



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

High School for Arts and Business

High School Q550

**105-25 Horace Harding Expressway
Queens
NY 11368**

Principal: Ana R. Zambrano-Burakov

**Date of review: March 25, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Rajeev Bector**

The School Context

The High School for Arts and Business is a secondary school with 887 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 8% Black, 79% Hispanic, 3% White, 9% Asian, and 1% other students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 44% of the students enrolled and girls account for 56%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 89.9%.

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	Well Developed
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	Additional Findings	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	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	Celebration	Well Developed
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	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders communicate high expectations to the entire staff and provide training to support those expectations. The school successfully partners with families and supports students with effective feedback and guidance supports.

Impact

By effectively communicating elevated expectations to the entire school community, the school creates a high degree of accountability and fosters a college and career mindset in families and students so that they are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders consistently communicate high expectations for professionalism and instruction to the entire staff and provide training to support those expectations. The school's Comprehensive Educational Plan indicates that after the school formulated the goal of aligning its math geometry curriculum with the Common Core standards, it put into place several professional development supports: utilizing the expertise of the math coach and the math assistant principal, identifying resources on the Engage NY website, and instituting ongoing professional development sessions for teachers throughout the year. Similarly, another school goal was to support teachers' understanding and implementation of multiple entry points in their planning. To further this goal, the school implemented peer observations, differentiated learning opportunities based on observation data, used the shortened-day schedule, and leveraged the expertise of content-area assistant principals, teacher leaders, network instructional points, and Generation Ready consultants, thus creating a culture of mutual accountability.
- Teachers and staff have established a culture for learning that provides guidance and advisement supports to ensure that students are prepared for college and careers. Each staff member in the school has "adopted" a group of students to provide college and career support. College preparation starts in the ninth grade, and students are supported throughout their four years via College Now, Advanced Placement courses, college orientations, trips, career pathways, Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) preparation with NY Cares, and Method Test Prep—an online SAT preparation program. Each student meets with an advisor to discuss college and career options, and the school has assigned additional staff to the college office to ensure that students are properly supported in this process. As a result, the school's 2013-2014 College and Career Readiness rating was 67.4, which is 17.7 points higher than the minimum score of 49.7 for meeting the target.
- School leaders and staff effectively communicate a unified set of high expectations and partner with families to support progress toward those expectations. These expectations are communicated through parent orientations, Parent Teacher Association meetings, the School Leadership Team, student recognition nights, college and career nights, and curriculum nights. Families report that teachers and school leaders share information about the Common Core Learning Standards at Parent Teacher Association meetings, and provide sample assessments. They state that the school provides ample notice regarding upcoming assessments and assignments, thereby allowing them to assist their children. The school supports students' social-emotional development by ensuring that teachers understand the unique strengths and challenges of each student; the principal has made it a priority to know each student well and as a result has earned the parents' trust.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics and assessments aligned with the curricula and their assessment practices reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding. Teachers use different assessments that measure common skills to evaluate student progress.

Impact

By analyzing trends for groups of students, teachers are able to make adjustments to curricula to meet students' learning needs and evaluate student progress toward goals. However, the use of effective formative assessment strategies is not yet embedded across the school, thus limiting teachers' ability to gauge the extent of student learning and provide substantive ongoing feedback.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use rubrics, checklists, and monitor student understanding. The assessment criteria are clearly communicated to students so they are aware of performance expectations. Additionally, on classroom bulletin boards and student work products, teachers provide written feedback and delineate the next steps for improvement. However, some feedback is not detailed and substantive; therefore, does not result in increased student achievement.
- In some classes, verbal feedback to students was general and few students assessed their own work. In one classroom the teacher assessed student understanding for the class as a whole by asking, "Do we all know?" and "Does anyone have any questions?" In another, students were provided rubrics, but did not use them to self- or peer-assess until directed to do so by the teacher. In an Integrated Co-Teaching class, the co-teacher circulated among groups, but made general comments such as "good job," and "nice work."
- Systems and structures are in place to analyze and assess student work periodically, and this analysis enables teachers to adjust curricula and instruction. For instance, social studies teachers determined through the results of internal assessments that students were struggling with essay writing. As a result, they incorporated tasks in their unit plans and lesson plans that provided students with additional practice in writing, paraphrasing, and citing textual evidence. However, not all students demonstrate increased mastery as evident in their work products.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Curricula and academic tasks are aligned to the Common Core and content standards, strategically integrate the instructional shifts, emphasize rigorous habits, and are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

Curricular coherence is evident across grades and subject areas. As a result, individual and groups of students, including the lowest- and highest- achieving students, English language learners and students with disabilities, have access to cognitively engaging curricula and tasks and can demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- Student work and data informs refinements to the curricula and academic tasks. Aligned with one of the Comprehensive Education Plan goals, “By June 2015, teachers will refine all English Language Arts curriculum and assessments,” teachers have refined the curricula based on the results of assessments to ensure that academic tasks from NY State’s Common Core website, Engage NY, are embedded in their planning, and have included a “pyramid of tasks” within each unit to differentiate instruction via the use of tiered assignments.
- In order to individualize instruction and to provide access to the curricula, the school provides simulated State assessments, such as Regents exams on Saturdays, and on modified schedules during the school day. Teachers analyze this data to discover patterns and to gain a better understanding of students’ areas of struggle; they then adjust the curricula accordingly to better meet the needs of these students. For instance, teachers determined that students needed more support in determining author’s purpose, and then provided additional practice in future lessons to facilitate students’ understanding.
- All curricula are aligned to the Common Core standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Interdisciplinary connections are evident in curricula, and teachers make purposeful connections between the shifts and the topics in each subject, both within and across grades. For instance, unit plans and curricula in English language arts reference historical events, while those in art emphasize discussion to deepen understanding.
- Curricula emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills across grades and subjects. Students demonstrate their thinking by collaborating with their peers, crafting written responses explaining their reasoning, and partaking in text-based accountable talk. As a result, on the 2013-2014 New York City school survey report, 90% of students indicate that they were asked to complete a math task that required them to explain their thinking, and 100% of teachers indicate that in English language arts students use evidence from text during discussion and in written assignments, and read informational and grade-appropriate texts.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Pedagogy is aligned to the curricula and reflects a coherent set of beliefs about student learning that is informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts. Teaching strategies provide multiple entry points into the curricula, and the school makes a concerted effort to engage students in learning.

Impact

The alignment of pedagogy to curricula, and the use of scaffolding and questioning strategies, enables all learners to be engaged in appropriately challenging tasks. Differentiated supports create the conditions for high levels of student thinking, demonstrated in work products and discussions.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, students were consistently asked to reference the text to support their claims, read complex texts—including primary source documents and informational text, critique the arguments of others, and explain their thinking across content areas. For instance, in a social studies classroom students read several documents, along with informational text, and crafted an argument based on these primary source materials.
- Instruction was differentiated by content and process. Across classes, students were provided with a choice of assignments and strategically placed in need-based groups. During small group work students answered questions, underlined key phrases, and annotated the text. Scaffolds, such as graphic organizers to capture textual evidence and to compare two works of literature, as well as other supports, such as visual vocabulary cards and pictorial support for understanding academic vocabulary were utilized for English language learners and students with disabilities.
- In most classrooms, students discussed their work products and engaged in genuine discussions that reflected high levels of thinking and participation. However, in one classroom, student engagement with the content, and interest and enthusiasm for learning were not evident. For instance, in an art class, students used an interior design rubric to evaluate each other's paintings and engaged in high level discussions about atmospheric perspective, color scheme, and size relationships; however, in an algebra class, some students sat in their assigned groups but did not collaborate with one another, while other students copied from their peers' notebook and focused on task completion. Students did not always have an opportunity to reflect on their learning and to consolidate their understanding.
- Across most classrooms, students were able to explain the task and its relevance. Students could describe the expectations for the assignment, refer to a specific work product and explain the steps they took to complete it, as well as predict how it might be of use to them in the future. In most instances student work products showed evidence of effort and persistence and were carefully detailed. However, in some classrooms, students filled blanks on worksheets or performed rote procedures, and thus had few opportunities for making connections among concepts and arriving at new understandings of complex material.

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

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations and systematically analyze teacher work, assessment data, and student work.

Impact

The work of teacher teams has a direct impact on student learning by strengthening the instructional capacity of teachers, and leading to the achievement of goals for individual as well as groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- School leadership indicates that teacher teams closely analyze data on a regular basis and use that data to adjust their practice. For instance, an examination of the historical data for the Living Environment Regents exam revealed that all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, were underperforming. To address this concern, teacher teams re-wrote the curriculum, monitored the results of the daily formative assessments, and administered a practice exam on a Saturday. Based on the item analysis for this assessment, students were offered individualized instruction. Consequently, there was a 21% increase in students passing the exam on the next administration.
- Teacher teams regularly and systematically analyze key elements of teacher work, including classroom practice and assessment data. Teacher teams described how the inter-visitations conducted helped improve their pedagogy by helping them adapt the questioning strategies and scaffolds observed in their colleague’s classroom to their own practice. As an instance of the cross-pollination of best practices, teacher teams created visual scaffolds to help students understand academic vocabulary, which was subsequently adopted by other teacher teams across the school. Item analyses of Regents assessments clearly show how teacher teams track student progress, identify trends and patterns, and formulate goals for groups of students, which are subsequently monitored and revised based on future assessments.
- The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured collaborations that have promoted the implementation of the Common Core standards and identified clear criteria for exiting a grade. A review of meeting minutes revealed that vertical and horizontal alignment was evident as teacher teams regularly met to discuss grade level expectations, identify the lowest and highest third students, and to plan interventions for groups of students based on student work and their reading levels. By engaging in this work, teacher teams were able to refine instructional strategies to provide additional scaffolds for struggling learners, and thus increase student achievement for all learners.