



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Metropolitan High School

High School X248

**1180 Rev. J.A. Polite Avenue
Bronx
NY 10459**

Principal: Madhusudhan Narayanan

**Date of review: April 1, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Mimi Fortunato**

The School Context

The Metropolitan High School is a high school with 306 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 21% Black, 75% Hispanic, 1% White, 1% American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 22% English language learners and 23% special education students. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 84.0%.

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	Focus	Developing
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	Additional Findings	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	Celebration	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	Developing

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations regarding professionalism, instruction, communication and other elements of the Danielson Framework for Teaching to the staff, provide opportunities for collaboration and professional development, and have a system of accountability for those expectations. School leaders, teachers and staff establish a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations for all students and offer ongoing feedback regarding student progress to families.

Impact

Established structures and systems of accountability support teachers' progress towards expectations for professional practice, and a system of reciprocal communication supports families' understanding of student progress. Detailed feedback and guidance/advisement supports promote students' preparation for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal communicates high expectations to staff through frequent cycles of observation and feedback to teachers and a weekly email in which he highlights promising practice observed. Observation reports demonstrate evidence of the principal's actionable feedback to teachers that is aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teachers and includes time-bound next steps. For example, the principal's feedback's in an observation report stated, "In the next two weeks (by 3/15/15), please invite me in at a time when students are actively engaged in math that is designed to challenge student thinking and make their thinking visible".
- All teachers are engaged in professional development aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching (DfT) and collaborations in which school leadership and teachers assume accountability for meeting established expectations. For example, the professional development plan includes a series of targeted workshops on deepening student engagement with rigorous, challenging learning activities (DfT component 3c). This series included opportunities for teachers to view model lessons, engage in shared reflection, and to collaborate on the development of learning activities that challenge student thinking and engage students with important and challenging content.
- Students and parents shared that they are aware of expectations for academic performance and social behavior, and that teachers and the principal celebrate students' accomplishments and provide students with individualized support to meet established expectations. For example, the school has implemented an advisory program in which students loop with their advisors during their years at the school. Advisors assume responsibility for communicating with families and supporting students' social and emotional development as well as tracking their progress towards graduation. In addition, all juniors and seniors participate in a mandated college preparation course that supports them in the college search and application process.
- The school has implemented an online grading system and provides students and families with on-demand access to real-time data through Pupil Path and Skedula. Students and parents shared that they access this system on a regular basis to determine student status towards credit accumulation and graduation.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies (including questioning and scaffolds), inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula. Across classrooms, student work products and discussions reflect uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact

Inconsistent teaching strategies lead to uneven engagement in appropriately challenging tasks and uneven demonstration of higher order thinking skills in student work products, including the work of English language learners and student with disabilities. Varying use of high level questioning and discussion techniques limit student engagement in high-level discourse.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal has identified trends in teacher practice and developed a plan of action to deepen teacher skill in providing students with opportunities to engage in rich and challenging tasks and discussions, and to ensure that student thinking is visible. These foci were apparent in some lesson plans. For example, in an eleventh grade English class, students were observed seated in groups and sharing thoughts regarding the selection of work to be placed in their portfolios. In this class, students shared their thinking with their peers on identified areas of strength and growth. However, in full class discussions in this class and in others observed, the pattern of teacher to student interaction was teacher-student- teacher, limiting student ownership of the discourse. For example, in an Algebra class on identifying equations with no identities or no solution, the teacher posed questions to individual students, who then responded directly to the teacher. Across classrooms, whole group discussions were generally teacher dominated, with a predominant pattern of teacher to student interaction being call and response.
- Lessons across the majority of classes did not consistently provide evidence of the use of scaffolds and multiple entry points and scaffolds to engage all learners. For example, in a grade 9 English lesson co-taught by an English as a second language (ESL) teacher and a general education English teacher, the lesson plan stated that the ESL teacher had differentiated the lesson for the English language learners and would also co-teach the lesson. The ESL teacher was observed modeling the use of a T-chart as a graphic organizer for the entire class. Students in this class were seated in groups, with a group of English language learners seated together. However, targeted supports for the English language learners in the class were not observed. In addition, one English language learner was seated alone, and the ESL teacher stated that the rationale for this seating arrangement was that this student was more advanced than the other English language learners in the class. In a grade 12 economics lesson where students acted as a loan officer or applicant for a car loan, the teacher was not observed providing scaffolds or supports for the diverse learners in the classroom.
- Across classes observed, students were paired or grouped during group practice. However, students were not able to articulate the rationale for the seating, and in most classes, all students were assigned an identical task and homework assignment.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

School leaders and faculty are in the process of aligning curricula to Common Core Learning Standards and integrating the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks reflect planning to provide access to the school's diverse learners.

Impact

Curricula and tasks are beginning to align to expectations that all lessons integrate instructional shifts, and that planning reflect refinement so that a diversity of learners, including English Language and students with disabilities, have access to the curricula and are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- Most lesson plans provide evidence of planning for alignment to Common Core across content areas. However, planning is inconsistent in incorporating the instructional shifts. For example, in an advanced placement United States history class, the plan included opportunities for students to engage with primary source documents. This lesson called for students to compare and contrast the positions of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr., and share and justify their thinking with their peers. However, in an Earth Science class, the lesson plan did not incorporate instructional shifts. This lesson objective stated that students would, “come to the realization of what dew point means”, and the plan indicated that all students would complete an identical task without an opportunity to model the environmental problem of comparing pairs of dew points and temperatures.
- The principal has established a key instructional goal of engaging students in peer-peer discussion, with planning for group work evident in some lesson plans. In some lesson plans, teachers included notes regarding student pairings or groupings. However, lesson plans did not clearly indicate how these groupings would support individual student need, or how the English language learners and students with disabilities would have access to the tasks. For example, a social studies lesson plan indicated that students would be assigned seats based on heterogeneous skill level, without noting how these skill levels were determined, or how this grouping would support the needs of the diverse learners in each group.
- Although some lesson plans noted strategies such as providing students with vocabulary support or graphic organizers, the strategies noted in lesson plans were not consistently specific to individual students. For example, a review of student work from a twelfth grade English class provided evidence of planning for scaffolding in the form of organizers to support all students' planning for an argumentative essay. An Algebra lesson plan with a learning objective of, “Students will be able to write the equation of a line between two points, and use the equation to determine if a third point belongs to the solution set”, indicated that students who finished their classwork would have an opportunity to complete bonus questions. However, this lesson plan indicated that all students were to be assigned the same do now, classwork, exit slip, and homework. This lesson plan, and others reviewed, did not provide evidence of planning for a refinement of curricula and tasks so that English language learners and students with disabilities would have access to the task.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create course specific assessments, rubrics, and grading policies. Teachers' assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

A lack of coherence in assessment practices result in limited feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. Varied use of effective checks for understanding, and minimal notation of data gained from formative assessments impede teachers' understanding of a clear portrait of student mastery, hindering the development of effective instructional adjustments in some classes.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers shared that they create course specific assessments, rubrics, and grading policies. For example, the chemistry teacher created an assessment plan that included regular periodic assessments administered every two weeks. However, there is no school-wide grading policy, and across classrooms, students could not articulate how their course grade was calculated. Student work was displayed on bulletin boards throughout the school along with teacher created course specific rubrics. In some cases, work posted included teacher feedback and next steps. However, as rubrics did not always align with curricula content but focused on mechanics, some teacher feedback on students' written work consisted of comments that pertained to mechanics and grammar rather than content. In addition, teacher feedback on some student math work reviewed consisted solely of red checks and a numerical grade.
- Teachers do not consistently use summative or formative assessment results to adjust curricula and tasks. For example, although some teachers track student performance on periodic assessments and quizzes, curricula and lesson plans did not reflect revisions or refinements to support identified areas of individual student need. A social studies teacher was observed moving throughout the class, providing support to groups and individual students, and grading students' participation on a scale of one to four. In this class, students shared that they understood that they were graded by the teacher on a scale of one to four each day. However, as the grades for the vast majority of students in the class was a Level 4 on this day and most other days noted, the information gathered was not specific enough to guide instructional adjustments and next learning steps for individual students. Across classrooms visited, students were assigned the same do-now, task, exit slip, and homework.
- The principal shared that teachers are expected to use strategies to check for understanding. However, across classrooms, checks for understanding and adjustments were inconsistent. Across classrooms, most teachers were not observed noting formative assessment data during lessons, and many students could not articulate how their participation in class was assessed. While some teachers were observed conferencing with individuals and small groups of students, adjustments to instruction were primarily clarification of tasks or a general comment of "Well-done", or "Keep going". A teacher in an algebra class was observed conferencing with a small group of students and addressing misconceptions, and in a grade 9 English class, an English as a Second language teacher asked the class, "Any questions, concerns?" and did not wait for students' responses.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

The majority of teachers engage in ongoing professional collaborations in department and grade level teams where they are beginning to analyze assessment data and student work for students they share or on whom they are focused. A distributive leadership is emerging, with teachers assigned as content leaders.

Impact

Teacher teamwork is beginning to promote coherence in the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts, and alignment of practice to the school's instructional goals. Teacher leaders facilitate team meetings, and are engaged in some decisions regarding student learning. However, teacher teamwork does not typically result in improved teacher practice or progress toward goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- Content and grade level teams meet monthly in professional learning teams. The English team was observed discussing an identified problem of practice (questioning and discussion), and sharing strategies that teachers might use to guide discussion during instruction, which is aligned to one of the school's instructional foci. Members of this team were observed sharing a Bloom's Higher Order Flip Chart that teachers planned to use in future lessons. However, a review of agendas for this team and other teams provided evidence of a focus on sharing practice rather than an inquiry approach, and members of this team were not able to clearly articulate the outcomes of their work on shared teacher practice or student outcomes. In addition, as department and grade level teams meet monthly, coherence is hindered.
- While there is evidence that teachers are gathering and archiving assessment data, the analysis of the data is not yet consistently informing strategic and differentiated next instructional steps to meet individual student need. For example, while an English teacher shared Regents data and her plan to target individual students with support through peer tutoring, it was not clear what specific skill the students might need support in, and the data that was gathered was primarily pass or fail Regents grades.
- The principal has identified teacher leaders for core content teams. The team leaders plan agendas and facilitate team meetings with guidance from the principal. During team meetings, teachers assume responsibility for maintaining minutes, which are submitted to the principal for review. Teachers shared that they have numerous opportunities to contribute ideas, and that the principal's open door policy has encouraged teachers to contribute recommendations for implementation. For example, teachers shared that they requested that the principal purchase additional graphing calculators that have since arrived and are in use in classrooms. However, teachers are not yet engaged in key decisions that affect students learning school-wide.