



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Murray Hill Academy

High School M432

**111 East 33 Street
Manhattan
NY 10016**

Principal: Anita Manninen-Felix

**Date of review: December 11, 2014
Reviewer: Eva Ostrum**

The School Context

Murray Hill Academy is a high school with 305 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 37.4% Black, 51.5% Hispanic, 3.6% White, and 7.2% Asian students. The student body includes 6.2% English language learners and 26.9% special education students. Boys account for 56.1% of the students enrolled and girls account for 43.9%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013 - 2014 was 80.7%.

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	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	Celebration	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

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

Distributed leadership structures are embedded, and teacher teams systematically analyze key elements of teacher work including classroom practice, assessment data, and student work for they share or on whom they are focused.

Impact

A distributive leadership structure ensures that teachers play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning across the school, and results in improvements in instructional practice, and mastery of goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers engage in ongoing collegial collaboration. For example, teachers participate in regular classroom inter-visitations to observe their colleagues' classroom practice. In addition, teachers videotape their lessons and present lesson clips from the videos to the rest of the faculty. Teachers then analyze the lesson and provide feedback to the presenter using the *Lesson Refining Protocol*.
- Teachers have a voice in key instructional decisions. For example, teachers proposed the creation of grade teams two years ago, and recommended modifications to the grade team structure at the end of the first year of implementation. This distributive leadership permeates the culture of the school in multiple ways, including the participation of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) chapter chair, teachers and staff participating in all leadership team discussions during the Quality Review process.
- Student support staff members meet as a team, and also attend grade team and academic department meetings. The integration of student support staff members in grade team and department meetings ensures that multiple data sources are reviewed as part of an inquiry process in identifying appropriate academic and social/emotional supports to students. Student support team members cited specific examples of students who have progressed academically as a result of this cross-team collaboration.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts.

Impact

Teaching practices that are aligned with the school's belief regarding how students learn best provide learners with multiple entry points into the curricula. As a result, all learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities are engaged in challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in student work products.

Supporting Evidence

- In a social studies classroom, the teacher led students in a discussion of how to write an effective document-based question essay that echoed what they would experience on the Regents examination. Students discussed how to use a primary source document effectively, how to incorporate outside background information, and how to write from sources. This discussion provided evidence of an integration of the instructional shifts, and supported the school's academic mindset instructional focus.
- In an Integrated Algebra classroom, students worked in groups to construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others, consistent with Standard 3 of the Standards for Mathematical Practice. In this class, some student groups solved problems independently and verified answers together, while others solved problems as a group. Other students in the class rotated between individual and group work. The teacher circulated around the room to provide assistance and coaching as needed.
- In an Integrated Collaborative Teaching class, the teaching pair effectively used the one-teach/one-support co-teaching model to support all students in the room, ensuring seamless support for special education students. In this class, all students were engaged in rigorous academic work.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty collaborate to align curricula with the Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks are refined using student work and data.

Impact

Curricula development and revision promotes curricular coherence, and curricula refinement ensures access to the curricula for all learners, including students with disabilities and English language learners.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and faculty have aligned unit plans, lesson plans, academic tasks, and assessments to each other and to the Common Core Learning Standards. Refinements extend curricula access to students with disabilities and English language learners. For example, in an English as a second language unit plan on what it means to be an American, the plan includes a task where students develop interview protocols that correspond to higher levels of thinking based on Webb's Depth of Knowledge. Students are expected to use those interview protocols to gather information from members of the school community who are immigrants to the United States. The unit includes analysis of the *Declaration of Independence*, a trip to an exhibit at the New York Historical Society to view the Chinese American Exclusion/Inclusion exhibit, and, as a culminating task, students are asked to write a persuasive essay.
- Lesson plans consistently include sections on differentiation, and include strategies for providing access for struggling learners. For example, in a science class, the lesson plan detailed student access to vocabulary definitions and sentence starters, a checklist of laboratory procedures, and an interactive word wall. Teachers continually refine lesson plans as they observe student behaviors in class, and identify strategic entry points into the material for students.
- As evidenced in lesson plans, teachers consistently planned student groupings in a section of the plan titled *Purposeful Grouping Strategies*. This section of the lesson plan provided details on the teacher's rationale for selecting student groupings based on skills, areas for growth, and personal and academic behaviors. For example, in a math class, the teacher planned to group students based on results of a prior exam, pairing two students who succeeded on the exam paired with two students who struggled. Teachers refine lesson plans as they observe student behaviors in class, and identify fluid purposeful groupings.

Findings

Teachers use common assessments and ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment to create a clear portrait of student progress and to make effective adjustments to teaching during the lesson to clear up student misunderstandings.

Impact

Across classrooms, teacher assessment practice results in actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement, and effective curricular and instructional adjustments to meet all students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has developed an assessment plan for the school year that incorporates formative and summative assessments. Teachers administer diagnostic tests in September and October, and benchmark exams at the end of each trimester. A *Data Day* takes place midway through each trimester, where teachers and support staff track progress towards student goals by department and by grade team. Results and status reports are shared with students through rubrics and individual conferencing, ensuring that students and staff members are aware of student progress towards academic goals.
- As part of the school-wide assessment system, teacher teams create benchmark assessments that are analyzed in weekly department team meetings during inquiry cycles. For example, the inquiry cycle for the second benchmark included the use of a protocol to analyze student work. During the first inquiry cycle, teachers analyzed trends in student work, followed by an analysis of the areas of strength and areas for improvement. Teachers then incorporated strategies that emerged in the lesson analysis into their curriculum and academic tasks.
- Across classrooms, teachers implemented checks for understanding to address student misunderstandings and misconceptions before the end of the class period. For example, during the first half of a science class, the teacher distributed index cards to students, and asked them to write the main idea that they were learning that day. She then selected an answer that included accurate and inaccurate information, and asked students to clarify and correct the misconceptions in it. The teacher explained that she looks for an answer that typifies a misconception that appears on multiple index cards. As another example, a math teacher circulated around the classroom to confer with student groups. After visiting each group, he addressed the class to identify a common misconception that he had seen around the room, and to direct students to the appropriate resource in the classroom (posted on the wall) that would help them self-correct.
- Across classrooms, many teachers integrated student self-assessments in the lessons. For example, in an English language arts classroom, the teacher stopped a fishbowl discussion to ask students what they thought they were doing well and where they thought they could improve, both individually and as a group. Students stated that they felt they were doing a good job facilitating the discussion, but that they could do better integrating textual references into the dialogue.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations regarding professionalism, instruction, communication, and other elements of the Danielson Framework for Teaching to the entire staff, and provide training to support staff in meeting those expectations. School leaders and staff communicate high expectations to students and to parents through an emphasis on academic success and college readiness.

Impact

High expectations aligned with professional development for staff ensures a system of accountability for those expectations. Structures for reciprocal communication help families understand student progress towards expectations, and guidance/advisement supports prepare students for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- The school assigns talent coaches to facilitate professional development aligned to the school's high expectations for teacher practice and to components of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. This professional development is designed to support teacher reflection and growth in their practice.
- Parents shared that the school communicates an emphasis on college readiness, which begins in grade nine with trips to colleges, and then delves more deeply into the culture of college readiness and the mechanics of the college search and application process as students advance towards 12th grade.
- The school is collaborating with High Schools that Work and Eskolta to re-examine the alignment of existing units, lessons, tasks, and assessments to the Common Core Learning Standards, and to integrate academic and personal behavior standards into the academic curricula across all departments in the school.
- Students shared that they understood the financial and opportunity cost of taking remedial classes at the City University of New York, and how taking them could derail their progress to college graduation. Students also routinely retake Regents exams even if they have passed the exam, with a goal of raising their scores to at least 80%, which would place them out of remedial classes.