



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**The Steinway School**

**Middle School Q141**

**24-20 94<sup>th</sup> Street  
Queens  
11372**

**Principal: Miranda Pavlou**

**Date of review: March 25, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Philip A. Composto**

## The School Context

The Steinway School is a middle school with 1,196 students from grade 6 through 8. The school population comprises 3% Black, 40% Hispanic, 32% White, 22% Asian and 3% other students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 8% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 95.8%.

## School Quality Criteria

<b>Instructional Core</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
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	<b>Celebration</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
<b>School Culture</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>

## Area of Celebration

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.1 Curriculum**

**Rating:**

**Well Developed**

### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, strategically incorporate the instructional shifts across grades and subject areas and emphasize higher order skills. Curricula are continuously adjusted and refined using student work and data.

### Impact

Students are provided with a rich instructional program that emphasizes rigor and meta-cognitive skills that promote college and career readiness for all students, including English language learners (ELLs) and Students with disabilities (SWDs).

### Supporting Evidence

- All planned “Learning Targets” were aligned to the common core standards and incorporated the instructional shifts. For example, the seventh grade mathematics learning target stated, “I can analyze the measures of central tendency in order to make comparisons between data.” This is a major focus standard in grade seven and requires students to demonstrate conceptual understanding.
- Curricula are refined using student work and data so all students have access. This was evidenced in the sixth grade where teachers analyzed student work and determined that students did not have a clear understanding of the meaning of “bias”. As a result, teachers adjusted their plans by adding a lesson to explore the meaning of bias and incorporated short articles and video-clips that provided examples and non-examples of “bias”. Students then had to identify “bias” in articles, citing specific evidence from text to support their thinking.
- Teachers develop curricula and tasks that require students to use higher order thinking, reasoning, and metacognitive skills to investigate and research real world problems. For example, one academy conducted a crime scene investigation. The unit integrated English, mathematics, science and social studies. Students were presented with a crime scene and had to solve the crime with reasoning and evidence incorporating reading, writing and speaking. Students with disabilities (SWDs) and English language learners (ELLs) were given graphic organizers and “hints” to clues based on individual student need. One graphic organizer was a blank concept map, another contained two examples. Some students completed the Frayer Model Vocabulary Sheet to understand new word meanings and some were given sentence starters for their discussions and writing assignments.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

Academic tasks, activities and student work products are rigorous and aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards; however discussion that reflect high levels of student thinking, participation and ownership varied across some classrooms.

### Impact

Teaching practices across most classrooms ensure high levels of student thinking, discussions and participation. Rigorous academic tasks, activities and student work products provide opportunities for students to apply critical thinking skills that are necessary for college and career success.

### Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, there was evidence of multiple entry points into the curriculum that included scaffolds, differentiated learning tasks/activities, graphic organizers, small group discussion, conversation starters and use of rubrics for guiding students in their work through self-assessment and/or peer assessment. For example, students in an eighth grade social studies class worked to analyze evidence from multiple sources. The teacher provided leveled texts incorporated the use of a video and had students listen to an audio. These materials provided multiple entry points into the curriculum so that all learners, including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWD) are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher order thinking in student work and discussion.
- In an Integrated Co- Teaching (ICT) class the teacher noticed several students were struggling with providing textual evidence. For two students, the teacher provided sentence starters, for another two students, she supplied page numbers and for the last student she provided a range of pages for the students to locate and cite the evidence.
- In an English language arts (ELA) class, students were required to cite and analyze evidence from multiple texts to answer the question “Does the government have the right to use propoganda to sway public opinion?” Part of the activity required students to analyze propoganda postcards and synthesize information by integrating this new learning with previous information contained in multiple texts written with varying perspectives. The discussion held was student- to- student while the teacher facilitated. This student-centered approach was not evident in other classrooms across the school.

## Additional Findings

**Quality Indicator:**

**2.2 Assessment**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

The school uses common assessments, rubrics and grading policies aligned with curricula and Common Core Learning Standards and provide feedback to students regarding their steps for learning. Assessment practices reflect the use of checks for understanding and self-reflection opportunities for students, which inform instructional adjustments for most teachers.

### Impact

The use of assessments, feedback and rubrics provide actionable feedback to students and provides most teachers with information using checks for understanding to inform instructional adjustments to meet students learning needs

### Supporting Evidence

- The school has a consistent grading policy that is used across classrooms where tests are worth 50%, homework 20% and projects 30%. It is provided to students in their planners and given to parents on Curriculum Night.
- Teachers develop and use common assessments that align to the common core and ensure the integrity of rigor across classrooms. These assessments are evaluated and vetted by all teachers in the department, instructional coaches and administrators. Results from these assessments are analyzed by teachers noting patterns and trends that allow teachers to make curricula and instructional adjustments. For example, teachers noticed students had difficulty in how to solve quadratic equations and developed a lesson of how to solve quadratic equations by completing the square and developed a graphic organizer that contained the steps required to solve a quadratic equation.
- Across classrooms, student work on bulletin boards and in student portfolios contained “next steps” with feedback; however feedback was not always clear and actionable for students. For example, one student’s work stated, “Use your voice to make your argument more compelling.” In another student’s work stated, “Your comparison could have been better.” It would be most beneficial to the student if the teacher stated clear next steps that could be actionable by students.
- Teachers’ assessment practices reflect the use of checks for understanding, including the use of self-assessment, peer-assessment and exit slips. However, there were missed opportunities for teachers to assess student understanding during the lesson. For example, not all teachers were strategically circulating to student groups to assess and facilitate student learning.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### **Findings**

The principal communicates high expectations to all constituents within the school community and has a system of mutual accountability that has led to students, families and staff to work together to improve student outcomes and accomplish school goals.

### **Impact**

The collaborative spirit and shared belief in the importance of learning that prepares students to be on a path of college and career readiness is evident throughout the school. As a result, there is an ownership and mutual accountability by students, teachers and families.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- High expectations are clearly communicated to students, faculty and families throughout the school year. For staff, this begins at the principal's initial conference and continues in the Faculty Handbook, weekly bulletins prepared by the principal, and also integrated into the weekly professional learning sessions.
- A parent stated that at the start of the school year during Curriculum Night, teachers informed families of expectations for their children and provided information about the topics and material their children would be studying throughout the year. Teachers regularly update parents using the school website. Another parent added that teachers are always accessible in-person on Tuesday afternoons, any day at dismissal, and are always available by phone or e-mail. One parent proudly stated, "In this school, teachers go out of their way to offer additional assistance if a student is struggling and does not understand something. They give students the tools and techniques so they are well prepared for success."
- High expectations for teachers are also communicated through regular classroom walk-throughs and frequent observations of teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Teachers are mutually accountable to the feedback received in observations. High quality feedback communicates actionable next steps. For example, "Use assessment strategies to monitor student learning during instruction. Some strategies include: green-red-yellow cards, hand signals, exit slips, sticky note responses and listening in on student discussions."
- College and career readiness is built into the school's curricula. Teachers provide students with projects that will prepare them to be on the path to college and career success. For example, seventh grade students are required to research careers in Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics (S.T.E.M). Students, with the help of teachers and counselors, learn about the duties and responsibilities of the job, salary, the expected demand for this job/profession and the education and certifications required. Students then back map to the high schools that can best prepare to be on the path for these colleges or careers. This process is then further extended and linked to the high school application process. This requires students to learn about the admissions criterion and application process, special exams or auditions required for these schools.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

Teacher teams systemically analyze key elements of student work and engage in on-going curriculum refinements and alignment. Distributive leadership structures are embedded to support effective teacher leadership opportunities.

### Impact

Professional collaborations on teams, the refinement and alignment of curriculum and distributive leadership opportunities for teachers has resulted in shared accountability for student success and coherence across the school.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams examine the standards that are below and above their grade level to plan lessons that address learning gaps for students approaching grade level or to extend the learning for students exceeding grade level goals. For example, the math team examined the staircase of complexity for ratios and proportions and discussed the areas of ease and challenge. Teachers developed graphic organizers for struggling students and extension activities for enrichment. For example, a graphic organizer was developed that illustrated and listed the steps for calculating mean, median and range with an example for each.
- Teacher teams meet weekly to analyze student work and identify patterns and trends and identify possible causes, including curricula and pedagogical practices. For example, in mathematics, teachers noticed students with disabilities scored lower on short and extended responses. Upon a deeper dive into the work they noticed these students were not able to clearly explain their answers. Several teachers shared strategies, such as highlighting or underlining key words along with a prompt. Teachers introduced the prompt of “What words in the question led you to think...” along with a sentence starter, “The wording in the problem that said...told me to ...” As a result of using this strategy, teachers observed that these students’ were able to more clearly explain their mathematical reasoning.
- Teachers stated that department team meetings help them build capacity by brainstorming and sharing best practices with their colleagues. This was evidenced in a sixth grade team where teachers were analyzing student work to acquire a better understanding of the needs of higher performing students, and how they can more fully challenge them and provide them with the academic and personal skills for success.
- Teachers take on leadership roles by preparing and delivery professional learning sessions on a variety of topics such as questioning, student discussions, claims and counterclaims, understanding and using individualized education plans (IEPs), providing supports for students with disabilities (SWD) in the general education classroom and research strategies for content areas. This was evidenced in the school’s professional development plan and by teachers in meetings.