



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

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

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2014-2015**

**The New School for Leadership and Journalism**

**Middle School X244**

**120 West 231st Street  
Bronx  
NY 10463**

**Principal: Eduardo Mora**

**Date of review: May 19, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Michael L. Schurek**

## The School Context

The New School for Leadership and Journalism is a middle school with 773 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 11% Black, 83% Hispanic, 3% White, 2% Asian, and 1% other students. The student body includes 24% English language learners and 24% 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 93.0%.

## 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>Celebration</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>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

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

Teacher teams and staff communicate high expectations for all students. The school successfully partners with families around supporting students towards expectations connected to college and career readiness.

### Impact

Students demonstrate ownership for their learning as they prepare for the next level. Parents are aware and work in collaboration with the school in supporting their children's progress toward becoming college and career ready.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school provides parents with information regarding how their children are doing through report cards, progress reports, emails, phone calls, and an online grading system with student and parental access. A "Middle Years" newsletter is sent home on a monthly basis to keep parents apprised of school events, high school application deadlines and includes tips on how to meet the needs of middle school students and prepare them for college. School administrators survey students and families to better understand the circumstances of different families in an effort to better support students and effectively work with families. New workshops are added to the menu of parent workshops that include: 529 college savings plans, high school articulation procedures, a CUNY representative's college presentation, partnering with Publicolor to provide students with commercial painting apprenticeships as part of a way of saving for a college education, and a teen health workshop by Barnabas Hospital.
- The school's advisory is led by guidance counselors who along with teachers help students develop study and organizational skills, attendance supports, positive peer interactions, and sound personal development habits through socio-emotional learning. All students set short-term and long-term goals for college and career readiness. Advisors pay particular attention to eighth graders and keep students and their families aware of whether or not they are on track for high school acceptance and graduation.
- Success is celebrated during "Honors Night" when students, teachers, and parents are rewarded for exemplary work. High expectations are communicated to students through the school staff that organize educational field trips to the Hall of Science, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. for President Obama's last inaugural address. After school girls' and boys' clubs, Prep for Prep, and Summer Camps at Bear Mountain and Lincoln Center ensure that students are able to own their educational experience.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

While across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula, these practices are not yet evident across the vast majority of classrooms. A high level of student thinking and ownership was reflected in some student work products and discussions.

### Impact

In many classrooms, students are engaged in appropriately challenging discussions that require higher-order thinking. Assignments and projects elicit high-level student thinking.

### Supporting Evidence

- Students often work in collaborative pairs or groups to achieve lesson objectives. Although students work in collaborative groups and some classes provide fill-ins, sentence starters, and graphic organizers for lower level learners, some classes do not always include differentiated tasks with resources at varying levels or address diverse learning styles, providing missed opportunities to engage students at all levels of ability.
- The school has identified questioning and discussion as part of this year's instructional focus. While many classroom visits demonstrated teachers using open-ended questioning techniques to push student thinking, in some classes these questions were presented in a teacher-directed fashion resulting in teacher to student questioning and student to teacher responses, limiting opportunities for all students to express their thinking.
- Teachers provide scaffolds through the use of visuals and front-loading pertinent academic vocabulary connected to lesson objectives. For example, after reviewing how earthquakes, erosion, and volcanoes change the earth, a seventh grade science teacher displayed a picture of a local rock formation and asked students to predict when it was formed and how it was formed. Additionally, a social studies lesson about the Civil War and slavery has students complete a crossword puzzle containing words like secede and abolitionists to ensure that all students can engage in these lessons.

## Additional Findings

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

The school leader and staff adopt Common Core aligned curricula across subjects. The curriculum across subject areas is tailored by teacher teams who review student work and data to provide access to all learners.

### Impact

The school leader's decisions builds curricular coherence across grades and subjects and engages all students, including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs), in challenging tasks that promote thinking, prepares students for college and career, and engages learners in rich discussions involving higher-order thinking.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school uses Scholastic Codex and Expeditionary Learning programs as a basis to design common core aligned English language arts curriculum. The Connected Math program is supplemented with Measuring Up, New York State Coach materials, and Engage NY math modules to support math fluency needs, real world applications, and the instructional shifts. New York City scope and sequence serve as the school's overlying curricula for social studies and science. Science is supplemented with the Science World magazine, Measuring Up, Urban Farming (Randall's Island), Billion Oysters (East River clean-up), and the Bio Bus Lab-on-Wheels, the latter of which use hands on investigations to ensure students "learn by doing". Social studies is supplemented with the American Reader magazine and the Passwords document-based questions workbook to ensure that college and career readiness is promoted across grades and subjects for all students.
- Lesson plans in all content areas include unit essential questions to emphasize higher-order thinking. For example, a seventh grade lesson plan's objective for a novel study of Animal Farm by George Orwell states that students will be able to choose a position and cite textual evidence to support the position and also lists the unit's essential question of, "What causes Revolutions?" to enable students to make connections between literature and Russian history. In order to ensure that all learners can successfully participate, a dozen pivotal vocabulary words are scaffolded by the teacher individually for some students while more independent groups of students use a crossword puzzle as a vehicle for discussion and understanding of the pivotal words. In addition, the lesson plan contains pre-meditated open-ended questions for the teacher and students to use to facilitate their thinking.
- Teachers meet in both department teams and grade teams to refine curricula and academic tasks utilizing an interdisciplinary approach. For example, an ELA unit on conflict ponders the essential question, "Is there ever a good time to go to war?" by exploring the conflicts that involved our country in World War II while this topic is currently being studied in social studies class. To ensure access for all students, teachers decide to have students view multi-media accounts, first-person accounts, and simulations along with opportunities to collaborate with each other for reciprocal teaching purposes to ensure that all students have the opportunity to make personal connections to the material and bring a deep understanding to the topic.

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

The school's grading policies and use of common assessments provides all stakeholders with feedback about student progress. Assessment results are used to make curricula modifications.

### **Impact**

The school uses common assessments and the analysis of data to track student progress and inform adjustments in units and lesson plans.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Teachers use curricula aligned assessments and a combination of discipline specific rubrics such as a common core short-response (2-point) holistic writing rubric for making a claim and supporting it with details and 4-point genre specific rubrics to provide students with actionable feedback aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. Feedback provided is explicit, pushes students to explain their thinking, and involves higher-order thinking. For example, feedback on a social studies exit project research paper scoring rubric recognizes the student for progress made since the initial draft submission, but also prompts the student to add more detail to the paper's introduction and conclusion and make more connections to further explain his thinking. Students articulate that they find the feedback useful and routinely are provided with the opportunity to write another draft utilizing the next steps feedback.
- The school's grading policies are aligned with the school's curricula and based on the student's grade as well as completion and quality of student work, both in class and at home. Students state that they know how they will be graded on each project, essay, performance assessment, etc. through the school's routine use of rubrics presented at the beginning of each particular task. Students are provided with ample amounts of feedback and use it to improve the quality of their work.
- The school uses common assessments such as baseline assessments in ELA and math utilizing the Measuring Up! online assessment program. The results of the baselines were instrumental particularly in ELA where adjustments were made to focus on the written short response in each grade. Exit projects and performance assessments are routinely used to determine student progress towards goals across grades and subjects. The ongoing analysis of these data informs adjustments to written curricula and is evident in written units and accompanying lesson plans.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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**Findings**

Teacher teams' consistently conduct data analysis and review of student work that promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards. Distributed leadership structures support leadership development and teacher participation in decision-making.

**Impact**

Teacher team work and distributed leadership structures strengthen pedagogical practice and enhance student progress.

**Supporting Evidence**

- All faculty members are actively engaged throughout the school week and year in professional development and planning that helps them improve their practice of implementing Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. During Monday professional development, weekly department meetings, and weekly grade meetings with co-teachers, teachers meet in full faculty, and teacher teams to plan instruction, analyze and refine tasks and instruction and consider new and adjusted approaches. Teaching practices are monitored using Advance data from cycles of observation.
- In all of the different types of meetings, teachers systematically analyze data in order to improve instruction and student outcomes. In department teams, teachers analyze the results of end-of-unit assessments, performance tasks, and exit projects and make adjustments for the next unit as a result of their analysis. In grade team groups, teachers discuss trends in student performance and design opportunities for interdisciplinary study as a more holistic method to improve teacher practice and accelerate student outcomes.
- Teachers have many opportunities for leadership development. Team members take turns facilitating teacher team meetings and each teacher team has a lead teacher who meets with administration to keep them abreast of the work of the team. Teachers regularly engage in collaborative planning and make adaptations to the curriculum to meet the needs of students. For example, an ELA team comprised of new teachers is led by an experienced mentor teacher as they discuss using lower lexile level text and/or chunking text for lower level homogenously grouped students. In addition, teachers take on the responsibility for developing and creating assessments based upon data. Teachers reported that they have a true voice in key decisions that affect student learning.