Department of Education
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The Cinema School

High School X478

1551 East 172 Street
Bronx
NY 10472

Principal: Keisha Warner-LoSasso

Date of review: April 21, 2015
Reviewer: Leticia Pineiro

The School Context

The Cinema School is a high school with 329 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 22% Black, 70% Hispanic, 4% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 5% 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 90%.

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	**Focus**	**Developing**
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	**Additional Findings**	**Proficient**
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	**Additional Findings**	**Proficient**
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	**Celebration**	**Proficient**

Area of Celebration

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

Findings
Teacher teams consistently analyze teacher work and student assessment data to refine instructional practices and promote student progress toward goals. Teacher leaders function as decision makers across the school, and are responsible for setting goals that affect student learning.

Impact
Teacher team inquiry work improves teacher practice, increases student learning, and embeds shared leadership structures within the school.

Supporting Evidence
- During the observation of the Humanities team meeting, a teacher was observed presenting his third round of Assessment Driven Instruction (ADI) by using an adaptation of the Tuning Protocol. While the disaggregated data presented for the Tuning protocol focused on a target problem regarding analysis of evidence in an on-demand writing assessment given to his United States history students in April, the packet presented to the team for review included two additional class summary analytical tools for September and March that included the standard being assessed, student data (accomplished level work, proficient level work, or emergent level work), leveled student work samples, analysis of the learning problem, and an action plan with smart goals. The result was that the team could assess how the department-wide writing strategy using *Tie to Thesis* (TTT), aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, was assisting students in their ability to craft and defend an argument. The eight teachers on the Humanities team all present ADIs throughout the year to trace student mastery of this skill. Thus, the team can measure students' development in this area accurately, and utilize ongoing data to make instructional adjustments throughout their units of study.

- Each content team establishes unique goals and implements systematic cycles of ADI to make curricular and instructional modifications that reflect student learning needs. For example, the science department utilized student data to determine that modifications needed to be made to existing lab inquiries and assessments with a corresponding rubric to illustrate higher order thinking responses. The math department's goal focuses on using the same teaching strategies across the grades for developing students' problem solving skills with an emphasis on training students to engage in error analysis in their own work and that of their peers. During the teacher meeting, a teacher stated, "ADI helps in identifying problems, creating targeted remedies, and tracking for improved learning outcomes."

- Department leaders meet regularly with the administrative team. Department leader team minutes reveal that they are involved in setting goals for their departments and in making decisions that align with the school-wide instructional focus that students must show evidence of their thinking and learning. Department leaders facilitate adult learning, organize the logistics of ADI presentations, and support teachers' understanding of the importance of the team's work and the connection to school-wide and district goals.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Developing

Findings
School leaders and faculty are in the process of aligning curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrating the instructional shifts to emphasize rigorous academic tasks across classrooms, and plan and refine curricula and tasks to engage all learners.

Impact
Unit plans and lesson plans inconsistently reflect alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards and/or the integration the instructional shifts. Learning activities across grades and subjects unevenly demonstrate rigorous habits and higher-order skills and do not always provide access to tasks to ensure all learners are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- While the majority of unit plans reviewed indicate the Common Core Learning Standards to be covered in the specific unit, it is unclear as to how these standards are implemented because academic tasks and criteria for evaluating these tasks are vague or are omitted in the plan. For example, in Geometry and Algebra plans, *Stage 3-Plan Learning Experiences*, plans list math topics to be covered and not rigorous academic tasks leading up to summative assessments. In the Geometry and Algebra unit plans, under the question "What criteria will be used to evaluate student products and performances?" the teachers include grading scales that focus on completeness and presentation regarding organization and neatness. The criteria for evaluating formative and summative assessments do not reflect the Common Core Learning Standards or the instructional shifts. In a grade 9 humanities unit plan entitled *The Age of Exploration*, the desired results reflecting the content and skills that students should be able to master at the end of the interdisciplinary unit and assessments are listed, but not directly aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. In addition, topics to be covered are listed, but not the academic tasks leading up to summative assessments in the plan, such as a mock trial and argumentative essay. Finally, the topics within the social studies and English part of the unit are unevenly developed and are not clearly connected. The *Learning Activities Map* embedded in the plan indicates topics that will be covered as the students learn about European exploration, but the map does not indicate learning activities or topics that will be covered as they are simultaneously reading *Romeo and Juliet.*

- Rigorous academic tasks are emphasized inconsistently for all learners. For instance, in a ninth grade Global history integrated co-teaching lesson plan, the group work consists of students quickly generating words for each letter of the alphabet related to writing effective essays. This academic task promotes recall of terms, but does not require students to define or apply the terms in their writing.

- One out of seven unit plans reviewed across grades and subjects reflect planning to provide multiple entry points into the curricula. In an Earth Science unit plan, the teacher lists differentiated science texts books and general strategies such as use of handouts, reference tables, and power points that will be used to cognitively engage a diversity of learners. In a grade 9 integrated co-teaching Algebra lesson plan, the academic task requires that students apply exponential growth functions to a real world problem. However, the plan includes few scaffolds, therefore limiting access into the curricula for all learners.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing

Findings
Teaching practices inconsistently demonstrate strategies that utilize effective scaffolds and/or provide opportunities for all learners to engage in high level discussions and demonstrate high level thinking in student work products.

Impact
Across classrooms, some learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities, are not always engaged in appropriately challenging tasks. Student work products and class discourse reveal uneven levels of thinking and inconsistent cognitive engagement for a diversity of learners.

Supporting Evidence

- During a grade 10 Geometry lesson, students worked in small groups, pairs, and individually. However, the grouping did not serve to function as a support for students, as all students were provided with the same classwork packet containing 23 problems to review circles. An expert student led a small group in front of the class to assist students who were struggling with the concepts. However, the group in front of the room included four students, while there were students in the class who struggled with the task and who worked in pairs or alone. The teacher brought instruction back to the whole room to review a problem as she drew a diagram to represent the problem, and used a call and response structure to solicit responses from students on how to draw the diagram. After the teacher defined the term, *secant* and drew the diagram, she asked low level questions such as, "What is the external point going to be?" When a student came to the SMART board to explain how she solved the problem, she was not able to fully answer the question due to a lack of probing questioning and appropriate scaffolds.

- Across classrooms visited, student work products inconsistently demonstrated mastery of learning objectives and participation in high level discussions. The learning objective in an Advanced Placement Literature course was to adapt scenes from *Hamlet* that explore the essential themes of the play. During the lesson, students spent 17 minutes independently brainstorming how their character felt, and describing the way the character would walk and look. The teacher then led a discussion, and showed a film clip to illustrate how motifs in the play can be adapted. However, the groups did not engage in rigorous student led discussions in which they analyzed the mentor text. During a grade 9 Global History lesson, students worked in groups to create taxonomies of terms related to essay writing. Groups listed terms for each letter of the alphabet. This activity did not demonstrate students' ability to analyze evidence and tie it back to the thesis in an essay, which was the assessment driven instructional goal that was previously discussed in the lesson, nor did it produce high level discussions among students.

- In classrooms visited, students worked in groups or independently. During an Algebra lesson, students were directed to work in pairs to complete a math word problem to apply the concepts of exponential growth and decay. However, students were not given sufficient time to discuss their thinking with their peers. Additionally, it was not evident that all students were engaged in productive struggle.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula. The school uses common assessments to determine student progress towards goals. Teachers consistently use checks for understanding to make instructional adjustments.

Impact

Teachers' ongoing use of formative and summative assessment data facilitates effective adjustments to the curriculum and instruction at the team and classroom levels, and targets action planning to meet all students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, Assessment Driven Instruction (ADI) promotes the measurement of student progress and mastery of content and skills. The process of ADI formally analyzes student work with a deliberate focus on a skill. Impact on student learning outcomes is assessed through summative data that measures progress toward meeting established course, departmental, and school-wide goals. In addition, this process unites curricular and instructional goals. Via ADI, student assessment occurs regularly so that instruction is tailored to enhance students' learning strengths and address areas of concern. Action plans are developed to ensure that students have the appropriate supports needed to master course content and skills. For example, the action plan for the United States History teacher's third round of ADI includes goals for targeted students such as, "Provide a scaffolding worksheet immediately and accompany all subsequent papers until the Regents." It also includes goals for all learners such as, "Provide rigorous vocabulary instruction once a week in which students are taught how to define terms in three ways: rote, background, and historical significance."

- Department team meetings are designed so that all teachers undergo three rounds of data collection, analysis, and presentation to their peers. The most important aspect of the presentation is the teacher's plan regarding how he/she will close the gap between where the students are in their progress toward mastery of content and skills and where they need to be by the end of the course to meet learning goals.

- Teachers use rubrics that are aligned with the curricula to provide students with actionable next steps. For instance, the humanities department uses a common rubric to assess analysis in writing and the science department utilizes a common rubric to assess higher level responses on students' lab reports. The film teacher uses a rubric created to provide students with feedback on their presentations of favorite movie scenes. An English teacher utilizes a *Scene Work Rubric*, created by Red Eye Theater and Arts for Academic Achievement, which is used to provide students with feedback on their performances of scenes they adapt from *Hamlet.*

- Across classrooms, teachers were observed using checks for understanding. In an Algebra lesson, checks for understanding led the teacher to realize that he needed to review procedures for rounding before continuing with the lesson. In an English class, the teacher asked questions regarding characters' motivations and feelings to ensure that students understood characterization and motifs before engaging in writing an adaptation of scenes from *Hamlet.* In Global History, the teacher used an exit ticket to assess students' understanding of what they needed to do to improve their writing.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the staff, provide training, and hold staff accountable for expectations. Content area and grade teams establish a culture for learning that regularly conveys high expectations for all learners and provides guidance/advisement supports.

Impact

Frequent feedback and professional development align to the school's goals of creating quality units of study aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and strengthening the school culture. Content area teams and grade level teams analyze student data, conduct parent outreach, and provide supports that prime students for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers receive feedback in the form of walkthroughs which are used as formative observations. School leaders make expectations clear, and inform teachers of next steps verbally and in writing before rounds of informal and formal observations begin. Teachers receive professional development in the use of Understanding by Design principles in creating Common Core-aligned learning units. Teachers also receive training in the use of a Rigor Matrix to measure Common Core Learning Standards alignment when creating academic tasks. Optional professional development is offered once a month after school for two hours. Professional development targets areas in which Advance observation data reveals teachers need support such as questioning and discussion techniques and engaging students in cognitively challenging tasks. Over 75% of the staff have participated in these monthly professional development sessions.

- Teachers receive training in the Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) to support effective implementation of collaborative discipline. School-wide collaboration utilizing PBIS structures such as transformative mediation serve as the pillar for interpersonal communication and collaborative regulation of behavioral norms that reinforce the values of the school community.

- Content area teams regularly utilize benchmark assessment data to engage in Assessment Driven Instruction (ADI). ADI systematizes the way in which teachers assess gaps in students' learning, modify instructional strategies to meet students' learning needs, set goals for students, and communicate next steps to students so that they can meet high expectations regarding the mastery of course content and skills. Department leaders are accountable for establishing goals with their colleagues and monitoring progress toward these goals.

- Each grade team has a guidance counselor and social work intern assigned to the team. Bi-monthly grade team meetings focus on analyzing scholarship report data, Jupiter grades, and transcripts to prioritize high leverage academic and/or social and emotional supports for targeted students. These supports include tutoring, peer mentoring, and at-risk counseling. Teachers also participate on accreditation committees in which they track the progress of upperclassmen and put action plans in place when juniors and seniors are promotion in doubt due to credit or Regents exam deficiency. As a result of this work, data over the past three years demonstrates that the school has maintained attendance and graduation rates of 90% or higher.