Department of Education
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Teaching and the Professions

High School X433

2780 Reservoir Avenue
Bronx
NY 10468

Principal: Roberto Hernandez

Date of review: May 20, 2015
Reviewer: Mimi Fortunato

The School Context

Teaching and the Professions is a high school with 476 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 22% Black, 74% Hispanic, 2% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 22% English language learners and 24% 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 82.0%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
To what extent does the school…	**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	**Additional Findings**	**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	**Focus**	**Developing**
School Culture		
To what extent does the school…	**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		
To what extent does the school…	**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:	Well Developed

Findings
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations, (professionalism, instruction, communication, and other elements of the Danielson Framework for Teaching), to the entire staff. School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations that are connected to a path to college and career readiness to families.

Impact
A system of communication of high expectations and a structure of training and accountability results in a culture of mutual accountability for identified expectations. A successful partnership with families supports their understanding of expectations for students, and for their children's progress towards college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- Frequent cycles of classroom observations that communicate the principal's high expectations include formal and informal observations as well as feedback to teachers that incorporates time bound next steps and identified targeted resources to support growth in practice. For example, an observation report included the following: "To support the English language learners and other students who may struggle with reading, provide multiple means of representation in the text. This may include making a large font copy, pre-high-lighting, or providing line, paragraph numbers, or guiding questions. Review the Odell unit, "Reading Closely for Textual Details" on the Engage NY website, review the examples from the professional learning session that you attended on March 23, and meet with your mentor this Thursday as you incorporate these strategies into your next lesson."

- Ongoing professional learning sessions are designed in collaboration with instructional lead teachers in response to ongoing review of data from past professional learning sessions, teacher evaluation data, and student learning outcomes. Professional learning activities include training on curricular alignment to the Common Core, student engagement, and training through the Achieve Mentoring Center for Supportive Schools program for 20 staff members who serve as mentors for students in the lowest third. All teachers are expected to develop professional goals aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching and to engage in ongoing reflection in which they cite evidence regarding their progress towards attaining their professional goals. For example, an English teacher's professional learning plan included a goal aligned to Danielson's domain 3B: Questioning and Discussion. Specifically, it stated, "To slow the pace of questioning, develop more higher-order depth of knowledge questions that elicit critical thinking from students". Additionally, there was a goal aligned to domain 3D: Using Assessment in Instruction, "to deepen alignment of assessments to the learning objectives, and increase the use of formative assessment during the lesson."

- The school was one of 45 schools in New York City awarded a Community School Grant, and parents are active members of the Community School Council. Through the implementation of this grant, the school has developed strategies to engage and partner with families and provide training and resources to support identified parent and family needs. For example, the school's community based organization, Sports and Arts Foundation, offers workshops for parents on academic expectations for student achievement in high school, the Common Core, and College and Career Readiness.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing

Findings
Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies, that are not consistently aligned with the school's curricula. Teachers' practices inconsistently reflect the use of varied checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact
Inconsistent assessment structures limit effective feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. Uneven use of checks for understanding and student self-assessment hinders effective adjustments to meet students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has created a grading policy that incorporates summative and formative assessment elements. However, the formula does not always provide a clear assessment of mastery of learning standards. For example, although the grading policy contains a percentage of 25% for classwork or student participation, it was not clear how teachers develop grades for the classwork in each lesson. Some teachers used a system for grading behaviors of students during each class, which provided limited information regarding actionable feedback to teachers and students regarding student mastery of skills, while other teachers were not observed noting a grade for classwork or participation. Across classrooms, students could not articulate how their classwork or participation grade was calculated. One student stated that she thought her grade might be 10%, as she was doing a good job, while others said that they were unsure of how they were graded or what their grade might be. A student in a social studies class was overheard asking the teacher how the participation grade was calculated, and the teacher responded, "You only have 15 minutes for this task, in that time you need to finish."

- Some teacher feedback on student work is aligned to a task specific rubric, and some teacher feedback displayed on bulletin boards provided guidance to students regarding next learning steps. For example, Algebra work displayed on a bulletin board in the hallway noted teacher feedback and next learnings steps that included "Write a well-developed interpretation of what a number represents, use language that relates to the context." However, in some instances, feedback was not fully aligned to a task rubric, and some feedback was limited to evaluative comments. For example, on Earth Science student work, there was no task specific rubric and teacher feedback consisted of comments such as "No decimal point", and "Excellent use of ESAT". Living Environment student work was marked with red X's and ✓'s, with a teacher comment of "Why?" next to an incorrect answer. An English teacher used peer assessment during class, and a Global History teacher provided students with an opportunity to self-assess through an exit slip that asked students to respond to three questions that began with the word what, including, "What information do I need clarified from the text?" Opportunities for self- or peer-assessment were not observed consistently in classes visited.

- Across classrooms, teachers were not observed consistently noting formative assessment data, and checks for understanding and adjustments were uneven. For example, an English teacher was observed conferencing with a small group of students and clarifying the task expectation that students would extend their responses beyond paraphrasing to include analysis. However, an Algebra teacher asked the class, "How we doing", and "Understand?", and did not wait for students' responses before moving on.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
School leaders ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills across grades and subject areas for all students.

Impact
The school's purposeful decisions to build curricular coherence and ensure instructional rigor promote college and career readiness for all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- The instructional team has developed curricula across all content areas that promote coherence in the grade 9 through 12 continuum. Curricula overviews, course syllabi, unit and lesson plans have been developed using materials from Engage New York with support from the Teacher's College and Pearson instructional coaches. Most teachers utilize the lesson planning guide in lesson plan development, and most lesson plans incorporate key lesson elements such as the unit essential question, lesson learning objective, alignment to Common Core Learning Standards, a 'Do Now', planning for checks for understanding, access for all learners, a lesson summary, and homework. Curricular materials are reviewed by school leaders, who provide targeted feedback to teachers and teams in the ongoing revision and adjustment of unit and lesson plans based on classroom observation and student work analysis.

- The principal has established a key instructional goal of developing student skill in supporting arguments through reading, writing, and discussion, across all content areas in order to develop the communication and collaboration skills for college and career readiness. Across most classes, lesson plans reviewed provided evidence of alignment to this instructional focus. For example, a Global History lesson plan learning objective stated that "Students will be able to work collaboratively in small groups to identify and explain important details that could be used to support a claim about the extent to which the Ancient American civilizations were advanced, and provide citation and origins of the source in a claim along with evidence to show understanding of the text". A Living Environment lesson plan learning objective stated that "Students will be able to collaboratively develop possible solutions to explain the hormones and their function in the menstrual cycle, citing textual evidence to support their claim."

- Teachers work collaboratively to promote a high level of rigor across classes to ensure that higher-order skills are emphasized for all learners, including the school's population of English language learners and students with disabilities. For example, an integrated co-teaching Algebra class lesson plan included an opportunity for students to respond to a scaffolded set of math problems in which they were expected to use the structure of an expression to identify ways to rewrite it by factoring expressions completely. In this lesson plan, the class teachers created three learning stations based on the different factoring skills that the class had studied, including factoring trinomials, factoring the difference of two perfect squares, and factoring completely. The lesson plan indicated that students would be assigned numbers from one to four determined by skill level, and would complete tiered problems at each station that corresponded with their group number.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing

Findings
Across classrooms, teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula, and do not consistently fully engage students in opportunities to demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in discussions or work products.

Impact
Inconsistent teaching strategies lead to uneven demonstration of higher-order thinking skills in class discussions and student work products, including the work of English language learners and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- Lessons across the majority of classes did not consistently provide evidence of the use of scaffolds and multiple entry points to engage all learners. Although most lesson plans noted strategies such as grouping students, the strategies noted in lesson plans were not consistently specific to individual students or observed in lessons. For example, in a science class, the lesson plan stated there would be interactive presentation for kinesthetic learners and visual modalities for students with disabilities and visual learners. However, targeted supports for individual learners in the class were not observed. In other classes observed, students were paired or grouped during independent or group practice. However, students were not consistently able to articulate the rationale for the seating, and in some classes, all students were assigned an identical Do Now, task, exit slip, and homework.

- The school has identified promoting the use of high level questioning as an instructional focus, and some teachers' lesson plans noted Depth of Knowledge (DOK) questions that would be posed by the teacher to the class. However, teachers' use of questioning and discussion techniques varied across classrooms. For example, in an Advanced Placement United States History class lesson on the extent to which acquisition of atomic weaponry caused or affected the Cold War, the teacher posed high level multi-layered questions such as, "Once the power of the bomb was confirmed, what would you have advised President Truman to do at Potsdam?", and "To what extent do President Truman's diaries show a different attitude towards Russia?" As the students engaged in small group discussion, the teacher targeted high-level responses that would be shared out to the class. However, in a Living Environment class lesson on the stages of the human menstrual cycle, teacher posed recall-level questions to the class, such as, "What are the stages of the human menstrual cycle?", and the bell rang before the teacher had an opportunity to engage the students in a summary of the lesson.

- 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 student centered-tasks and rich discussion. Although there were opportunities for peer-to-peer discussion in some classes, students were not consistently engaged in generating their own questions or building on one another's responses, and whole group discussions were generally teacher dominated as teachers asked questions of individual students. For example, in a grade 12 English class, students were engaged in partner talk as they assessed their peer's responses to argumentative essay paragraphs. 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.

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

Findings
The majority of teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations on course and grade level inquiry teams. Teacher teams consistently analyze data and student work for students they share. Lead teachers facilitate inquiry teams, and teachers assume a leadership role in presenting professional development workshops for colleagues.

Impact
Professional collaborations strengthen the instructional capacity of teachers and result in progress toward goals for groups of students. Distributed leadership structures ensure that teachers have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams utilize a Looking at Student Work (LASW) protocol for analyzing student work and academic tasks. The Algebra math inquiry team was observed discussing a math task, assessing the task using a protocol, and determining next steps in unit and lesson planning to address identified learning needs. Members of this team were able to clearly articulate the goal of alignment of their work with the promotion of the school's instructional foci that includes an integration of the math instructional shifts of pursuing conceptual understanding, procedural skills and fluency, and application with equal intensity.

- Teacher team agendas and minutes indicate that most teachers engage in an inquiry approach in which they collaboratively analyze curricula, and the analysis of the data informs next instructional steps, strengthening the instructional capacity of teachers. School leaders and teachers shared that the focus on teacher team collaboration and professional learning has begun to strengthen teachers' instructional capacity, and ADVANCE data demonstrates some increases in teacher ratings in the Danielson Framework for Teaching components. For example, teacher ratings increased 12.8% in component 1E: Designing Coherent Instruction, 16.7% in Component 3B: Questioning and Discussion and 9.7% in Component 3D: Using Assessment in Instruction.

- Teacher leaders facilitate content and grade level meetings, and teachers assume a leadership role in supporting colleagues. Teachers shared that that they have opportunities to provide feedback to the principal on professional development planning, and teachers assume responsibility for facilitating workshops aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching for colleagues during weekly professional learning sessions. For example, during the Monday professional learning time, teachers facilitated professional learning sessions on using assessment in instruction, questioning and discussion techniques, and deepening student engagement. Teachers stated that they have a voice in key instructional decisions. After an analysis of the first Measures of Student Learning (MOSL), teachers determined that students needed additional time on task in research. Teachers developed a research course for all grade 9 and 10 students, adjusted student schedules, and initiated the implementation of the research courses to support students in building skill towards mastery of Common Core Learning Standards and the college and career readiness skills of conducting research. English language arts MOSL data indicates an average of a 13% increase in grade 9 and 10 students' scores in reading text dependent questions, 12.5% increase in command of evidence, and 23.5% increase in organization and coherence.