Department of Education
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts

High School M485

100 Amsterdam Ave
New York
NY 10014

Principal: Lisa Mars

Date of review: March 31, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Fred Walsh

The School Context

Fiorello H. LaGuardia is a high school with 2,621 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 11% Black, 19% Hispanic, 45% White, 20% Asian and 5% Multi-Racial students. The student body includes 0% English language learners and 2% special education students. Boys account for 27% of the students enrolled and girls account for 73%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 95.00%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
To what extent does the school…	**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		
To what extent does the school…	**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		
To what extent does the school…	**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

Findings
School leaders and staff effectively communicate high expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness partnering with parents. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that systematically communicates a unified set of high expectations together with detailed feedback and guidance support for all students.

Impact
Successful school-home partnerships support students' progress toward meeting high expectations for academic success. Students are motivated to own their educational experience and support their peers so that they are prepared for college and career decisions.

Supporting Evidence

- Parents interviewed articulated the dual mission of the school; to provide each student with professional preparation for careers in atelier and conservatory arts education and college preparatory academic education. Parents spoke about the school's active Parent Association that collaborates with the administration to promote the school's mission. Parents sit on an Academic Forum, which meets monthly, and participate in school-level instructional and curricular decisions.

- Parents receive a weekly news bulletin with updates on all aspects of school life, including administrative, instructional practice, and college and career information. Parents articulated feeling in touch with the academic and artistic life of their children. They spoke about how teachers communicate with them on a daily basis using the school's website and Pupil Path. Parents also spoke about the relationship they have developed over the years with their child's studio teachers and about the ongoing feedback they receive on their child's progress. Parents described the principal as visible, available, and aware of all aspects of the school's functioning.

- Students interviewed described classes as academically challenging and teachers as being always available during lunch periods or after school to support them. Students spoke about the school's expectation of their enrolling in Advanced Placement (AP) courses and the positive impact AP classes have had on their college preparation. Students also spoke about the positive influence their studio teachers have had in motivating them to achieve at the highest level and challenging them to experiment with other artistic talents and academic avenues. For example, a twelfth grade vocal music major was encouraged by her teacher to join the National Honor Society. Students explained that by logging-on to Pupil Path they receive up-to-date, specific feedback from teachers on their progress in all subjects.

- Data from the school's Quality Guide indicates that the four year college readiness index, which shows the percentage of students who graduated with a Regents diploma and met City University of New York's standards for college readiness in English and math within four years, has steadily increased for the past three years and is significantly higher when compared to peer and city schools. In addition, the graduation rate and the four-year weighted diploma rate are significantly higher when compared to peer and city schools.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
While teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best, there are missed opportunities to craft instruction and foster the highest engagement of all students.

Impact
Across classrooms, students are challenged appropriately and given opportunities to work collaboratively, yielding high-level work products, yet there is some variation in student participation and ownership of learning.

Supporting Evidence

- In an English language arts class, students were tasked with naming which character from *Antigone* they would prefer to be and providing a text-based rationale for their choice. Students were heard building on each other's points as they agreed and/or disagreed with peer responses. In a global studies lesson, students were assigned in heterogeneous groups to read and discuss the positions of political parties on the partition of India. Using primary source documents, students worked collaboratively to write claims and counterclaims explaining why or why not a partition was best for the Indian subcontinent. However, during whole class discussion, the teacher called on only those students who volunteered answers. Answers were repeated by the teacher limiting opportunity, for student-to-student discussion.

- Teachers across grades and subjects use strategies to build academic vocabulary. For example in a living environment lesson, students were paired and assigned leveled readings on the environmental influence of phenotype. Students highlighted key words and important facts to support the main idea of the text. Students created a chart which included their supporting ideas, questions, and unknown vocabulary words. Partner groups then discussed the articles, sharing supporting ideas and vocabulary, and presented their learning to the class. In a geometry lesson, students used examples of central angles, minor arcs, major arcs, and semicircles to come up with their own definitions. Students worked in partnership, yet when the lesson called for students to share their findings, only volunteers were selected, allowing others to avoid presenting by not volunteering.

- In an eleventh grade orchestra studio, after warming up and tuning instruments, the teacher facilitated a whole class discussion on the role of conductor in an orchestra. Students volunteered answers to which the teacher expanded or asked follow-up questions. The teacher then called on three students to conduct the orchestra, which included approximately seventy student musicians.

- A color theory class was observed where students meticulously worked on monochromatic self-portraits. After a break, students were instructed to rotate through their peers' portraits to offer feedback on the specific elements of line and texture.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts, and consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher order skills.

Impact
Across grades and subjects, teachers' purposeful decisions help build vertical and horizontal coherence helping prepare all students for college and careers. Students engage in class activities and culminating tasks designed to prepare them for rigorous higher-order thinking college-level work and professional careers in the arts.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders schedule teachers for weekly team meetings and provide targeted professional development to ensure curriculum alignment to Common Core Learning Standards. Curricular materials reviewed showed alignment to Common Core Learning standards with entries such as: identify and describe relationships among inscribed angels, radii, and chords; cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of text; and write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts.

- Rigorous tasks found in lesson plans included: writing an essay that establishes a thesis, discusses the antithesis, and arrives at synthesis; explaining how the independence of India led to the creation of two nations; exploring ceramic aesthetics and the quality of craftsman, and completing a report modeled after the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, including a data-based summary of findings. An English language arts unit plan revealed that students would use multi-genre resources and materials including text from Sophocles, Freud, and Aristotle to write thematic essays with counterclaim as well as identify and analyze irony and the concept of the tragic hero while citing evidence from the text to support their claims.

- Department teams use course pacing calendars and scope and sequence to ensure that all topics are covered and to promote horizontal alignment of the curriculum. The school has intentionally designed Common Core aligned culminating tasks at the end of each unit. Across subjects, teachers use web-based applications and Google Docs to catalogue, share, and revise curriculum.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
Across classrooms, teachers create assessments and rubrics that are aligned to the school's curricula. Teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding.

Impact
Students and teachers have actionable feedback and are aware of criteria to increase achievement. Across grades and subjects, teachers use data and classroom checks for understanding to make effective adjustments to curricula and to drive instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, students were aware of grading criteria. For example, in a twelfth grade advanced placement literature class, students conducted literature circles, discussing books they had chosen to read. When asked how their participation was being evaluated, students explained that the teacher looked to see how they introduced ideas, added to others' contributions, challenged others' ideas, ensured equity of talk, spoke positively and supported ideas with direct quotes, paraphrases, and summaries. Teachers were observed maintaining records of student participation during group activities.

- In an interview with students, when asked how they would improve on assignments that they received feedback on, responses included: "The points I was making were vague and I needed to be more specific," "I should have bridged the evidence to my thesis much earlier," and "I didn't have any details and I didn't quote from the book."

- In a visual arts class, students completed a self-reflection followed by a peer assessment on the same piece of artwork. In one case, a student self-assessed stating, "I could show the difference of hardness and softness better." A peer added, "As far as I can tell your arm and fingers look well in proportion. The arms seems a little bit thinner compared to the hand." In both a ballet class and a mixed chorus class, teachers consistently checked for understanding, clarifying misunderstandings as the lesson progressed. For example, in the ballet class, when students made errors as they crossed the floor, the teacher asked, "What is happening with the arms here?" The choral teacher halted the class during warm-ups to help correct issues with the harmony. In both classes, students were asked to clarify understanding either by answering questions and/or demonstrating.

- In a fundamental stringed instrumental music class, the teacher provided ongoing checks for understanding and immediate feedback to the orchestra on their bow strokes. Students were prompted to play, self-assess, specify needed improvement, then practice and self-assess again. As a result of these live-time assessments, there was notable improvement during the fifteen-minute observation.

- During an advanced placement environmental science lesson, students worked collaboratively in small groups to analyze data on climate change. They then wrote a paragraph incorporating the data representing it geographically. Groups then joined a second group and shared their findings. The two groups gave feedback on the written product and then drafted a final version to share with the class and turn in for a grade. However, in other core subjects, checks for understanding did not include all students.

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

Findings
The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry based professional collaborations. Distributed leadership structures are in place.

Impact
Teacher collaboration across disciplines builds leadership capacity, instructional expertise, and curriculum design and revision. Teachers' input affects key school-wide decisions on student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Several teachers spoke about their participation in the Teacher Leader Program through the New York City Department of Education's Office of Teacher Effectiveness. Teachers have the option to apply and be selected as departmental teacher leaders and receive training in building effective teacher teams, which include structures for peer-feedback, data analysis, and lesson study. Core subjects have three teacher leaders each to facilitate weekly meetings and ensure all teachers are included. Teacher team meetings incorporate student data, teacher practice, and curriculum revision. Art studio teacher leaders were observed in a meeting as they reviewed units collected across grades to ensure vertical coherence and alignment to the four New York State standards in the arts.

- At an English teacher leader meeting, members analyzed assessment data, which revealed student underperformance in the area of claims and counterclaims. Social studies teacher leaders pointed out underachievement in document-based essay writing. Teachers adapt unit plans and are making instructional shifts to address skill deficiencies. For example, social studies teachers described their department team's work in revising curriculum to address student deficiencies. Teachers in the department created a list of five strategies to post in classrooms for students to use when writing the data based question (DBQ) essay.

- A new member of the strings instrumental music department spoke about his professional growth as a result of teacher collaboration and structured professional development.

- Teachers articulated that they felt empowered to have input on decisions toward the development of instructional resources across disciplines. For example, teachers initiated school-wide use of Google Docs, as a system for recording and revising administrative, teacher, and student work. Teachers shared that they have opportunity to take leadership roles within the school community including the School Leadership Team, United Federation of Teachers Consultative Committee, Curriculum and Assessment Committee and Professional Development Committee.