



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Pelham Lab

08X320

**3000 E. Tremont Avenue
Bronx, New York
NY10461**

Principal: Jason Wagner

**Date of review: November 24, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Amanda Lurie**

The School Context

Pelham Lab is a high school with 229 students from grade 9 through grade 10. The school population comprises 31% Black, 53% Hispanic, 8% White, and 6% Asian students. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 30% special education students. Boys account for 61% of the students enrolled and girls account for 39%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 90%.

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	Proficient
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	Additional Findings	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	Celebration	Proficient

Area of Celebration

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

Teachers in the school are engaged in structured professional collaborations in teams, using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved school learning.

Impact:

As a result of the work that is happening in teacher teams, the school has structures that support distributive leadership and give teachers, as well as all stakeholders, voice and shared decision-making. Vertical teacher team work has contributed to a rigorous, Common Core aligned curricula.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams engage in a continuous cycle of feedback, using the Atlas Protocol, to review and revise curriculum maps and unit plans. This process has resulted in rigorous tasks, embedded into unit and lesson plans that are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards, and reflect the instructional shifts.
- Teacher voice is an integral part of the decision making of this school. Teachers continually expressed feeling valued, and gave examples of key decisions that they helped institute, such as changes to the school schedule, changes to the structure of the teacher team meetings, and input on curricula purchases, advisory curricula and technology.
- All teachers participate in inter-visitation, using a protocol, to give warm and cool feedback to colleagues. During the review, teachers reported that these visits resulted in improved teacher practice, improved delivery of instruction, and better calibration around the components of the Danielson Framework.
- Weekly common planning time is embedded into the schedule so that Integrated Co-teaching, and General Education teachers can co-plan, make changes to lesson and unit plans to support all learners, and review materials that may need to be modified for English language learners or students with disabilities.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings:

Across classrooms, teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula, which leads to uneven levels of engagement.

Impact:

Teacher practice that pushes student thinking, engages students with high level questioning, and encourages student-to-student discussions, was viewed inconsistently across classrooms. As a result, not all students were able to complete challenging tasks or demonstrate higher-order thinking through writing and discussion.

Supporting Evidence

- In a science class, we saw high-level student discussion and rubrics that promoted independence, self and peer editing, and a discussion protocol that pushed student thinking and questioning. In an English class, however, while we saw students working in groups to write a story about an event in their lives, students were not able to work independently. Many students were unclear on the directions, while others were disengaged and not on task. Students did not understand how this activity connected to the work that was happening in the class. In a social studies class, the students were engaged in direct, teacher-led instruction. The questions asked by the teacher were mostly recall and lower level Depth of Knowledge questions. Students were not encouraged to expand upon their answers, question one another, or engage in student-to student discussion.
- While we consistently saw group work that was aligned to rigorous tasks, students had difficulty working together. Students often waited for a teacher to come to the table to explain directions, or help complete a task. In many instances, when the teacher left, students reverted to working alone, or disengaged from the activity. In an ICT math class, students were grouped, and were given problems of varying complexity. With the exception of one table, students could not work without a teacher providing steps for solving the equation. Students were not encouraged to think independently, work together to figure out a solution, or discuss how they arrived at an answer. Similarly in a social studies class, students were grouped and given a graphic organizer framed around questions and a primary source text. While one table of students seemed to work to complete the task together, several other students, at different tables, worked silently and did not engage with their peers, until a teacher came to explain and assist. In many cases, when the teacher left the table, students stopped working as a group and went back to working silently and individually.
- Lesson plans and classroom instruction, in many cases, reflected multiple entry points and attempts to engage students with disabilities and English language learners. There was, however, inconsistent evidence of attempts to engage higher-level learners. The use of extensions, and opportunities to “differentiate up” were not consistently seen across classrooms, or within lesson plans.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
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Findings:

Across classrooms, teachers inconsistently use assessments and rubrics that are aligned to the curriculum.

Impact:

While the school engages in inquiry cycles around assessment data, inconsistent expectations around common assessments and rubrics have resulted in uneven levels of rigor in student work product, and ambiguous benchmarks for student learning across subjects and grades.

Supporting Evidence

- While the school has created common grading policy and criteria, they have not yet created common assessments. Although there is only a ninth and tenth grade, teachers reported that there is not a process in place to review assessments across departments or grades that measure common skills, create benchmarks from grade to grade, or evaluate student progress across classrooms.
- While the use of rubrics was seen across classrooms, many of the rubrics only addressed the mechanics of writing or projects. For example, in a social studies class, student work displayed had an accompanying rubric. The rubric, however, only addressed technical aspects, such as the number of grammatical errors, the length of the assignment and whether handwriting was legible. Similarly, many of the rubrics seen in classrooms and in student notebooks did not push higher-order thinking, or address the quality of evidence.
- In the meeting time with the students, all seven students were asked to bring two samples of their best work. In almost every case, the work selected reflected a task, was that was common core aligned and high school appropriate. However, when asked how a grade was arrived at, or why they thought they received the grade that they did, most students could not explain their grade. While some of the assignments were aligned to rubrics that accompanied the work, others simply had a number grade, and/or a brief comment. When asked about their editing process, most students articulated a process that was teacher directed, rather than a mix of self or peer editing, combined with teacher edits. Additionally, several students felt that their grade was determined by the quantity of what they wrote, rather than the quality.

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings:

Engaging, coherent and rigorous curricula, that is aligned to Common Core learning and content standards is consistent across subjects and grades.

Impact:

The school's curricular decisions promote college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Unit plans in all subject areas are revised as part of a continuous cycle within teacher teams. Units consistently reflected a backward design model, and were embedded with rigorous tasks. All units were aligned to Common Core content and writing standards. For example, English Units reflected reading choices that were aligned with the grade level recommendations from Engage NY. The units contained writing tasks that asked students to infer, cite evidence and frame arguments. Materials such as graphic organizers and rubrics were also included in the units.
- Complex texts, primary source documents, and articles from trade and professional journals are used by teachers as a source of materials for students. Students are encouraged, with the support of various scaffolds, such as close reading, annotation, and graphic organizers, to use these materials to inform their thinking, cite evidence, devise questions, and frame arguments.
- All lesson plans, and most classes reflected multiple entry points, such as tiered math problems, student choice in text materials, purposeful grouping and an outline of academic vocabulary.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings:

High expectations are consistently messaged to students, parents and staff through the use of staff handbooks, continuous communication, outreach to families, and community partnerships.

Impact:

An exploratory learning curriculum, robust college counseling, and the creation of partnerships within the community promote college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- An exploratory learning curriculum takes students out of the building to go on college trips, explore science through the environment, and see live performances of work that students are studying in class.
- A partnership with Einstein medical college allows Pelham Lab students to be mentored by medical interns and helps students to explore careers in medicine and other health related fields.
- The school is partnered with Hostos Community College for College Now. Students are able to take college courses on the Hostos campus.
- The principal has a meeting in the cafeteria every morning, with all students, to share information, motivate them to do well, and celebrate individual student achievement.
- Parents are provided with a weekly email that includes college information, a calendar of events that are happening at the school, and strategies to support their child. Advisors make weekly contact with parents, to update them on student progress, and to inform parents of positive behavior and progress, as well as areas where students may need additional support.