



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

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# **Quality Review Report 2014-2015**

**Soundview Academy for Culture and Scholarship**

**Middle School X448**

**885 Bolton Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10473**

**Principal: William Frackelton**

**Date of review: May 14, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Renardo Wright**

## The School Context

Soundview Academy for Culture and Scholarship is a middle school with 356 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 32% Black, 64% Hispanic, 1% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 27 % 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 89.0%.

## 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>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</b>

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to staff and students and successfully partner with families to support student progress toward those expectations.

### Impact

The supportive learning environment where school leaders share and communicate high expectations results in a culture of mutual accountability and leads to a pathway for college and career readiness for all students.

### Supporting Evidence

- At the beginning of the school year, school leaders provide a professional handbook for teachers that outlines clear expectations and professional duties. The staff handbook also includes guidelines for professional integrity, expectations of common planning, promotional policies, academic expectations, and components of the Respect for All program for the entire school community.
- School leaders have incorporated a professional growth timeline to provide ongoing professional learning opportunities for teachers. These weekly professional learning workshops include training and information to meet the professional needs of teachers based on surveys, observations, and Department of Education compliance. In addition, professional workshops based on the Danielson Framework for Teaching provide training in teacher practices for incorporation across classrooms.
- School leaders have secured Skedula, a school-wide interactive online grading system, and Jump Rope, an online student and parent portal that provides access to behavior and academic progress data. Parents shared that they can see their children's current academic status and next steps online. Students also agreed that Skedula and Jump Rope make it possible for them to see how they are progressing across all content areas as well as know their next steps. Since these online tools are interactive, teachers and parents can engage in ongoing communication related to students' strengths, challenges and clear next steps.
- During the school year, school leaders provide a series of workshops for students that help them to prepare and choose high schools across the city. In addition, school leaders provide students the opportunity to visit and tour high schools across the city. For example, students were to visit and tour the High School for Fashion Industries.
- The school provides consistent, ongoing feedback to families to understand their children's academic and social progress via phone calls, newsletters, emails, and text messages. Parents clearly expressed that school leaders and teachers provide ongoing communication with them. Parents shared that all school leaders have open door policies to discuss any school related matters.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula so that all learners are engaged in challenging tasks that lead to high levels of student thinking and participation.

### Impact

The access to the curriculum and engagement of all learners result in multiple learning opportunities that promote student work products that reflect higher order thinking skills and high-level discussions.

### Supporting Evidence

- A grade 7 humanities lesson plan was differentiated for students with three different reading levels. The plan calls for the more advanced reading group students to read three different literary texts and two poems and look at three visual images to complete their assigned task. The plan has the mid-level reading group read three literary texts and one poem and look at two visual images, and the struggling readers read one literary text, one poem and examine one image to complete the assigned task. A reviewed grade 6 lesson plan had the teacher assigning students to groups according to their cognitive levels. Struggling students would be provided one propaganda poster and the support of a paraprofessional to assist them with writing their perspectives on the images of propaganda in the United States involving the Japanese government while other students in the class would work in groups with more posters and very little or no adult support.
- Students in a dual language social studies class sat in a large circle engaged in a Socratic Seminar. Students had the opportunity to discuss modern day social issues as well as the impacts of the Patriot Act. Students used protocols and discussion prompts as they engaged in full class conversations. In a grade 7 math class, students watched a video of a familiar community. The students then worked in assigned groups using graphic organizers to discuss how they would transform a community using the provided information with their group members.
- Students in a grade 7 biology class debated the ethical issue of an African American woman diagnosed with cancer whose doctors took samples of her cells without her permission to conduct scientific experiments for the advancement of medicine. Student opinion was divided based on who believed that the doctors were right or wrong. Students holding either position were required to use text based evidence and background knowledge on human cells to support their arguments. In a grade 7 humanities class, students read multiple texts and described how the power of words and images impact the readers' understanding of slavery in America. During the lesson, the teacher directed the students to use their prior knowledge about slavery in America to complete their assigned tasks and share out with their group members.

## Additional Findings

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

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

### Impact

Across the school, all students have access to standards aligned curricula and are cognitively engaged in rigorous learning tasks where they must demonstrate their thinking, resulting in college and career readiness.

### Supporting Evidence

- Reviewed curriculum map samples across the different content areas provided evidence of alignment to the Common Core and included the instructional shifts. A grade 6 humanities curriculum map required students to read a literary text and write to the author, including evidence from the text. A grade 8 humanities curriculum map required students to read and research multiple primary and secondary sources regarding slavery in America and use several sources from informational and literary texts.
- A grade 7 social studies lesson plan included instructions for students to cite textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of their arguments. For example, students had to list and share out the impact of the Patriot Act using the assigned text to support their claims. While in a grade 7 humanities lesson plan, students were required to determine the meaning of words and phrases used in the text and to use the same text to support their meanings.
- Math and science curriculum maps included differentiation strategies to ensure access to the curricula for all learners, especially English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities. For example, a grade 8 algebra curriculum map included the provision of additional worksheets with word problems as well as the opportunity to use process charts from their notebooks to guide and support students during the lesson. A grade 8 science curriculum map included graphic organizers, Venn diagrams, and picture dictionaries with vocabulary to provide all learners access and additional supports during the lessons. Several reviewed lesson plans also included a variety of differentiation strategies to engage and support all classroom learners.
- A grade 7 humanities map required students to create a children's book with illustrations using historical details to highlight theme within slavery that speaks to the various human experiences during this time in American history. A grade 8 humanities curriculum map required students to research Mine' Okubo's life after internment and to write a narrative in which they tell the full story of how Okubo went from her resistance efforts to making herself "invisible" during internment to how she became "visible" post-internment.

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

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use common and other assessments, rubrics and grading policies that are aligned to the school's curricula. Teachers analyze student learning outcomes and adjust their instructional decisions using ongoing checks for understanding to inform instructional practices at the team and classroom levels.

### **Impact**

The school's use of common assessments, data analysis, and meaningful feedback allows school leaders and teachers to make thoughtful instructional adjustments at the classroom and teacher team levels so that all students demonstrate increased mastery and are aware of their next learning steps.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- The school's grading policy is standards based and includes a grading rubric for all subjects. The use of content rubrics accompanied by meaningful feedback from teachers to students was evident in hallways and classrooms. For example, in an English language class, a student received written feedback from the teacher on his argumentative essays. The written commendations noted the student's clear and relevant evidence to support his argument while the recommendation suggested that the writer begin to incorporate the many different vocabulary words learned in the classroom. Several students presented work samples during the student meeting that included actionable feedback from their teachers.
- Across classrooms, there were displayed grading conversion charts. The charts were leveled from 1-4. Level 4 is equivalent to 80-100%, level 3 is equivalent to 70-79%, level 2 is equivalent to 60-69% and level 1 is equivalent to 1-59%. In addition, there were math department grading policy charts posted in some classrooms that clearly outlined the grading based on class work, participation, extended learning, projects, and assessments. Students shared that because of the grading conversion, they have a better understanding of their overall grades when teachers use the content rubrics to assess their projects and writing.
- Teachers checked for understanding during observed lessons. Teachers used thumbs up, written responses, and various questioning strategies to assess students' understanding during lessons. During a grade 7 math lesson, the teacher directed students to put thumbs up if they understood the lesson and what was being asked of them. When she noticed the vast majority of students had raised their thumbs up, she moved on with the lesson. In a grade 7 humanities class, the teacher formatively assessed by instructing students to pick the strongest power words that have had the most impact on them and to write short responses to explain how these words helped deepen their understandings of slavery in America. The teacher of a grade 8 humanities class walked around to the different groups of students and asked topic related questions to assess their understanding.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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**Findings**

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

**Impact**

The impact of shared leadership and teacher teams has strengthened teacher collaboration, resulting in improvement to student learning outcomes and mastery of goals for groups of students.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School leaders have incorporated content teams that meet weekly as part of departmental and grade level planning. The content team is responsible for tracking, analyzing, and studying student data across the school. In addition, the content team members are responsible for implementing curricula revisions and adjustments as well as promoting student progress across classrooms based on the student performance data.
- School leaders use lead teachers across the school. Lead teachers work closely with teachers across grades and school leaders on various instructional and curriculum matters. Lead teachers serve a vital role, working alongside school leaders to plan and facilitate school wide professional development for the entire school community. Lead teachers also contribute toward decisions on the vast majority of instructional directives. Teachers expressed that decision making at the school level is very collaborative, as all teachers are involved in key instructional decisions. For example, teachers are involved with setting instructional and academic goals for the school year.
- Teacher teams systematically analyze key elements of teachers' work, including teacher classroom practice, assessment data, and student work samples for students that they share or on whom they focus. Grade 7 math teachers met to review and discuss the written assessments of students in their math classes. The team used an inquiry approach as they carefully analyzed and discussed the students' written math assessments. While reviewing the students' assessments, the team noticed a few patterns and trends across the class and grade and decided to make revisions and adjustments to the upcoming math unit.
- School leaders provide opportunities for weekly professional collaborations and professional learning. There are several teams across the school where teachers engage in professional dialogue to improve teaching practices and student outcomes. These teams include the lead instructional team, the inquiry team, the dual language team, and the scholar/Positive Behavior and Intervention Supports (PBIS) team. In addition, the entire teaching staff meets on Wednesdays for common planning, reflections, and creating plans of action to address current curricula. Additionally, professional learning opportunities are available to meet the individual needs of teachers to support implementation of the competencies of the Danielson Framework for Teaching.