



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Queens High School for Language Studies

High School 241

**35-01 Union Street
Queens
NY 11354**

Principal: Melanie Lee

**Date of review: January 14, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Matthew Angell**

The School Context

Language Studies is a high school with 203 students from grade 9 through grade 10. The school population comprises 9% Black, 24% Hispanic, 2% White, and 62% Asian students. The student body includes 37% English language learners and 4% 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 94.3%.

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	Developing
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	Celebration	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	Focus	Developing
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:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms teaching practices are aligned to an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best and consistently provide multiple entry points.

Impact

School wide practices result in students, including English language learners, engaging in challenging tasks and demonstrating higher-order thinking skills.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and faculty believe in cooperative learning where students learn best from each other. Across classrooms students were engaged with each other in conversation connected to textual evidence and problem solving and students were often translating for their peers within groups during group work. In a social studies classroom students worked together in groups to evaluate the leadership of Julius Cesar. Each group gathered textual evidence to support their analysis from the perspective of Roman senators, soldiers, or commoners. Later in the lesson student groups defended their position based on the evidence they gathered. Students spoke to cooperative learning and opportunities to discuss with each other during the student meeting when one student said “I don’t think I’ve ever not heard them say think-pair-share.”
- Across classrooms teachers provided scaffolds for students and provided multiple entry points such as models, graphic organizers with word definitions, differentiated math problems, and scaffolded questioning, to support all learners. In an English as a second language classroom students were drafting a debate script with the help of a peer using a rubric to cite evidence they had gathered from a variety of texts throughout a unit on post-feminist society,. This was evidenced as one student was translating the rubric language into English for his partner in order to give feedback on his evidence. Some students were given sentence starters or graphic organizers to assist them in creating their draft.
- Across classrooms students demonstrated higher-order thinking skills through discussion and use of multiple sources to support their claims. In an English classroom, students were observed discussing the text *No Way Out* by JoAnn Wypijewski. Groups were given differentiated text that included word definitions for difficult vocabulary. Student groups were assigned scaffolded questions for the assignment. Students groups discussed both the text and its connection to the other texts they recently read.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Developing

Findings

As the school is still in the process of creating common assessments aligned to curricula the use of rubrics and assessments are only loosely aligned. Furthermore, the school is still developing the how they use common assessment data to determine student progress across grade and subjects.

Impact

Feedback to students is limited and assessment results are inconsistently used to adjust curricula.

Supporting Evidence

- One of the school's goals is to create aligned assessments within their curricula for the 2014-2015 school year. School leaders have conducted professional development for teachers and teachers spoke to collaborating with colleagues in creating assessments. This work is not yet finished.
- Although the school has created some school wide common assessments, such as a math midterm, and it has begun administering assessments of student reading levels, these practices are not yet fully embedded or used to adjust curriculum.
- In math, teachers create 80% of a common assessment. Individual teacher's then add up to 20% more content to reflect his/her pacing as this is not yet consistent across the grade.
- Although the school does use rubrics, they are inconsistent across subjects and the feedback to students is often limiting in providing clear next steps. Students spoke to conferencing with their teachers when they need help and getting feedback at the end of a project, but most students couldn't speak to the type of feedback they receive or what their next steps were. Some responses from students regarding feedback included "I have to have better grammar," and "I have to improve my writing vocabulary."
- The school does have some systems to look at overall student performance, including class grade reports and attendance data. However, curricula based assessment data is still not fully developed.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Developing
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

School leaders and faculty are in the process of aligning curricula to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), integrating instructional shifts, and designing academic tasks.

Impact

The written curriculum inconsistently emphasizes rigorous habits and higher-order thinking skills.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and faculty have not yet identified strategic standards across content areas to build coherence within the curriculum. The school uses online google documents to collaborate and share curriculum maps. A review of the curricula across content areas revealed maps are still in the process of being created and aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts.
- School leaders and teachers used the prior year's State assessments to develop a deeper understanding of the Common Core Learning Standards in order to develop school wide curricula that are aligned, support student mastery, and prepare them for college and career. However, curricula maps do not yet show sufficient evidence of rigorous assessments aligned to the Common Core or clearly identify how all students will be supported. For example, in a writing unit map, a task was identified as a five paragraph essay, thus missing out on showing how all students were to be engaged in the activity.
- One school wide goal is to develop curriculum maps by June 2015. Current maps' writing structure includes Common Core Learning Standards, enduring understandings, skills, key readings, formative, and summative assessments. For example, the Global 10 curriculum map has a full year outline aligned to Common Core Standards and the scope and sequence for the course. Tasks within the unit allow for students to demonstrate higher-order thinking skills through document based question assessments as well as projects, debates, and essay writing. However, not all curriculum maps meet the standard set by this example, as the Earth Science curriculum map lacked assessments.

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

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff. School leaders consistently communicate expectations that are connected to college and career readiness.

Impact

The systems for accountability results in a clear understanding of school expectations. There is ongoing feedback to students and families to help them understand progress towards those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders started the school year with a weeklong training for all staff in August of 2014 focused on school goals and objectives in pedagogy, curriculum, and a culture of high expectations. School leaders send weekly newsletters, highlight positive staff practices, and attend at least two common planning meetings per team per month. They also provide ongoing feedback regarding core beliefs in the observation process aligned to the Danielson framework.
- The school, parent teacher association, (PTA) and the community based organization, Asian American for Equality Youth Leaders, partner to provide parents and students with workshops throughout the year on high school requirements and college readiness. A review of workshop agendas and materials included workshop materials designed to help parents understand ways to support their children towards future college choices. The PTA president at the parent meeting said that even though the school is only in its second year “we want to promote that students can go to college early.”
- Since the school’s inception parent teacher conferences have included a student led conference component. Students create a reflection piece, that they review with a teacher before the conferences, complete a conference specific project, and choose a few pieces of school work for the conference. Parents spoke to appreciating learning about their children’s progress from their child.

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

Findings

Teacher teams meet consistently to analyze assessment data and student work. School leaders have structures in place to build leadership capacity in teachers.

Impact

Teacher team collaboration has improved teacher practice and student progress. Teachers have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers collaborate on unit plan writing and meet to analyze student assessment data as well as student work in order to share best practices and monitor student progress. Teachers on the social studies team were able to speak to a recent unit on imperialism in which they were given the freedom to attempt a thematic unit instead of learning about world events in chronological order. The teachers said that they noticed in student work that students developed misconceptions about the cause and effect of historical events and therefore made adjustments based on their findings. This team, and all other teams, keeps running agendas and meeting minutes on a google document so that they and school leaders can monitor progress over time.
- Teachers spoke of sharing strategies across content areas. The ESL teachers shared examples of ELL supports provided to both the science and social studies departments, such as breaking down sentence structures and defining vocabulary.
- The math department was observed in a team meeting norming the grading of their mid-term common assessment. As they normed the grading of short response questions they also shared patterns of common misconceptions among students and wrote them down in meeting notes on a live google document that runs for the entire year. Teachers spoke to the team structure allowing them to focus more on students for whom assessment results fell in the bottom third.
- School leaders and teachers engage in collaborative monthly consultation and teacher leaders are given the opportunity to provide input on school matters. Teachers spoke to, and the google drive log supports, teacher input of professional development needs, design of intervisitation tools, and curriculum decisions. Teachers for instance have chosen to create their own curriculum maps rather than be provided them by school leaders. Additionally, they have input into the curriculum design and professional development via a needs assessment.