



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Millennium Art Academy High School

08X312

**1980 Lafayette Avenue
Bronx, NY
NY 10473**

Principal: Herman Guy

**Date of review: December 5, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Amanda Lurie**

The School Context

Millennium Arts is a high school with 496 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 30% Black, 66% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 27% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 86%.

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	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings: The school establishes a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families and provides supports to achieve those expectations.

Impact: Consistent, high level communication to staff, students and parents has created a culture of high expectations that promotes a positive school tone, college access for all students, mutual trust and shared leadership.

Supporting Evidence

- From grades 9-12, the school has created a college outreach process that includes parent workshops, college trips, assemblies, classroom visits, newsletters, interest inventories and college partnerships. The school has “Open Access Thursdays”, where parents are invited to come in, meet with the college counselor throughout the day, do research on the computers, and receive help in completing applications for colleges and financial aid.
- The school has a College Now partnership with Hunter College that allows students to take college classes on the Hunter College Campus.
- The school offers several Advanced Placement classes, such as Calculus and English Literature. Students have access to additional Advanced Placement classes on the Stevenson Campus, and at the other campus high schools, as a result of a partnership created by several of the principals on the campus.
- Parents reported that the school is in constant communication regarding their child’s progress. Parents are given access, as well as training on how to use SKEDULA and Pupil Path, to view their child’s classwork and grades in real time. Additionally, parents reported that the school calls home on the first and subsequent day of any absence.
- The “Are you Green” initiative keeps parents and students aware of graduation requirements, with an easy-to-understand color-coded tracking system, that is updated after each semester. Students and parents are invited to a meeting after each semester to go over graduation requirements and discuss their child’s individual progress with the guidance counselor.
- The school has a comprehensive and thriving arts program that is integrated throughout the school. In most classrooms visited, the arts were part of the curriculum and the lessons observed.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings: Across classrooms, teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula, and uneven levels of engagement.

Impact: Teacher pedagogy is inconsistently aligned to the instructional shifts and the Danielson Framework for Teaching. As a result, there are uneven levels of engagement, inconsistent levels of challenging tasks, and inconsistent student work products.

Supporting Evidence

- In both advanced placement classes, there were high levels of engagement, consistent level three and four Depth of Knowledge questions asked, student led discussions, and student to student interactions. However, in many of the other classrooms visited, teachers consistently asked level one and two Depth of Knowledge questions, had students copying definitions from the board or from PowerPoints, and did not encourage student to student interactions. For example, in a science class, students were filling in a chart on the density and hardness of rocks, using the MOH's scale. There were no questions, however, that pushed student thinking beyond their basic observations of the rocks. Students were not asked to come up with questions or "wondering", form a hypothesis, or draw any conclusions. When I asked individual students, "why is this important?", and "why would you need to know this information?", they could not explain why this exercise would be important, or how it would be applicable in the real world.
- There was inconsistent evidence of purposeful grouping or multiple entry points. This led to uneven levels of engagement in Integrated Co-teaching classes. For example, in a science class, students with disabilities were sitting at the back of room, together with the ICT teacher, going over the assignment. The students could not work, either as a group, or individually, without continual support from the ICT teacher. While other students were interacting to complete the assignment, most of the ICT students sat silently, until the teacher could come and assist. Similarly, in an ICT math class, we saw students working in groups. The students indicated that they sit in the same groups every Friday, with the same partners. While some groups were fully engaged, and were able to work together, other groups had students working alone and silently. Several students in the group were off task. Neither the assignment, nor the materials had any evidence of scaffolds, tiered problems, choice, or manipulatives that would support struggling learners.
- Based on student note books, writing folders and lab folders, several of the content classes, such as science and social studies, appear to be framed around a heavy volume of note taking, work sheets with fill-in-the-blank responses, or other materials that require basic recall, memorizations, and little depth of knowledge or critical thinking.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Developing
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Findings: The school is inconsistently using engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula in all subjects that are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards.

Impact: While the school consistently delivers appropriate and well-paced content across subject areas, the rigor and quality of the embedded tasks is inconsistent, leading to uneven levels of student engagement and uneven levels of student work product.

- While most lessons are appropriately paced, and high school level content is covered in most classes, the writing tasks that are embedded within unit and lesson plans are inconsistently aligned to Common Core writing standards. Writing assignments, in many instances do not push college level skills, such as defending an argument, or using claim and counter-claim. Instead, most writing tasks are framed around a writing prompt that elicits a one paragraph. For example, in one social studies class, the writing folders contained mostly samples of student writing that were framed around short paragraphs from primary source documents. Students were asked several brief questions that had them pull text-based evidence from the documents. Students were not pushed to the next level, where they would use the evidence to frame an argument around a bigger idea or concept.
- Teachers are using scaffolds to make challenging text and materials more accessible to students. In many cases, however, they are not moving students to the next level, by using those scaffolds to engage in high level tasks or discussions. In an English class, we saw students reading the book "Night". The teacher used a graphic organizer that helped students to pull evidence out of the text, working in groups. The students then used that evidence to answer short, one or two sentence writing prompts. The students were not pushed, however, to engage in any type of extended discussion. Additionally, when reviewing the student writing folders, there were several similar type graphic organizers used for different passages in the book and in other pieces of literature that have been covered throughout the year. There was no evidence, however, that these graphic organizers are used to set up a Socratic seminar, a debate, or other opportunities for students to make connections to bigger ideas. There was also little evidence that the teachers are gradually removing the scaffolds as the year progresses, to foster more independence and productive struggle.
- While all unit and lesson plans contained multiple entry points and strategies for struggling students, there was little evidence of tiered problems, challenge problems, extra credit or other extensions for more advanced learners.

Findings: Assessments are loosely aligned to curricula. Common assessments, rubrics and daily checks for understanding are inconsistently used to analyze information on student learning outcomes and adjust instructional decisions.

Impact: The school has not fully developed its use of common assessments, common rubrics or daily checks for understanding. As a result, instructional decisions are not consistently data-driven, and targeted to learning outcomes.

Supporting Evidence

- While the school has a common grading policy, the school does not use common assessments. Teachers view assessment data and student work in teacher teams but, they have not created a common framework, a common set of expectations, common tasks or benchmarks across grades and subject areas in their use of formative and summative assessments. Assessments viewed in student folders and in classrooms were inconsistently aligned to the New York State Regents Exams, and Common Core Learning standards.
- Across every classroom, there was consistent use of exit slips. The use of medial checks for understanding, however, did not happen with the same level of consistency. Where we did see medial (and other informal) checks, it was often in the form of a “thumbs up/thumbs down”, or a quick assessment of who in the class got the answer wrong, but it was not followed up with a way for the teacher to assess where the student may have gotten stuck, or why they struggled.
- There was little evidence of common rubrics across grades or subject areas. While many teachers have created their own rubrics, the quality of those rubrics was inconsistent. For example, in an English classroom, we saw a rubric displayed with student work that focused on the quality of evidence, and the ability of students to synthesize ideas in a comparative writing piece. In a social studies class, however, a writing project was graded with a checklist that focused on the mechanics of writing, rather than the quality and rigor associated with the task.
- In the meeting with students, most spoke highly of their teachers. When we looked at the work that they selected to bring to the meeting, few students could explain why they received the grade that they did. Most selected their work, based on a high grade, rather than the effort required to complete the piece. Few students were able to articulate the skills that they are assessed on, what quality writing should look like in their subjects, and what supports they need to be successful. Few described any type of self or peer editing process, and instead, see their teachers as the “gatekeepers” of their work. While some pieces of work contained rubrics, or post-its with teacher feedback, other pieces simply had a letter or number grade, and a brief comment.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings: Teachers engage in structured professional collaborations on teams, using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning.

Impact: As a result of a distributive leadership model, shared decision making, and purposeful allocations of time and resources, the majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry and professional collaborations that support student outcomes and strengthen the instructional capacity of teachers.

Supporting Evidence

- In the Special Education teacher team meeting, teachers consistently view authentic student work and assessment data to refine and modify materials, look for trends, share successful strategies and interventions, and provide warm and cool feedback on shared materials and resources. Artifacts collected, supported their verbal feedback, and included agendas, meeting minutes, protocols, and “next steps”.
- Teacher team time, across grades, is used for common planning for ICT teams. Most co-teaching teams have at least three periods a week where they can co-write lesson plans and make modifications to materials. The school supports this work with a google docs platform that allows ICT teams to archive lesson plans and materials, to be shared and revised.
- In both teacher team meetings, teachers continually referenced opportunities to lead professional development, attend opportunities for professional learning, or were invited to sit on committees where school-based decisions were made. Teachers also reported that they feel supported and are encouraged by the administration to engage in opportunities to enhance their leadership and professional skills in pursuit of opportunities outside of the classroom, such as school leadership programs, coaching workshops, and teacher leader programs.