



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

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**High School for Violin and Dance**

**09X543**

**1110 Boston Road  
Bronx  
NY 10456**

**Principal: Franklin Sim**

**Date of Review: November 21, 2014**

**Lead Reviewer: Carron Staple**

## The School Context

High School for Violin and Dance is a high school with 378 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 36% Black, 63% Hispanic, and less than 1% White and Asian students. The student body includes 11% English language learners and 27% special education students. Boys account for 12% of the students enrolled and girls account for 88%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 78.0%.

## 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>Proficient</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>Developing</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>Developing</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>Developing</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>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.1 Curriculum**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

Curriculum aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and the diverse needs of students is implemented in six-week unit plans of study across all grades and content areas.

### Impact

The school aligns curricula to Common Core Learning Standards and plans purposeful cross-curricular strategies across content areas to build instructional coherence that promotes higher-order thinking and college and career readiness for a variety of learners.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teacher's College consultants and network staff work with the faculty to frequently revise curricula, discuss expectations, and create or adjust unit maps that are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and to the citywide instructional expectations. Every department team has submitted updated unit maps that culminate with an assessment of each six-week unit. Teachers use Engage NY to guide their curricular adjustments to ensure that academic tasks are accessible for all learners including English Language Learners and students with disabilities. All lesson plans contain a learning target, checks for understanding, and a check-off list with a menu for differentiation.
- To ensure vertical and horizontal alignment, teachers meet across grades and departments. The tenth grade teachers in the English Language Arts and social studies departments have aligned their curricula to strengthen instruction and relevance by pairing content-related texts and readings to topics in history. For example, when the students are learning about the Holocaust in social studies, they read "Night" and the "Diary of Anne Frank" in English class.
- Math and science teacher inquiry teams discovered that students had difficulty graphing correctly when a scale was not provided. Consequently, the teachers worked together to amend curricula to address deficit skills in graphing, making the material more accessible and comprehensible to all students in Living Environment, Earth Science, and Integrated Algebra for improving written responses on class and Regents exams.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Developing**

### Findings

Pedagogical practices do not consistently provide effective instructional support to engage all learners in rigorous tasks.

### Impact

Across classrooms, students are inconsistently engaged, and are not provided with multiple entry points, curricula supports, or opportunities for learning extensions. As a result, some students are not involved in appropriately challenging tasks or discussions that lead to high-level thinking and meaningful work products.

### Supporting Evidence

- Fifty percent of the classes observed demonstrated a teacher-centered approach in which most of the dialogue occurred between teachers and individual students. Most students were not engaged in peer-to-peer discussions and teacher questioning was consistently at the lowest levels of the Depth of Knowledge tiers, limiting higher-order thinking and application of knowledge. Although in most classrooms, students sat in small groups, there was no small group instruction provided, although Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) teachers did circulate and support students with disabilities individually.
- In almost every teacher's lesson plan it was specifically written that students would engage in accountable talk, yet most students were not engaged in substantive conversations and responded with one-word answers or incomplete sentences. In a Living Environment class, the teacher asked, "Is New York City helping to combat environmental problems?" When a student responded by saying, "Yes and no, sometimes they can and sometimes they can't." The teacher responded by saying, "Great work, you are on a roll!" without asking the student to give specific examples of what she meant, or asking the class to support their classmate with evidence. In a social studies global history class, the teacher asked, "Who knows what the word nomad means?" "Why do people move?" "Is it better to live near the ocean or the river?" Such questions did not yield high-level responses and at no time did students turn and engage in accountable talk to discuss the Neolithic Revolution and the significance of movement from nomadic life to stable communities.
- Contrary to the principal's written instructional focus and expectations on how students learn best, school-wide literacy implementation is lacking. Despite curricula prescribing Common Core Learning Standards instructional shifts within lessons, in some classrooms students are not reading text in depth, and writing is limited to short answers on worksheets. Only the Earth Science teacher required students to take out their notebooks and write notes connected to the learning target and academic vocabulary. In an English Language arts ICT class, two teachers attempted to teach how to defend a claim using philosophical chairs, an activity where students have to defend their positions based on a claim. Students had to take a position as to whether or not they agreed that schools should be allowed to view their private social media pages and accounts. Students attempted to defend their claims, but there was not sufficient direct instruction, modeling, or scaffolding of the activity, causing students to quickly disengage and become frustrated with the task, resulting in a breakdown in classroom management.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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### Findings

The school is in the process of developing common assessments, common core aligned rubrics that are shared school-wide, and classroom checks for understanding to ensure that the learning needs of students are met.

### Impact

Although the school engages in frequent analysis of student work and assessments, there are inconsistencies in how teachers use this data, thus impairing the on-going, effective adjustment of curricula and instruction and the provision of thoughtful feedback to improve students' academic mastery.

### Supporting Evidence

- All teachers meet on a regular weekly basis using a protocol to analyze student assessments and work products to determine where students have instructional gaps that are similar across content areas. The teacher team observed was working on strategies to support better graphing, a common area of weakness in math and science, and although they did discuss how they had amended the curricula to make it more accessible to students, they did not discuss their next steps in designing future assessments and rubrics to measure skills identified in their gap analysis of student work and assessments.
- Across classrooms, every teacher utilized red-yellow-green assessment cards to get a quick check of student understanding, but only three teachers followed up with support for students who showed yellow and red cards, while other teachers failed to acknowledge the cards, dismissing the students' lack of understanding. In one class, when a student's red card was ignored, she asked, "What am I supposed to do if I don't understand this question?" The teacher immediately went over to help her, but had missed the opportunity negating use of the cards for individualized student support. In another class, the teacher used the red-yellow-green assessment cards incorrectly by asking the students who flashed yellow and red cards to find a student who flashed a green card without first checking to see if the students who flashed green were correct. Follow-up questions revealed that some of the answers provided were not totally correct.
- There were no students observed engaging in peer assessment, and only one teacher distributed an exit ticket that asked students to self-assess as to whether or not they had met the learning target of the day.

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

Teacher teams consistently look at student work and are empowered by administration to make instructional decisions that lead to curricula adjustments and revised teaching strategies.

### **Impact**

The work of teacher teams provides a venue for distributive leadership and builds capacity among teachers to share strategies to improve student learning.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Teacher teams use the "Looking at Student Work Protocol" to discuss student work products and analyze item analysis data from Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) baselines, class tests, and Regents exams to strategize pedagogical changes in order to support students in areas that need improvement.
- Teacher teams articulate that they have the opportunity to lead teams and meet bi-monthly with the school's leadership team and cabinet to discuss team progress and next steps. Teachers also discuss feeling encouraged and empowered to provide input and to make instructional decisions around curriculum for their students. Some spoke of attending external professional workshops and turn-keying best practices they had learned with their colleagues.
- As a result of analyzing the students' written responses from the Integrated Algebra, Living Environment and Earth Science Regents exams from June 2014, teachers shared learning gaps, identified common mistakes, and discussed potential strategies to use with students to support stronger writing responses and more accurate graphing.

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

High expectations are not clearly communicated to staff, students, and parents even though the school leadership has structures and systems in place to ensure all learners have academic and social-emotional support.

### Impact

Although school leaders and staff are developing expectations that lead to college and career readiness, there is a disconnect between what is being communicated and provided, and what students and families perceive and experience, thus hindering clarity of how students are being advised, supported, and prepared for the next level of college and careers.

### Supporting Evidence

- At the student meeting, students shared that their classes were boring and not challenging. Upperclassmen complained of a lack of high-level classes to prepare them for college and careers and complained that only students in the Advancement Via Individualized Determination program (AVID) get trips, enrollment in the only honors English class, and special support. Students expressed that they wanted the opportunity to take Advanced Placement courses, physics, electives other than the arts, and other high-level courses not being offered at the school. Additionally, two students stated they were being prevented from obtaining an Advanced Regents diploma because there is no foreign language teacher to provide direct instruction in a language. When asked about academic intervention support, students stated they were not aware of any official school tutoring, and that most teachers tell them that they have to help themselves. One student stated that AVID students held peer tutoring sessions, but she wasn't aware of who they tutored and when.
- Although many students stated that they enjoy the arts classes in painting, dance and orchestra, appreciate their relationships with teachers and administrators, and feel safe, they complained about the lack of student voice and follow-up from student-principal meetings. Some stated they had voiced concerns to their student grade-level representatives and wrote proposals for clubs and other activities as requested by administration, but never saw any action or resolution, leaving them to think that their voices were "being listened to, but not heard". Students discussed having a difficult time getting to see their guidance counselors and one ninth-grader stated that she had not ever met individually with her guidance counselor. The students stated that the principal needed to help teachers to control their classes and they approximated that between 55-65% of students misbehaved daily, disrupting their instruction.
- Parents spoke highly of the principal and assistant principals in supporting them with their concerns, but none spoke of receiving any help from a guidance counselor or parent coordinator. The parents stated the school was in the process of organizing workshops for Common Core Learning Standards, but had not received any workshops or informational sessions on graduation requirements or how to read their child's transcript. Multiple complaints were made about the teachers' failure to regularly update Pupil Path, the school's electronic grading system, and some parents were concerned that the school does not provide interim progress reports, preventing them from helping their children to get missed assignments or tutorial help.