



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

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

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2014-2015**

**World Cultures**

**High School x550**

**1300 Boynton Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10472**

**Principal: Ramon Namnun**

**Date of review: May 6, 2015  
Reviewer: Mimi Fortunato**

## The School Context

World Cultures is a high school with 362 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 10% Black, 78% Hispanic, 1% White, 3% American Indian or Native Alaskan, 1% Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, and 7% Asian students. The student body includes 88% English language learners and 0% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 85.0%.

## 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>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>Celebration</b>	<b>Proficient</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

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

The principal consistently communicates expectations regarding professionalism, instruction, and communication aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching to all teachers. School leaders, teachers and staff share expectations aligned with a path to college and career readiness for all learners.

### Impact

A system of ongoing training and feedback helps teachers understand progress towards professional expectations. Targeted guidance/advisement prepare students for the next level.

### Supporting Evidence

- The principal communicates high expectations to staff through a Staff Handbook and frequent memorandums to staff. School leaders conduct cycles of observation, and feedback to teachers includes a notation of practices that meet the requirements for the next rating level for each component aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching (DfT). For example, in a teacher observation where the teacher was rated effective in designing coherent instruction, the principal's notes to the teacher included descriptors of practice that would meet the requirements for a rating of highly effective such as, learning activities connected to other disciplines, and the teacher provides a variety of appropriately challenging resources that are differentiated for students in the class. The principal meets with teachers each marking period and facilitates a scholarship report and performance meeting in which teachers reflect with the principal on their students' performance, as well as their professional practice ratings aligned to the DfT. In addition, school leaders have developed a reciprocal accountability log that tracks requests from teachers and school leaders and that includes deliverables and due dates.
- Teachers shared that they have opportunities to participate in on-site weekly professional development as well as off-site self-selected professional development opportunities. For example, teachers participate in structured lesson study sessions, and are provided with professional readings such as *Text Complexity*, *Raising Rigor in Reading*, *Word Wise Content Rich*, and *Teaching Vocabulary to English Language Learners*, and are expected to incorporate the learned strategies in their daily practice.
- In classroom visits, student behavior was consistently in compliance with the school's expected norms, and student discourse was respectful. Students shared that teachers and the principal celebrate students' accomplishments, and provide students with motivation to meet established expectations, such as celebrations for student of the month and opportunities to earn participation in trips like a recent trip to Washington, DC.
- Guidance advisement supports include tracking of individual student need that begins with an entrance conference with the principal, and continues with the college advisor, guidance counselor, and social worker facilitating meetings with students, tracking student progress towards graduation, and supporting students through the college search and application process. Students receive Class of 2015 T-shirts, as well as wrist bands engraved with "I Can Do It, I Will Graduate!". Currently the school is on track to increase the graduation rate 7.5%, from 62.5% in 2014 to 70% in 2015.

## Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies (including questioning and scaffolds in English), inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula. Across classrooms, student work products and discussions reflect uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

### Impact

Inconsistent teaching strategies lead to uneven engagement in appropriately challenging tasks and uneven demonstration of higher order thinking skills in student work products and class discussions.

### Supporting Evidence

- Lessons across the majority of classes observed did not consistently provide evidence of the use of scaffolds and multiple entry points to engage all learners. Although most lesson plans noted that students would be grouped and some lesson plans noted the rationale for the grouping, strategies noted in lesson plans were not consistently observed in lessons. An English as a second language lesson plan noted that advanced students would complete all activity questions, intermediate students would complete two questions, and foundation students would try to answer one question. However, it was not clear how some students might access the activity, the students referred to in the plan were not identified, and scaffolds and supports were not apparent in the lesson implementation.
- The principal has identified trends in teacher practice and developed a plan of action to strengthen teacher skill in deepening student engagement and in providing students with opportunities to participate in peer–peer discourse. For example, on Tuesdays, a group of teachers work with a consultant to strengthen pedagogical approaches to student learning and providing access to English language learners. The school has worked with the New York City DOE Office of English Language Learners to create a Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE) bridges program where students have the support of co-teachers in homogeneously grouped classes. However, in a SIFE bridges class observed, the lesson was teacher dominated, with students viewing a series of images on the SMARTboard and few students responding to the low-level questions posed by the teacher. For example, an image displayed showed a woman on the phone with her legs up on a desk. The teacher asked, “Is she on the phone for work or pleasure?”, and a student responded, “Pleasure.” The teacher announced to the class that this activity would prepare them for the upcoming Socratic Seminar on *Othello*, although students could not articulate the connection of the activity to the text.
- Although there were opportunities for peer-to peer discussion in some classes, whole group discussions were generally teacher dominated. For example, in an algebra II class, students were observed seated in groups. However, in the full class discussion in this class and in others observed, the pattern of teacher to student interaction was call and response, limiting student ownership of the discourse. In a United States history class, 5 of the twenty-two students were observed responding to the teacher’s questions as the teacher posed questions to individual students, who then responded directly to the teacher.

## Additional Findings

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

School leaders ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and promote the integration of the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills and support college and career readiness for all learners.

### Impact

Across grades and subjects, curricula decisions encourage inter-disciplinary coherence and include college and career readiness activities for all learners, including the school's large population of English language learners.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers have collaboratively developed curricula across all content areas that promote coherence in the grade 9 through 12 continuum for the school's population of English language learners (ELLs) and students with interrupted formal education (SIFE), and in the school's focus of interdisciplinary exploration. Teachers develop curricula maps and unit plans for each course, and these are implemented consistently to ensure reliable application. A scope and sequence is developed across each grade, with teachers collaboratively identifying topics where inter-disciplinary connections can be made to support student understanding of overarching essential questions. For example, the grade 10 scope and sequence for all content areas is guided by the essential question of, "How are conflicts created and resolved?", with students studying the Scientific Method in science, the Scientific Revolution in social studies, and the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and *The Social Contract* by Rousseau in English.
- The principal has established a key instructional goal of questioning and discussion techniques, student engagement, and the use of assessment in instruction. Teacher unit and lesson plans provide evidence of planning to support peer to peer discussion and in building all students' skills to engage in rigorous tasks. For example, an Advanced Placement biology class lesson plan included opportunities for students to research Advanced Placement exam topics, present a short overview of the topic to the class, pose questions to their peers, and facilitate the class discussion.
- Teachers work in teams to collaboratively promote a high level of rigor across lessons and to ensure that higher-order skills are emphasized in curricula maps, unit plans, and lesson plans across grades and content areas for all learners, including the school's population of ELLs. As the majority of the school's learners are new arrivals to this country, and many are students with interrupted formal education (SIFE), teachers have developed a scope and sequence aligned to Common Core Learning Standards that moves from building literacy (grade 9), to practicing literacy (grade 10), Regents ready (grade 11), and college ready (grade 12). For example, a grade 9 global history unit plan indicated that students would be expected to complete a performance task in which they crafted a short essay comparing and contrasting two geographic features and describe the impact on particular civilizations. A grade 11 English lesson plan indicated that all students in the class would be expected to participate in a Socratic seminar, to respond to text based questions posed by student facilitators, and assess their peers on the clarity and accuracy of their responses.

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

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are loosely aligned with the school's curricula. Formative assessments and teacher checks for understanding do not always provide a clear portrait of student mastery.

### **Impact**

As the grading policy and teacher use of rubrics is implemented inconsistently across classrooms, students are not always clear of their progress towards skill mastery. Inconsistent checks for understanding provide limited feedback to students and teachers regarding students' progress towards skill mastery, hindering the development of effective instructional adjustments in some classes.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- The school has developed a grading policy that incorporates formative and summative elements such as homework (15%), participation (30%), projects (25%), and tests and quizzes (30%). While 30% of a student's grade is based on class participation, it was not clear how the teachers assess students' participation across classes observed. One teacher stated that she uses a system whereby students earn up to six points during each class, other teachers stated that they use a system of check and check + to grade students during each class, which provides limited information regarding actionable feedback to teachers and students regarding student mastery. In addition, across classrooms, students were not able to articulate how their class participation was assessed.
- Some teacher feedback on student work provides clear next steps to move students from one level to the next, and feedback is aligned to a task specific rubric. However, feedback on other student work consisted of "Excelente!" with a smiley face, while math work posted on bulletin boards consisted of checks and comments such as, "Organized, and most answers are correct." Across classes, rubrics used to assess student performance varied. In a Spanish class, rubric grades were 6, 7-8, 9, and 10. In an English assignment, rubric grades were 0 to 5, while other student work was graded with a rubric that ranged from 1 to 3. Although students stated that they use rubrics in most classes, few students were able to articulate how their grades were calculated.
- There were few examples of student self or peer assessment. In an English class, students were asked to assess two of their peer's performance in a Socratic seminar, although students were only provided with one copy of the rubric. In a literature class, one rubric was provided to each group of 4 – 5 students, and some students were not clear regarding the expectations of the peer assessment task.
- In an Advanced Placement biology class, the teacher interjected during a student led discussion to pose a clarifying question to the class regarding how oxygen was transported to the cells, which served to deepen the level of discussion. However, in other classes visited, checks for understanding were limited to general questions posed to the class such as, "Does anyone have any questions?", and "Does everyone get it?" Adjustments to instruction in some classes consisted of teachers checking in with students to clarify the task.

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

The majority of teachers engage in content area professional collaborations. A distributive leadership structure is in place that includes the assignment of grade and content teacher leaders.

### Impact

Professional collaborations promote the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts, and encourage alignment of practice to the school's instructional goals. A distributive leadership structure builds teacher leadership capacity, and provides opportunities for teachers to have a voice in key decisions regarding student learning.

### Supporting Evidence

- Content, grade level, and cross content and cross grade level students with interrupted formal education (SIFE) teacher teams meet monthly. For example, the SIFE Inquiry team was observed collaboratively analyzing a student's written work, and sharing the strategies that teachers might use to guide next instructional steps across content areas to build the student's writing skills. Using the Literacy Evaluation for Newcomer SIFE (LENS), as well as other diagnostic tools, teachers analyze data and track students' progress. Members of this team were able to clearly articulate the outcomes of their work on shared teacher practice and on student outcomes, indicating which students had progressed in mastery and moved from one instructional level to the next.
- A review of agendas and minutes provide evidence that teachers meet once each month in content and grade teams. Agendas and minutes indicate that most teachers consistently engage in an inquiry approach in which they collaboratively analyze outcomes for student groups. Teachers gather and archive assessment data, and the analysis of the data informs next instructional steps, strengthening the instructional capacity of teachers. For example, an English as a second language teacher shared that the student work analysis and shared reflection on instructional strategies have strengthened her understanding of how to support struggling learners and support the learning of advanced students.
- Teacher leaders facilitate content and grade level meetings, and teachers assume a leadership role in supporting colleagues. Teachers shared that the team leaders provide feedback to the principal on professional development planning, and that the leadership team, consisting of all lead teachers meets weekly with the principal. Teachers participate in self-selected off-site professional development workshops and share their learning, planning and facilitating workshops for colleagues.
- Teachers stated that they that they appreciate having a voice in key instructional decisions, and stated that their perceptions and findings are taken into consideration. For example, the SIFE team used the LENS math assessment to identify an instructional focus of targeted math skills, and implemented additional time on task that resulted in increased student performance on pre and post unit assessments.