



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

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**Long Island City High School**

**High School Q450  
14-30 Broadway  
Queens  
NY 11106**

**Principal: Vivian Selenikas**

**Date of review: April 21, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Michael Alcott**

## The School Context

Long Island City High School is a high school with 2064 students from grades 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 13% Black, 60% Hispanic, 9% White, and 16% Asian students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 79.0%.

## 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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</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>Celebration</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>

## Area of Celebration

<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 strategically analyze teaching practices and writing samples for a focus group of students whom they share, to identify gaps in achievement. Teacher team work is directly aligned to the school's instructional focus and promotes the implementation of Common Core Learning standards (CCLS).

### Impact

Teacher collaborations across the school result in school-wide coherence around the writing strategies identified in the teacher inquiry teams, and improvements in teacher practice that lead to student mastery of specific goals.

### Supporting Evidence

- Grade level inquiry teams in the ninth grade and the vertical English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher team are engaged in Writing is Thinking Strategic Inquiry (WITSi), in which the teams meet twice weekly to review student writing for a focus group of students. Short-term, specific mastery goals are set, gaps are identified, and curricular and pedagogical decisions are made to address the gaps. For example the ninth grade team that is part of the New Explorers Academy smaller learning community, looked at student mastery of the use of conjunctions within different areas of content writing. Student work was analyzed for both mastery of the writing skill and understanding of the content. Based on this analysis, next steps, including the removal of certain writing scaffolds, were identified.
- The staff regularly analyzes students' assessment results and makes effective adjustments to teacher practice and student placement. For example, during the interview teachers shared that they consistently analyze data for groups of students across subjects and grades. Each teacher works with a band of struggling students identified on their inquiry team records. Teachers track the students' progress across Regents assessments, credit accumulation, attendance and graduation. During the interview, teachers shared that "all hands are on deck", with the focus of increasing literacy skills across the curricula, increasing student attendance and bolstering outreach to students and their families.
- For coherence across teacher teams, the staff uses the "Noticings and Wonderings" protocol, while looking at student work to identify student needs. Teachers learn strategies from team members and collaborate to brainstorm ideas that address the targeted students' needs. For example, one teacher noticed that a student in his inquiry group was having difficulty explaining mathematical thinking. Thanks to a strategy suggested by a colleague on the team, such as building time in the lesson for students to explain their answers, the teacher implemented the strategy and the student later moved to mastery in this area. In addition, teachers across the department worked together to create subject specific "Do Nows" that incorporate writing. These practices are part of a collaborative community that allows all staff members to share best practices gained from inquiry team work focused on closing student learning gaps.

## Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

### Findings

Across classrooms teaching practices aligned to curricula, reflect the school's beliefs about how students learn best. A majority of teachers consistently provide multiple entry points in lessons.

### Impact

All learners, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, are consistently engaged in challenging tasks across classrooms. There are missed opportunities to further deepen student learning via high level peer to peer interactions in all classrooms.

### Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, instructional strategies provide learners with multiple entry points into the school's rigorous curricula. For example, in a class of English Language Learners, students analyzed the Cold War policy by being part of a jigsaw activity incorporating the WITsi writing strategies. Students cited textual evidence to support their analysis of primary and secondary sources. In a grade 10 English Language Arts (ELA) class, two students researched the experience of Cambodians in Khmer Rouge prison camps and compared their findings to the experiences of Jews in Nazi concentration camps, as depicted in *Night*. The students were able to cite textual evidence and draw insightful parallels between the two. In an Advanced Integrated Co Teaching (ICT) class with English Language Learners, students were purposefully grouped to include an English Language Learner, a student with a learning disability, and a student with a speech disability. Three teachers in the classroom provided direct support for the three subgroups.
- The principal articulates the belief that writing must be infused in all classes and this was illustrated across classrooms visited, where scaffolded and explicitly taught writing strategies supported high quality student work. In a ninth grade ELA class, students engaged in independent reading based on their Lexile levels, followed by differentiated writing tasks, based on their mastery of skills for effective writing. In an Algebra class, the 'Do Now' incorporated a conjunction (because, but, so) writing organizer for students' use in multiplying and factoring polynomial expressions. In the tenth grade Global History class, the 'Do Now' required students to engage in a sentence expansion exercise, wherein they added 'Who', 'What', 'Where', 'When', and 'Why' details to a sentence kernel. Similarly, students in an advanced ESL class engaged in sentence expansion in response to the reading of a New York Times article, which all students do weekly in ELA and ESL classes.
- School leaders articulated and instruction reflects the belief that students learn best when given opportunities to interact with each other. Students in a tenth grade Global History class worked in groups on specific aspects of the Cold War. Similarly, students in an ICT class for Advanced ELLs worked in groups of four to discuss the dialogue between two characters in *A View from the Bridge* and analyze their relationship at particular moments in the story. Students in a grade ten ELA class worked in pairs to research and present their findings in connecting the Holocaust as depicted in *Night* to more recent genocides. In a Living Environment class, students worked in pairs to identify the definitions, causes, and treatment for diseases. Lessons in a few of the other classes visited did not offer similar opportunities for students to collaborate with peers. In a Trigonometry class, students sat in rows, working individually. In a Geometry class, most students also sat and worked individually.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

School leaders and faculty implement Common Core aligned curricula across grades and content areas. Teachers collaboratively refine curricula and academic tasks, using student work.

### Impact

The school has coherent curricula that promote college and career readiness and provide access to academic tasks for a diversity of students.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school offers over 19 Advanced Placement courses in a total of 44 sections, including all English, math, sciences, Spanish, and the arts courses, through which students have access to rigorous college level curricula aligned to relevant standards for all grades and content areas. In addition, through its thematic smaller learning communities, the school offers career readiness curricula in culinary arts, restaurant hospitality management, health services and global languages. The school supplements the regular curricula with Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) curriculum, a blended learning model that prepares students with college readiness skills, such as effective note taking and other critical organizational skills.
- A few academic departments, notably English and ESL, are leading the work to make purposeful decisions to align curriculum to the Common Core Learning Standards and develop meaningful tasks. For example, during a ninth grade English unit in which there are plans for students to engage in reading and discussing *The Miracle Worker*, students will learn to read in Braille and use American Sign Language. Students are challenged to do so without giving up, just like the main character in the book, who had to demonstrate resilience in the face of defeat. The unit also builds students' reading skills by aligning to the "7 Habits of a Good Reader" and infusing sentence writing skills through the Hochman writing strategies. Similarly, the lesson plan for an ESL class required groups of students to read different dialogues between the same two characters in *A View from the Bridge*, at different points in the story. This aligns directly to Common Core grade level standard three for reading literature, which requires students to, "analyze how complex characters develop over the course of a text and interact with other characters."
- Through the regular inquiry work which looks at student writing samples, teachers refine academic tasks to target specific writing and other academic skills. For example, the ninth grade New Explorers Academy team reviewed students' use of conjunctions and identified an improved level of mastery for most students in general but noted some students' continued struggle with one particular conjunction. As a result, the team revised the unit task to replace the word with one that students might find more familiar in that context. As another example, an ESL lesson plan designed to prepare students to read Arthur Miller's *A View from the Bridge*, was revised to frontload more vocabulary and to emphasize a focus on "setting" for one of the pre-reading activities.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### **Findings**

Teachers use or create common assessments aligned to the school's curricula to determine and share feedback about student progress towards goals and inform adjustments to curriculum and instruction.

### **Impact**

The results of assessment data are used to differentiate instruction, adjust academic tasks, and explicitly address gaps in student performance. Students receive feedback from assessments that keeps them informed about their progress and next steps.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Inquiry teams plan common assessment tasks with sentence level writing foci, review writing samples of a focus group of students, and make explicit adjustments, such as revising academic tasks for the upcoming week based on what the data shows. Teachers share assessment data with students and provide them with feedback that allows them to clearly determine their next steps. For example, ninth grade students reviewed their argument essay scores with teachers to identify an area of strength, an area of challenge, and a time bound target goal.
- The New Explorers Academy monitors ninth grade students' progress on Common Core Writing Standard one and Reading Standard one, via periodic assessments at the sentence, paragraph, and essay level. Assessments have been administered three times this year, and data on individual progress has been shared with students. Findings from the data included students showing progress in using conjunctions but needing additional support in expanding sentences to include pertinent details. As a result, students in the ninth grade English class were assigned differentiated writing tasks targeting their specific areas of challenge.
- The science department monitors student progress towards science requirements for graduation, with a particular focus on analysis of student performance on past Regents exams. For example, minutes and agendas reviewed showed that the focus of the February 2015 department meeting was an item analysis of the January 2015 Living Environment Regents assessment. Teachers in the department identified the most challenging topics for students, the major misconceptions, and possible adjustments to instructional decisions, based on their analysis. As a result, an action plan for the June 2015 Regents assessment was developed. The plan included targeting specific students in "cohort Q" and explicit curricular decisions such as additional writing to generate explanations, increased use of content key ideas and terms, emphasizing content specific vocabulary, and incorporating more task that require students to support responses with examples of evidence from texts.

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

Staff members consistently communicate high expectations to all students and provide guidance supports for students to achieve the expectations. School leaders convey high expectations to all staff and support them in creating shared accountability and success in attaining the expectations.

### Impact

Students have ownership of their educational experiences and are well prepared for their next level. All staff members hold themselves mutually accountable for their professional growth and for all students' success in meeting the school's high expectations for learning by all.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders communicate the belief that all students should have access to Advanced Placement and other college and career preparatory courses. Reflecting that belief, the school is organized so that all students, including students with disabilities, have access to Advanced Placement (AP) courses, college preparatory courses, and career readiness skill development. For example, one of the four AP United States History classes is designed as an ICT model, open to general education students and students with disabilities. The school's expectations for college and career preparation for all students is also clearly delineated through a "College Summit App Map" that is available to students and lays out the milestones they have to achieve each year in high school and college, to be successful.
- Ten of 12 students interviewed knew what they needed to do to advance to the next level and what the requirements are for their graduation. One who is over-aged and under-credited, re-engaged with her education and was able to articulate the courses and exams she needs to pass in order to graduate. The assistant principal, teachers and guidance counselors meet with students who are not meeting expectations, to agree on attendance goals and action steps to ensure that the students' improve their performance. In addition, the guidance department leads workshops for students across grade levels, focusing on goal setting and requirements for graduation, promotion and college admission. Graduation and promotion requirements are also outlined in student friendly language in a student handbook. The handbook spells out expectations for academic and personal behavior, such as "evaluate yourself and your peers based on standard criteria", and gives an overview of the Common Core Standards and their connection to learning goals for all content areas.
- School leaders, through various media, convey high expectations to teachers. The staff handbook mirrors expectations in the student handbook. For example, in addition to student peer and self-assessment, the handbook emphasizes the importance of engaging students in writing, researching and problem solving. The school's internal leadership program for teachers provides regular professional development on building strong partnerships within the school and on teams, and emphasizes speaking and listening skills for teachers, as well as community building activities and protocols. Teacher feedback from school leaders includes explicit references to expectations linked to instructional initiatives of the school by commending teachers for observed exemplary practices and making clear and specific recommendations for improving teacher practice, in alignment to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. An observation report for a science class commended the teacher for "using the journals for the writing to engage activity." The observation report of another science class reminded the teacher to "incorporate the Hochman writing strategies."