



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

**Renaissance High School For Musical Theater &
Technology**

High School X293

**3000 East Tremont Avenue
Bronx
NY 10461**

Principal: Maria Herrera

**Date of review: April 22, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Renardo Wright**

The School Context

Renaissance High School for Musical Theater & Technology is a high school with 454 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 26% Black, 60% Hispanic, 10% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 25% special education students. Boys account for 42% of the students enrolled and girls account for 58%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 81.0%.

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	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	Focus	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	Additional Findings	Well Developed
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 have established a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff and students. These high expectations are consistently communicated through professional collaborations that provide instructional supports and prepare students for college and career readiness.

Impact

There is a supportive learning environment where school leaders share and communicate high expectations for professional collaboration and growth for teachers and a pathway for college and career readiness for students. The supportive learning environment and the culture of learning results in teacher growth through collaborations and in increased progress for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- At the beginning of each school year, school leaders provide teachers a professional handbook that outlines clear expectations and professional obligations. The staff handbook also includes a template for a highly effective lesson plan, the school's mission statement, grading policies, and expectations for classroom observations and evaluations based on the Danielson Framework for Teaching.
- School leaders meet with all teachers early in the school year to mutually discuss their professional learning goals for the year. Based on teachers' professional learning goals, school leaders incorporate professional learning opportunities tailored to meet the diverse needs of teachers as well as school-wide professional learning opportunities based on competencies of the Danielson Framework for Teachers. For example, one of the professional goals in the school's professional plan is "Using questioning and discussion". One of the teachers expressed that she needs to work on continuing to level questions through the duration of her class lessons.
- The school has secured a school-wide interactive online grading system, Skedula, to provide communications with students and their families about their social and academic progress. Students can view their attendance, assignments, transcripts, and current grades. During the meeting with students, it was shared that this communication tool provides them the opportunity to know their current academic status and next steps. Since this tool is interactive, teachers and students engage in ongoing communication related to students' strengths, challenges and clear next steps.
- There is a college and career office on site to provide all students with college information and assistance for applying to various colleges. In addition, the office provides a comprehensive College and Career handbook that outlines graduation requirements, college admissions, tips for college visits, and how to choose and evaluate colleges. During the visit, it was expressed by school leaders that a full time college counselor is available on site to provide ongoing college preparation for students in grades 11 and 12.
- Each September, a general school assembly is held for all students to learn about their roles and the required expectations set for them for the school year. In addition, planners and handbooks are provided to students outlining clear roles and expectations.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the school's curricula and instructional focus and consistently provide opportunities to all learners to engage in active participation and discussions.

Impact

Learners were actively engaged and there were multiple opportunities to promote high order thinking and high level participation and discussions.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, lessons were grade appropriate and cognitively challenging to promote higher order thinking skills. For example, in a 12th grade math class, students were required to look at eight algebra statements and place them in order based on the levels of difficulties. In a 12th grade ELA class, students were required to read complex text, *The Great Gatsby*, and provide reasoning and evidence to strongly support their claims.
- In many classrooms students were provided the opportunities to engage in peer to peer discussions. Teachers provided graphic organizers and assigned roles to students to encourage active participation and high level discussions. In a 9th grade ICT science class, students were provided graphic organizers and paired with their classmates to analyze text and discuss their positions with well-rounded reasons and evidence from a genetic unit in Living Environment. In a 9th grade math class, students were provided leveled math sheets and assigned partnered to work to discuss solving systems of linear equations.
- Across classrooms, lessons were aligned to the school's instructional focus, improving questioning and increasing student engagement, and reflected an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson Framework for teachers. During the visit, it was noted that classroom lessons included a wide range of questioning strategies from the Degree of Knowledge wheel to promote active student engagement. This was most evident across the ELA classes where students were required to respond to the different levels of questioning from multiple literature resources.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula emphasize rigorous tasks and are consistently revised and modified to address the diversity of learners.

Impact

Across classrooms, all students are engaged in rigorous tasks and are pushed towards college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- Samples of reviewed curriculum unit plans across the different content areas provided evidence of alignment to the Common Core Standards and emphasis on rigorous tasks. For example, a 9th grade Living Environment unit plan required that students cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of science and technical texts. An ELA unit plan required students to analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature.
- A review of a 12th grade ELA lesson plan showed that students were instructed to determine two or more themes or central ideas using complex text. In a reviewed 9th grade lesson plan, students were instructed to produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, pushing students to develop rigorous habits towards tasks.
- The school leader provided samples of units in writing and math that show modifications made to address the learning needs for students with disabilities. Reviewing a 10th grade writing unit, clear written modifications were made to support students with disabilities by incorporating graphic organizers and essay templates. A reviewed math unit plan required more discussion questions and independent assessments planned with additional scaffolding to ensure entry access and supports for students with disabilities.
- School leaders and teachers' teams expressed that content unit plans/maps are revised yearly to reflect students' work and data. A reviewed math unit shows yearly written reflections and revisions made by teachers and administrators from 2013 to the current school year.
- Reviewing a 9th grade math lesson plan and a 10th grade global lesson plans, it was noted that both lessons were modified to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Both lesson plans outlined the use of graphic organizers and visual aides to provide access and supports during the lessons for students with disabilities. The school also provides Advance Placement (AP) classes for high performing students in English, World History and US Government and Politics. These courses are offered through Lehman and Mercy College.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms teachers use or create assessments, rubrics and grading policies aligned to the schools' curricula and rigorously analyze the resulting data to identify gaps in learning, targeting prescriptive instructional strategies to address the needs of all learners. Teachers use varied checks for understanding and student self-assessment practices.

Impact

The school's use of common assessments, data analysis, and feedback allows teachers to make meaningful instructional adjustments and revisions to improve student learning outcomes.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teachers consistently checked for understanding during lessons. It was noted that teachers used conferring, and different levels of questioning to assess students' understanding during the lessons. For example, in a 9th grade Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, the classroom teachers and the assistant conferred with small groups of students during the lessons to assess their understandings. While across the ELA classes, students were required to respond to various levels of questioning related to assigned texts. For example, students were asked after reading text, "Why does Daisy choose Tom over Gatsby and what does that tell you about her?"
- Across math classrooms, students were assigned to groups for peer assessment and reflections. During the classroom visits, students were instructed to assess each other's mathematic answers and provide feedback. For example, 12th grade math students were provided eight mathematic expressions and asked to solve them and then explain to the group their answers. The group was assigned roles and protocols as they provided feedback and suggestions to their peers within the group.
- During the students' meeting, students expressed that the school provides them with the grading policies across the grades. In addition, students shared that they were given content specific rubrics to provide them with academic guidance and feedback from teachers.
- The school has a grading policy that detailed a standard based grading rubric for all content areas. During the visit, it was noted the use of rubrics accompanied by actionable feedback and clear next steps from teachers to students was evident in hallways and across classrooms. While reviewing students' work samples, there was evidence of clear actionable feedback from teachers referenced to content specific rubrics.
- Teachers participate in weekly and monthly discussions on summative assessments that are administered across all content areas that are aligned to Common Core and reflect the modifications and updates released by Engage NY. Teachers use this information and the Exam Item Analysis Reports to properly monitor and assess students' academic progress. This information is then presented to students on the form of student reflective guide and in-class review of the data. In addition, curriculum adjustments are made directly in each unit plan at the conclusion of the summative assessment given by the content team.

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

The great majority of teachers engage in structured professional collaborations during which pedagogical practices, student work, and common assessments are reviewed and analyzed. Distributed leadership is embedded across the school.

Impact

The work of shared leadership and teacher teams has strengthened teacher collaboration resulting in strengthened teacher capacity and improvement to student learning outcomes.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders provide teachers the opportunity to meet on grade at least twice per month. Grade team meetings are usually spearheaded by the school's guidance counselor in an effort to get to know students socially and developmentally. Before the grade team meets, the guidance counselor sends out an email to all classroom teachers with the names of 10-15 students that will be discussed during the meeting. In turn, teachers can email the guidance counselor names of students who were not on the list, but who they wish to be included on the list. During the grade meeting, members discuss the behavior plan for improving student behaviors.
- School leaders have incorporated content teams in their cabinet meetings, providing teachers the opportunities to engage in dialogue on the learning needs of students. Content teams meet regularly and use inquiry based protocols to review curriculum, lesson plans, content data, and content requirements as they relate to the Regents Exams.
- During the visit, a teacher team met to discuss students' work samples from a social studies class. A social studies teacher presented the team with his students' written results based on a social studies assessment that was administered in class. The team used an inquiry approach as they carefully looked and reviewed several students' written responses. Teachers looked for patterns and trends as they analyzed the students' work and provided the social studies teacher with next steps to ensure that he models this practice with his students and uses the data results to inform grouping.
- School leaders use teacher leaders across the school. Teacher leaders work closely with teachers and school leaders on instructional and curriculum matters. Teacher leaders work with school leaders to develop and lead the many different professional learning opportunities available to staff. Teacher leaders are invited to the principal cabinet meetings and encouraged to be part of key decisions at the school level. For example, as a result of these meetings and discussions teachers have a voice in the creating of the school's PD plan as well as developing the instructional goals for the year. During the teacher team meeting, it was shared that teachers are encouraged by administration to consult with teacher leaders about curriculum adjustments and professional learning opportunities.