



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

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

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2014-2015**

**Wings Academy**

**High School X684**

**1122 East 180<sup>th</sup> Street  
Bronx  
NY 10460**

**Principal: Tuwana Williams-Gray**

**Date of review: February 11, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Mimi Fortunato**

## The School Context

Wings Academy is a high school with 504 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 59% Black, 38% Hispanic, 1% White, 1% Asian, and 1% native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 21% special education students. Boys account for 57% of the students enrolled and girls account for 43%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 82.0%.

## 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>Developing</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

School leaders regularly share high expectations regarding professionalism, instruction, communication and other elements of the Danielson Framework for Teaching to the staff, and provide opportunities for collaboration and professional development. Teachers and staff consistently communicate high expectations for all students, and implement guidance/advisement supports across the school.

### Impact

Consistent communication from the principal coupled with targeted training and a system of accountability promotes a shared understanding of high expectations for staff. Ongoing feedback from teachers and staff promotes the development of a culture for learning, and provides guidance/advisement supports that prepare students for the next level.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders conduct frequent cycles of observation and provide detailed feedback to teachers. The WAHS Observation Feedback Form includes a check for implementation of the instructional foci, classifies evidence to determine if the learning objective was mastered, and recommends next-step actionable changes. Observation reports reviewed demonstrated that feedback to teachers identifies targeted resources and support, and includes time-bound next steps. In addition, the principal distributes a daily school-wide Briefing Bulletin to all staff. This bulletin reiterates the school's vision and mission, as well as key policies and mandates such as instructional foci, Comprehensive Educational Plan goals, expectations for professional collaborations, data inquiry, classroom practice, and acknowledges and celebrates staff members' professional accomplishments.
- School leaders and teachers have collaboratively developed a professional development plan in response to a needs assessment that incorporates goals aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching (DfT) as well as school-wide goals. For example, in October, November, and December, 2014, professional development activities focused on the DfT Domain One: Planning and Preparation. In January, 2015, professional development activities focused on DfT Domain Three: Instruction. Sample workshops include titles such as, *Using Texts to Deepen Learning*, and *Giving Effective Feedback*.
- The school has established core values that include control, optimism, resilience, and empowerment. Wings Academy High School Core Values posters are displayed throughout the school and in all classrooms. Students shared that they are aware of these core values as well as the expectations for academic performance and social behavior. Students stated that the principal and teachers celebrate students' accomplishments, and that an incentive program provides students with motivation to meet established expectations.
- The school has implemented an online grading system, and provides students with on-demand access to real-time data through Pupil Path and Skedula. Students shared that they access this system on a regular basis to determine their status towards credit accumulation and graduation. A guidance team (that includes a college advisor), provides students with on-going feedback as well as support in the college search and application process, and offers students opportunities to participate in college tours and trips.

## Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

### Findings

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

### Impact

Inconsistent implementation of teaching strategies leads to uneven engagement in class discussions, and varying demonstration of higher order thinking skills in student work products, including the work of English language learners and students with disabilities.

### Supporting Evidence

- The principal has identified trends in teacher practice, and has developed a plan of action to deepen teacher skill in providing students with differentiated opportunities to cite textual evidence in making claims in class discussions. This focus was apparent in some lessons observed. In an English lesson on *The Tell-Tale Heart*, by Edgar Allen Poe, students were expected to respond to questions using text-based evidence from the short story, with differentiated questions designed to support individual students' skill level. However, in an English as a second language class on Rosa Park's impact on the civil rights movement, the teacher asked students to write down a personal experience where they felt that they had been discriminated against. In this class, the task did not include translated or annotated text, and the class discussion did not provide students with an opportunity to cite textual evidence.
- The principal has established a professional development goal that teachers increase rigor, engagement, and differentiation in curricula, instruction, and assessment through the planning and implementation of effective instructional strategies. Most lesson plans noted differentiation strategies, although those strategies were not consistently implemented in lessons observed. For example, a Living Environment lesson plan indicated that some students would have access to multiple modalities to understand questions, and that some students would have access to an alternate activity. However, the students referred to in the plan were not identified, and the multiple modalities referenced in the plan were not observed in the lesson, as all students were directed to complete the same worksheet.
- Although there were opportunities for peer-to peer discussion in some classes, whole group discussions were generally teacher dominated with teachers asking questions of individual students who then responded directly to the teacher. For example, in an Algebra class, students were observed sharing thoughts with peers in their assigned groups regarding the task of solving systems of equations using the elimination method. However, in full class discussions in this class and in others observed, there were limited opportunities for student ownership of the discourse, as the pattern of teacher to student interaction was call and response.

## Additional Findings

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

School leaders and faculty are in the process of aligning curricula to Common Core Learning Standards and integrating the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks reflect planning to provide students with access to the curricula and tasks and cognitively engage a diversity of learners.

### Impact

Inconsistent integration of the instructional shifts hinders school-wide coherence in promoting college and career readiness for all students. As a result of a lack of strategic curricular planning and refinement, a diversity of learners, including English language learners, and students with disabilities do not consistently have access to the curricula, limiting their cognitive engagement.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school uses a common unit and lesson plan template that incorporates a section indicating alignment to Common Core Learning Standards. However, this template does not incorporate the shifts in instructional practice and implementation. Across lesson plans reviewed, teachers inconsistently planned for integration of the instructional shifts. For example, a grade 12 English lesson plan on *The Great Gatsby* indicated that students would engage in text-based discussion and write a character analysis on two major characters from the novel, incorporating textual evidence. However, an Algebra lesson plan on multiplying and dividing rational expressions and understanding the difference between multiplying and dividing two rational expressions did not incorporate instructional shifts. For example, this lesson plan indicated that all students would complete worksheets containing multiple similar problems, and did not offer students an opportunity to apply the math concept to a real world situation or model the problem presented.
- The principal has established a key instructional goal of planning for differentiation through strategic grouping. Three out of eight lesson plans reviewed provided evidence of planning for students to work in heterogeneous groups or pairs of their choosing. However, lesson plans did not clearly indicate if these groupings were created based on an analysis of student work and data, how these mixed skill level groupings would support individual student need, or how English language learners and students with disabilities would have access to the assigned tasks.
- Although teachers plan lessons to cognitively engage all learners, curricula and tasks are not consistently planned and refined using student work and data. For example, an English lesson plan noted individual student reading levels and identified appropriate text and task goals aligned to the analysis of student data. However, a social studies lesson plan did not include a reference to student data or planned refinements to the task or text provided to students.

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

Assessments and rubrics are not fully aligned to curricula and are used inconsistently. Across classrooms, teachers' assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding, and students' self-assessment.

### Impact

As teachers do not regularly use summative assessment data to make targeted adjustments, student learning needs are not consistently met. In addition, formative and summative assessments do not always provide a clear portrait of student mastery, limiting actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement hindering the development of effective instructional adjustments in some classes.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers develop common assessments and task specific rubrics to drive instructional adjustments. However, the results are used inconsistently to drive support for individual student needs. For example, in visits to seven classrooms, six out of seven teachers were not observed implementing instructional adjustments to aid students in successfully accessing the same text and task that was assigned to all learners.
- Across classrooms visited, three out of seven teachers were observed noting formative assessment data on student participation during lessons. However, the information gathered was not consistently specific enough to guide next instructional steps. For example, a math teacher was observed moving throughout the class, providing support to groups and individual students, and grading student participation on a scale of one to five using a classwork rubric that was posted in the classroom. In another class, a special education teacher was observed noting GR (Good Response) to measure student participation, and it was not clear how this assessment led to adjustments during the lesson observed or in future lessons.
- Teachers have developed a common grading policy that incorporates formative and summative assessments such as exam/quizzes (50%), classwork (20%), homework (20%), participation (10%), and extra credit (5%). However, as the formula contains redundant elements, the information provided to teachers and students does not always provide a clear assessment of mastery of learning standards. For example, teachers are expected to develop grades for class participation. However, only three out of seven teachers were observed noting participation grades for students during each class, and students were not able to articulate how the class participation grade, which constitutes 10% of their course grade, was calculated.
- The principal shared that a school instructional goal includes teachers frequently checking for understanding and adjusting lessons based on student understanding. However, across lessons observed, checks for understanding and adjustments were inconsistent. For example, an English teacher was observed stating to the class that she had noticed a common misconception in student responses. This teacher then re-enforced the concept by re-teaching it briefly. However, in a social studies lesson observed, the teacher was not observed checking for understanding during the lesson. In this class, the bell indicating the end of the lesson rang as the teacher asked the class, "Any questions, concerns?" and no students responded.

<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 principal ensures that the majority of teachers engage in grade level and content area professional collaborations that promote the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards, and align practice to the school’s instructional goals. Distributed leadership structures are in place.

**Impact**

Ongoing professional collaborations strengthen teacher instructional practice. Teachers have opportunities to build leadership capacity, and have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teachers meet regularly in grade and content specific teams, using established protocols to analyze student work, and identify student need. The majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry work, in teams that have developed a process to look at assessment outcomes to identify student needs. For example, an English 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade inquiry team was observed using items-skills analysis to develop a common baseline assessment. Teachers shared that collaboration at weekly inquiry team meetings has strengthened their practice in using assessment to guide curricular revisions. In addition, the principal shared that five out of thirteen teachers with teacher improvement plans have shown growth in using assessment to guide instruction in the first four months of this school year.
- Distributed leadership structures are embedded as part of the school culture. Teacher leaders across content areas support facilitation of department and grade level inquiry team meetings, and teachers assume a role in supporting colleagues through mentoring. In addition, teachers’ input and active participation in the professional development team has shaped the professional development calendar in response to shared reflection and identified teacher professional needs.
- Teachers stated that they that they have a voice in key decisions, and shared that their perceptions and findings are taken into consideration. Teachers on the accreditation committee were integral to the development of the school’s grading policy. In addition, teachers shared that they are active members on the school leadership team, and in the development of the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan goals and action plans.