



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

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

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2014-2015**

**Providing Urban Learners Success In  
Education High School**

**High School X319**

**560 East 179<sup>th</sup> Street  
Bronx  
NY 10457**

**Principal: Dr. Carol Wiggins**

**Date of review: May 14, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Renee Peart-Zachary**

## The School Context

Providing Urban Learners Success in Education is a transfer high school with 230 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 25% Black, 58% Hispanic, and 17% American Indian students. The student body includes 8% English language learners and 4% 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 80.6%.

## 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>Proficient</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>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

The principal communicates high expectations, provides professional development aligned to the expectations, and has a system of accountability for those high expectations. The school staff communicates high expectations to parents that are connected to a path to college and career readiness and provides guidance supports to all scholars.

### Impact

Staff is aware of school-wide instructional expectations. Families comprehend student progress toward those expectations, and learners are prepared for the next level.

### Supporting Evidence

- Upon entry to the school, students are interviewed and given an assessment to determine strengths and areas of focus. Students meet with the guidance counselor and the principal to review prior academic grades, future academic expectations, and academic action plans. Students receive a diploma requirement sheet that identifies items discussed at the student meeting. The guidance counselor tracks student progress through ongoing meetings with the students and documents expectations on the diploma requirement worksheet.
- The dean, attendance coordinator, and teachers communicate behavioral and instructional expectations to students at venues such as the New Student Orientation meetings. The dean monitors students' academic and behavioral plan through observations, conversations with teachers, and student meetings.
- The school has a partnership with Fedcap, which offers student services to prepare them for the next level such as resume writing, college preparation, college application support, post-secondary plan for seniors, Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) Prep classes, and job placement. The school has a partnership with the Bronx Community College that provides pre-college and career counseling to students. Furthermore, the school has a partnership with New York City Young Men's Initiative, which provides support to the male students to help them prepare for their next step in life.
- Parents receive information on their child's academic progress through progress reports that go home every five weeks. Parents have access to Engrade and Pupilpath, an online grading system. The school has an open door policy where parents can visit the school at any time to check on the progress of their child. During the parent interview, parents reported that they are very pleased with the support from the school. One parent said, "This school is a family and they keep me informed about everything." A second parent said, "I would recommend this school to anyone."
- The principal communicates her instructional expectations to teachers through professional learning sessions on topics such as parent engagement, classroom environment, instructional shifts, and Common Core Learning Standards. Teachers are held accountable for the instructional expectations through informal and formal observations where they receive written reports that include next steps.

## Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

### Findings

Across classrooms, teacher practices reflect a coherent set of beliefs and teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points. Discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

### Impact

High quality supports and extensions into the curricula so that all learners, including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs), are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate critical-thinking skills are evolving school-wide. Although, shared pedagogical practices are beginning to inform discussions at team levels, lessons inconsistently provide opportunities for high levels of student ownership in discussions.

### Supporting Evidence

- The principal reported that they believe students learn best when they make connections to their lives and multiple opportunities to practice new learning in a structured classroom. The principal also reported that they believe in using data to inform small group instruction. Although, small group instruction based on assessment data and lessons included making a connection to students were observed across classrooms visited, it is not embedded in discussions at teacher team meetings as evidenced by review of teacher team agendas and discussions at the teacher team interview.
- Across classrooms visited, teachers used the workshop model in their lessons and supports for diverse learners. However, high-quality supports varied across classrooms. For example, in a Global Studies class, the teacher included high quality supports such as purposeful grouping, I-Pads, and Smart boards for visual aids, student modeling, teacher modeling, and differentiated handouts to support diverse learners. However, in an English class, the content teacher and ELL teacher provided minimal supports for diverse learners. The teachers only included teacher modeling in the lesson observed.
- Across classrooms visited, students engaged in high-level discussions; however, some teachers provided opportunities for discussions that incorporated student ownership. For example, in a Global Studies Prep class, the students worked in groups to create Regent questions. The students used various resources to create these questions and were observed reading and sharing content to create questions. Without minimal directive from the teacher, the students took ownership of their discussions and created high-level questions. However, in an Algebra class, the students worked in small groups to explore graphing quadratic functions. While they were in purposeful grouping and student discussion, it was not based on high levels of student thinking and ownership.

## Additional Findings

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

The principal and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards, integrate the instructional shifts, emphasize rigorous habits, and are planned and refined using student work products and assessment data.

### Impact

The principal and faculty curricular decisions promote college and career readiness, push learners to deepen their higher-order skills and allow all scholars, including ELLs and SWDs students with disabilities access to tasks that are cognitively engaging.

### Supporting Evidence

- At the beginning of the school year, the principal hired a literacy consultant to work with teachers on ensuring curricula be aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and included the instructional shifts. Although the school focuses on argumentation, a review of unit plans revealed that most unit plans include various instructional shifts such as text-based answers, academic vocabulary, and writing from sources.
- To ensure tasks promote rigorous habits, teachers use Norman Webb's Depth of Knowledge to evaluate the tasks so that learners enhance their critical-thinking skills. A review of tasks revealed that across subject areas, tasks deepen higher-order skills for all students including ELLs and SWDs. For example, in a Global Studies task, students were asked to use information from a document and prior knowledge to analyze the impact of Feudalism on medieval life. In this task, these two groups of students were given various supports such as chunking text from the document. In an English task, students were asked to complete a literary analysis essay on Brighton Beach memoirs. Diverse learners were given graphic organizers to organize their thought before writing the essay.
- Teachers refine units and lesson plans based on ongoing review of student work and assessment results. For example, the math and science teachers reviewed benchmark and end-of-the-cycle assessments, as well as student work products and realized that they needed to adjust lessons to include re-teaching graphing. The English language arts teachers reviewed student essays and realized that students needed additional support with supporting their claims. Therefore, the teachers included the Statement, Evidence, Explanation (SEE) Method in their lesson plans. The SEE Method is now used across content areas.

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

The teachers use assessments and rubrics and there is a school-wide grading policy. Across classrooms, teachers' assessment practices consistently include the use of ongoing checks for understanding and opportunities for scholars to self-assess their work products.

### **Impact**

Teachers' assessment practices result in students receiving actionable feedback and adjustments made in lessons to meet all students' learning needs.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- The principal reported that teachers check for understanding using various methods such as turn and talk, student reflection sheets, teacher questions, teacher observation, exit tickets, pop quizzes, think-write-pair-share, and end-of-cycle surveys. Across classrooms visited, teachers included checks for understanding in their lessons. For example, an Algebra class, the students worked independently, with a partner, and with teacher support. The teacher conferenced with selected students and provided immediate feedback on the linear equation activity. The teacher asked comprehension questions and adjusted the lesson based on students' responses. Then, the students completed an exit ticket.
- Teachers give students various assessments such as teacher-created assessments, mock Regents exams, and end-of the-cycle exams, and provide students with actionable feedback. For example, in a Global Studies class, the teacher feedback said, "Next step, more details on culture would have boosted your score." In an English class, the teacher feedback said, "Please review the SEE Rubric, I like your details in the first part of your argumentative essay, but your ending needs better sentence structure and more content."
- The principal reported that students self-assess their work products by using rubrics as well as receiving feedback from peer editing. Furthermore, students confirmed in the student interview that they receive feedback from their peers in different subject areas. In classes visited, evidence of students providing feedback to their peers was posted on student work products that were displayed on classroom bulletin boards. For example, in a Global Studies class, students' document-based essays were displayed with peer feedback. One student's feedback said, "Your writing addressed the task that was given, and you used one document, and some outside information. " A second student's feedback said, "Next time watch your spelling and details."

<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 engage in professional collaborations where they review student work, and discuss Common Core Learning Standards. Distributed teacher leadership structures are in place so that teachers have opportunities to build leadership capacity.

**Impact**

Teacher teaming results in strengthening teachers’ instructional capacity, as well as opportunities to share best practices. Teacher leaders have input in instructional key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The principal reported that the school has a culture where decisions are made collaboratively. During the teacher team interview, teachers confirmed that the teachers work with the principal to make instructional decisions. Additionally, teacher leaders meet throughout the week informally and formally to engage in meetings that focus on topics such as, curricula expectations, writing across disciplines, and other school initiatives.
- Every Friday, teacher teams have formal meetings to review student work. For example, during an observed English/Social Studies department meeting, teachers used a Looking at Student Thinking and Surfacing the Gaps Protocol to examine student work. Teachers recorded low inference data on a graphic organizer and discussed what the student work revealed about the students skills, knowledge, and thinking. Teachers also discussed how students organized their thoughts and supported their claims. Teachers discussed next steps to incorporate in forthcoming lessons. Teachers discussed how to include a storyboard, as well as various graphic organizers in their lessons.
- Teachers reported that they have many opportunities for leadership roles in the school and input in instructional decisions. For example, the SEE method widely used was brought by a teacher. One teacher leader said, “We have lots of input in decisions but if we have an idea, we must explain to the principal how our idea benefits the students.” A second teacher leader said, “I am allowed to try out new things, make mistakes, problem solve, and continue to work with adult learners on topics that affect our kids.”