



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

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

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2014-2015**

**Marble Hill High School for International Studies**

**High School X477**

**99 Terrace View Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10463**

**Principal: Kirsten Larson**

**Date of review: April 16, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Joan Prince**

## The School Context

The Marble Hill School for International Studies is a High School with 449 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population is comprised of 27% Black, 57% Hispanic, 5% White, and 11% Asian students. The student body includes 32% English language learners and 9% 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 94.0%.

## 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>Celebration</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>Additional Findings</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

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.1 Curriculum**

**Rating:**

**Well Developed**

### Findings

The school leader and faculty engage in a rigorous process of curriculum development aligned to the CCLS and instructional shifts and the Danielson Framework. Higher order thinking skills are consistently emphasized across grades and content areas so that all learners, including students with disabilities and English language learners demonstrate their thinking.

### Impact

The schools' curricular decisions build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all learners. Ownership of learning and academic tasks foster student thinking and engagement across grades and subjects.

### Supporting Evidence

- Lesson plans in all content areas are aligned to the CCLS and include multiple strategies for students to choose from in completing academic tasks that require higher order thinking skills, including the use of Webb's DOK chart.
- The reading and writing and content area units of study integrate tiered-academic vocabulary, fluency, multiple-step problem solving, argumentative writing and text based responses. A reading of the curriculum units in science and history revealed that the scope and sequences are aligned to match the ELA texts students are reading in the humanities class which solidifies the coherence of what is taught.
- The school has provided time for teaching teams to engage in unit/lesson planning to identify areas that require further adjustments. Teachers routinely plan and effectively refine units of study aligned to the CCLS to ensure student engagement and promote coherence across grades. Purposeful decisions are made to promote college and career readiness.
- The curricula planning and lesson plans also meet the needs of a diversity of learners and ensure that they are cognitively engaged. This was evident at teacher meetings when teachers looked at student work and examined formative and summative assessments.
- Thinking maps and rubrics, conference notes, templates and student reflection pieces along with rigorous guiding questions and culminating tasks are outlined as daily lesson objectives giving the flow of a unit coherence to Danielson, DOKs and English as a second language grammar continuum, as shown during classroom visits.

## Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

### Findings

Teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points and challenging tasks for students, The extensions that foster deep reasoning in student work products varies across the school.

### Impact

Across classrooms, curricula extensions result in students producing meaningful work products; however, there are missed opportunities for all learners to take ownership of their learning.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers in many classrooms provided small group instruction. In some classes, students participated in discussions by responding to teacher-generated questions and were not observed in many cases to have a productive struggle with in-depth analysis. However, there was evidence of higher level thinking in class groupings and/or pairings to assist in creating meaningful work products. Students used research skills and were given opportunities to cite text-based evidence as they argued and defended their positions during discussions/debates. This was evidenced in the 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> grade government class where students discussed the ranking of funding in your neighborhood. Students referred to an article titled *New York versus National Funding*. Each group discussed their priorities and shared information from previous readings on public policy.
- Questioning and discussion techniques have been a focus in the school's professional development. Teachers were asked to create at least one question that required students to use higher order thinking skills and promoted discussion with each other as opposed to a repetition of facts for every lesson plan. This was not observed in all classrooms visited even though it was included in the curriculum maps and lesson plans. Teaching strategies, such as questioning, scaffolds, and supports provided multiple entry points into many of the lessons observed. In an Algebra lesson, students in different groups received the same task of diagramming a graph and recording the process. Students referred to notes and shared and assisted each other in their group. Some students were focused on completing the task rather than building a genuine understanding of the content. The math department is moving forward from chalk & talk, and will continue to build upon allowing students to struggle through and be challenged within their groups.
- The incorporation of projects within the curricula increases student engagement and exposes students to a wide variety of instructional tools and practices. Some student work examined did reflect a variety of skills and new ways of expression that served to further understanding and academic growth. Although students were encouraged to collaborate with one another, student participation in some groups was limited to the stronger students. Additionally, academic tasks did not always afford opportunities for student choice and extensions for higher performing students.

## Additional Findings

**Quality Indicator:**

**2.2 Assessment**

**Rating:**

**Well Developed**

### Findings

The school's assessment practices are well aligned to curricula and the Common Core Learning Standards. Teachers use targeted assessments to inform instruction and make curricula decisions.

### Impact

Assessments and checks for understanding result in effective curricular adjustments. Actionable feedback to teachers and students results in improved instruction and the needs of all learners met.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers, as evidenced in unit plans and lesson plans examined and at teacher team meetings attended, create ongoing adjustments to align units of study with embedded assessments to meet the needs of all learners. In addition, teachers use systems to weekly monitor progress through data analysis and formative and summative assessments to provide meaningful feedback to students and to guide adjustment to units and lessons. Teacher teams, evidenced during a meeting, adjust curricula /lessons based on diagnostics of students and use teacher developed assessments, standardized test results and previous grades to make informed assessments and decisions about student learning outcomes.
- Teachers reported that targeted instruction across all subject areas is grounded in the application of rubrics for student work and the use of on-going checks for understanding to support the development of skills and next steps. Teacher created documents included rubrics providing actionable feedback to students, as evidenced by student work displayed and in the student meeting examination of finished work. For example, there is a strong portfolio process, and students at the student meeting brought not only finished work products but pieces from their portfolios from different subjects including business, government and Japanese. All work products had a uniform rubric with the quote "*Teachers teach you HOW to get the answer, NOT to get the answer.*" This process was evident in all work shown at the student meeting including written articles on the Supreme Court, chemical engineering and engineering/architecture projects.
- Across the majority of classrooms, there was consistent evidence that teachers were checking for understanding at various times throughout the delivery of instruction. All teachers frequently circulated around the room and provided individualized support and conferencing. Most teachers used exit slips at the end of the lesson. Other methods, including quick writes, were used to check for understanding. In the Japanese class, the teacher went over language prompts and moved letter tiles on the board. Students took turns moving tiles for both English and Japanese. There were accountability supports proved through a writing assessment at the end of the lesson.

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

### **Findings**

The school promotes a culture of high expectations for staff, students and families for their understanding of the school's expectations focusing on guidance advisement supports, as well as addressing constant communication of expectations connected to a path of college and career readiness.

### **Impact**

As a result, all constituents contribute to a culture of learning and high expectations so that all students are on a clear path to college and career readiness.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- The school has established partnerships with families to support student's progress toward college and career readiness. This is shown through well attended open houses, parents' active participation on the school leadership team, and participation in college office presentations. As a parent stated in a well-attended meeting with parents "There is a focus on independence and this school pushes you hard". Several parents stated that there is a constant flow of communication from the school, including from the teachers, the advisors and support personnel and from the school leader who knows every student, to inform them about their child's progress.
- Students expressed at our meeting that they have become informed of expectations and empowered to advocate for their academic choices to ensure that they are well prepared for graduation and their future. There exists a strong work ethic that leads students to take AP courses in their junior and senior years. Japanese classes are well attended, and trips to Japan and China are embedded into the program, along with other cultural educational exchange programs.
- The school provides a College Now Program and advisories that track students where they are and what they need to accomplish. This year the school began a partnership with the College Bound Initiative (CBI) to ensure that all students and parents have guidance and assistance throughout the college and career process. There is an on-site CBI Director who has implemented counseling on college readiness for seniors, offered information on deadlines and facilitated "The College Process" in a series of workshops. There is community service, Senior Seminars and a 'Dress for Success' code. The Scholar Program and the National Honor Society have a large number of students, as posted in the office and hallways.
- As a result of all this work there is excellent attendance and punctuality which is well above the city-wide percentage. The school performs above city-wide expectations on assessments and there is no remediation for students when they transition to college.

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

### Findings

Distributive leadership structures are embedded so that there is effective teacher leadership. Teacher teams systematically analyze key elements of teacher work including classroom practice, assessment data and student work.

### Impact

Teachers have a key role in the decision making process throughout the school, sharing leadership structures that build teacher capacity to improve student learning. Teacher teams focus on improvements in teacher practice and mastery of goals for groups of students.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers on department teams and grade level teams review data, formative and summative assessments, Regents information and requirements to make instructional decisions. On a weekly basis teachers share ideas to adjust teaching practice across grades and content areas. At the math team meeting, the review team noted that the main topic on the agenda was the examination of student work across grades with the goal of promoting higher order thinking skills. Embedded into lessons were formative assessments and thinking points along with a list of guiding questions. Teachers came to the decision that perhaps there was too much planned in the lesson, and that refining goals prior to the end of a unit would structure review as re-engagement not as re-teaching. All of this results in improved teacher practice and in student mastery of learning goals.
- The teacher team Q&A revealed that all teachers who were present felt ownership in the school plans and goals. The distributed leadership structures exist because of the decision to partner with Learning Partners. Marble Hill School was selected as the host school, which includes having model teachers from the school select agendas and lead the professional development meetings, the establishment of a College Access Team who plan informational events for parents and students and the opportunities for teachers to step into leadership roles through outside programs and turn-keying to the entire school community.
- Teachers at both meetings stated that they are pleased that their voices are heard and are committed to enhancing pedagogy and increased student achievement. Teachers articulated that they felt empowered to have input on decisions toward the development of instructional resources across departments and grades. Sixty-five percent of all teachers speak a second language and 14 different languages are represented by them. There is a high percentage of teacher retention at the school. The school retention rate of teachers is 100%, there were no retirements of resignations/exits or transfers this past year.