such as, "Can you expand on that?", "Can you give an example?", with few examples of students generating clarifying questions or taking a leadership role in the peer-peer discussions.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

Administrators and staff align the curricula to Common Core Learning Standards and content standards. Academic tasks are refined and planned using student work to provide access to engaging curricula for all learners.

Impact

Consistent curricular alignment to Common Core Learning Standards and an integration of the instructional shifts promotes college and career readiness for all learners. All students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, have access to the curricula and are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- The school partners with the New York Consortium, and graduation requirements mandate that students complete four rigorous performance based assessments aligned to the Common Core State Standards. These curricular expectations support the efforts of the school to build coherence across grades and content areas. In addition, some teachers work with the Common Core Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math Fellows to infuse technology into the math curricula.
- Curricula maps in all content areas integrate the Common Core State Standards and the instructional shifts. For example, the curricula maps for grade 9 Global Studies course and the grade 11 and 12 Probability and Statistics courses evidenced time frames for units of studies for the entire year, Common Core Standards addressed in the units, content and big ideas, skills, learning targets, and the mode of assessments that would be used to ascertain that the students mastered the standards in each unit. Sample units showed that the school promotes college and career readiness for students. For example, a unit on short stories for grade 9 students was designed to afford students with opportunities to participate in close reading of a text in a manner similar to college level reading.
- Curricula and tasks are planned and refined using an analysis of student work. For example, after a review of the mid-year performance based assessments, teacher teams decided to revise the English Dystopia unit for grade 10 students. In this unit, students were expected to analyze how authors develop characters in literature. Teachers readjusted the unit by adding short stories and novels with current scholarly articles about dystopian tendencies in today's world. Book clubs and a reading of a dystopian book at different reading levels were added to ensure that all learners, including students with disabilities and English language learners, had access to the unit, content and learning.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to staff and support them towards success in meeting the expectations. Families are provided with information about expectations for their children, and are supported in learning how to help their children succeed in meeting the expectations.

Impact

The school has established a culture of shared expectations for learning that results in all stakeholders working collaboratively to ensure all students meet high expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff through daily supervisory visits and actionable feedback given to all staff using the Danielson Framework for Teaching. The administrative team conducts professional development activities two times per month with department and grade meetings to support teachers in shared understanding of the school's expectations for teaching and learning. Weekly professional development activities focus on the three school-wide goals for the year, which are: strengthening assessment practices, raising student achievement through inquiry work, and strengthening school culture by implementing restorative justice practices. The principal holds the staff accountable for these expectations by collecting lesson plans and providing feedback when recommendations are not visible in daily instruction.
- School leaders provide the staff with an *Understanding by Design* unit template that includes the desired outcomes of the unit, learning outcomes, enduring understandings, questions to foster inquiry into the content, knowledge and skills expected for students, speaking and listening expectations, mode of assessments, and the evidence teachers will collect to show how students demonstrate achievement of the outcomes for the unit. Lesson plans collected during classroom visitation and shared by the leadership evidenced the expectations for daily instruction and include teaching points, strategies for active engagement, guided, independent and whole group work, and differentiated work to provide multiple entry points into the lesson.
- Parents reported that the school consistently communicates with them through phone calls, texts, e-mails and Jupiter, the online grading system used by the teachers and the school to communicate progress of the students. Additionally, the school sends out monthly calendars of upcoming events of the school. Parents are aware that students have to complete performance based assessments as part of their graduation requirement and they have to present and defend their ideas to a committee. The advisory team at the school supports the efforts to communicate the expectations of college and career readiness to families.

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

Findings

Teachers participate in structured inquiry based professional development focused on the school’s instructional goals. Team collaborations provide a vehicle for teachers to have input on key decisions regarding the curricula and teaching practices.

Impact

The work of teacher teams has resulted in school-wide efforts to effectively promote the school goals, including the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards, and has built leadership capacity for staff to have a voice in key decisions regarding student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams promote the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shift. The school has structured times for teachers to meet by grade or department daily, weekly, and bi-monthly. The school schedule includes early dismissal on Wednesdays to provide additional time for professional development for the staff to engage in collaboration and inquiry work focused on school-wide goals. During a team meeting, the teachers were observed reviewing student work. The team had an agenda, student work, and a protocol from Atlas-learning for looking at the argumentative essay from the grade 9 target students.
- Teacher leaders plan and facilitate professional development sessions, establish agendas and keep track of minutes. The administrative team holds them accountable and ensures that decisions at these meetings are implemented through twice per month meetings with teacher leaders and the principal to ascertain alignment of the teacher teamwork with school-wide goals. During the teacher team interview, some teachers reported that they have assumed leadership roles within teacher teams. This allows them to share expertise with the staff and take ownership of their professional development. Please provide an example.
- During teacher team meetings, teachers articulated that the school provides them with opportunities to assume leadership roles. For example, teachers provide feedback to each other on revisions and adjustments made to the curricula maps. Teachers engage in inter-visitiation by department with the lens of looking at students’ work, and have begun to vertically align the curricula to ensure rigor from grade 9 through grade 12. Teachers articulated that they have opportunities to make decisions in the adjustment and revisions of the curricula and in the selection of instructional resources for use across grades. Additionally, teachers use a school-wide tool to analyze tasks created by the teacher team to ensure that tasks are rigorous. The tool includes components such as open ended tasks providing multiple possible outcomes, problem based tasks fostering critical thinking, inquiry based tasks, wide study of curriculum allowing students to draw from multiple ideas, collaboration, and experimental, engaging and relevant tasks.