



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

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

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2015-2016**

**Multicultural High School**

**High School K583**

**999 Jamaica Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11208**

**Principal: Alexandra Hernandez**

**Date of review: May 24, 2016  
Lead Reviewer: Michele Ashley**

## The School Context

Multicultural High School is a high school with 208 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 0% Asian, 0% Black, 99% Hispanic, and 1% White students. The student body includes 90% English Language Learners and 2% students with disabilities. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 84.8%.

## 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 <i>Framework for Teaching</i> , 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>Proficient</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>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>Celebration</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

<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 are engaged in structured, inquiry based professional collaborations, and teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work.

### Impact

Professional collaborations strengthen the instructional capacity of teachers and result in student progress toward goals.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet weekly to review student work, assessment results, and data, and they follow a set agenda and an established protocol for looking at student work. Furthermore, teachers use skill checklists, identified as “tennis charts” to assess student work samples and to calibrate teachers’ assessment practices. Teachers interviewed shared that the work on inquiry teams has strengthened the collective practice of the teaching staff. One teacher noted that, as a result of common planning, she and her colleagues are better at creating learning and language objectives using the required school-wide learning objective format that identifies the skill and strategy for each lesson. Further, teachers take the time to refine these learning and language objectives during common planning. All lessons observed followed this format.
- During the observed inquiry meeting, using a tennis chart with the inquiry focus question, “Where should we begin: paragraph or sentence?” teachers analyzed student writing samples from grades 9 through 12 for paragraph and sentence skills. Initially, each teacher reviewed the samples individually and then engaged in a discussion about their results with their colleagues. Based on the results, teachers determined whether to begin inquiry work on paragraph or sentence skills with the identified students. As reflected in inquiry agendas and notes, the work observed in this meeting is consistent across the grades. As a result of inquiry teamwork, teachers have made collective improvements to their lesson plan format, questioning techniques, the use of WITsi (Writing is Thinking and Strategic Inquiry), and Cornell notes in all classrooms.
- Teachers shared that their inquiry work has resulted in progress for groups of students, such as improvements in student paragraph writing with the use of the MEAL (Main idea, Evidence, Analysis, and Link) strategy and the planning of lessons based on skills identified during inquiry. Furthermore, student data on Because, But, So, and paragraph and sentence trackers used for analysis during inquiry, evidence improvement for individual and groups of students. Teachers also noted student improvement in organizational and note-taking skills since the schoolwide implementation of Cornell notes. As a result of sharing best practices at team meetings, across grades and subjects, there is now evidence of student use of Cornell note-taking rubrics, and student notebooks demonstrate improvement in the quality and quantity of information. Student Cornell notes from a chemistry lesson include the learning objective, essential question, language objective, key vocabulary, and summaries of student understanding. One student explains in his summary that the name of a hydrocarbon tells the number of carbon atoms and the type of bond in a compound.

## Area of Focus

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best. Teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

### Impact

Adherence to a core set of beliefs about student learning engages them in challenging tasks. However, across the vast majority of classrooms, there is not yet evidence of strategic multiple entry points, high-quality supports, and extensions, so that all learners demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in their work products.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leadership identified a school-wide focus on both designing coherent instruction and engaging students in learning aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* as a means to improve pedagogy. They shared an articulated belief that students learn best when they are active participants in their learning, have opportunities to demonstrate their thinking, and engage in the fluidity of language as per the theory of “translanguaging,” specifically allowing and supporting students in making meaning using English and their native language. Leadership shared expected practices, which include translated texts and materials, notes in Spanish and English, and the fluid use of English and Spanish in classrooms as needed. Across classrooms visited, teachers taught lessons, asked and responded to questions, and provided materials in both English and Spanish.
- Across classrooms, teachers asked questions and assigned tasks that required students to analyze text and materials and provide evidence for their responses. Students read and responded verbally and in writing in English or Spanish. Teachers provided graphic organizers in English and Spanish and defined academic vocabulary on SMARTboards and charts in both languages, and students referenced Cornell notes from previous lessons to provide additional support for them in completing their work. In a history class, students read texts in either English or Spanish to explain some of the key events of the Cold War that created the “Politic of Containment.” Using Cornell notes from previous lessons and translated texts, students completed graphic organizers to cite key events, and provide the year of the occurrence and an explanation of how the event was a part of the containment policy. Consistent use of multiple entry points and scaffolds were observed across most of the classrooms visited.
- Most teachers provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their thinking, however, in a few classrooms the teachers have yet to strategically provide entry points and extensions so that all students demonstrate higher-order thinking in their work products. In a science classroom, students used reading strategies to read a non-fiction text on acid rain. Students read and annotated text identifying new and familiar vocabulary words. After reading, students responded to question prompts written in English and Spanish and summarized their learning in MEAL paragraphs. However, several students who finished early did not have additional tasks and waited for their classmates to finish. In a math class, only three students were able to complete the assigned task by the end of the lesson.

## Additional Findings

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

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. Curricula and tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

### Impact

Purposeful decisions build coherence and provide access to the curricula for a diversity of learners.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and faculty utilize use Houghton Mifflin Harcourt supported with WITsi strategies for ELA, *EngageNY* math, and the New York Scope and Sequence for science and social studies. Advanced Placement (AP) courses follow a locally developed curriculum aligned to the AP standards. Lesson plans follow a school-wide format that includes Common Core or content standards and integrates academic vocabulary and coherence. This format includes learning and language objectives, criteria for success that align directly to the Common Core standards, as well as key vocabulary, whole group activities, opportunities to share, and closing. Across grades and content areas, lesson plans reviewed followed the school-wide format.
- School leaders and teachers have used student work and data to plan school wide enhancements to curricula. Based on data from the New York State English as a Second Language Assessment Test (NYSESLAT) and Regents examinations, which identified student needs in speaking, writing, and the organization of ideas, school leaders and teachers incorporated Cornell note-taking, MEAL, and the academic word of the week into all content areas. Across all content areas, teachers' planning of lessons and unit plans focus on needs as identified by student data and incorporate the use of the Cornell note-taking format to support their recording important information and summarizing their learning. Lesson plans include a variety of adjusted MEAL templates to support students' organization of information and the collection of relevant evidence to support claims across content areas. Plans for all subjects also include a portion of the "Academic Vocabulary Strategy Schedule" which follows Marzano's six step process each week and employs listening, writing, reading, and speaking skills using the school-wide word of the week and aligned to students' needs.
- Across grades and content areas, teachers plan adjustments to lessons to provide access for English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities. Based upon NYSESLAT and Regents examination performance, teachers have revised lesson plans to include language objectives that support ELLs in the development of language in all content areas. Teachers plan scaffolded tasks, translate materials, and incorporate graphic organizers translated into Spanish. A math lesson plan includes a language objective that requires students to find the difference between a central angle and an inscribed angle and explain using a MEAL paragraph. To support ELLs and students with disabilities, teachers revise MEAL templates to include definitions of each acronym, as well as cloze sentences to prompt and support the main idea, evidence collection, and analysis and link statements. Teachers also define and translate content vocabulary words in English and Spanish for ELLs for them to record the information in their Cornell notes in their language of preference.

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

Across classrooms, teachers use and create rubrics and assessments that are aligned to the school's curricula. Teachers use common assessments to determine student progress toward goals.

### Impact

Assessment data provides actionable feedback to teachers and students, and teachers use the results to adjust curricula and instruction.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use and create assessments aligned to the *Houghton Mifflin Harcourt* and *EngageNY* curricula and the New York City Scope and Sequence for science and social studies, respectively. Teachers also create rubrics and assessments for WITSi strategies and the use of Cornell notes. The school-wide grading policy incorporates percentages for classwork, homework, and all assessments. Cornell notes account for 15% of each student's total grade. Assessment results provide teachers with feedback that informs next teaching steps. Teachers analyzed the results of the January 2016 Regents exams and student work to identify misconceptions, strengths, skills for reteach and implications for instruction and pacing. One teacher identified Global History unit five and thematic essays as an area of need and created a plan to adjust the pacing calendar to review the unit and reteach document based and thematic essays.
- Across content areas, teachers provide students with actionable feedback via conferencing, rubrics with written comments, and "glows and shows" comments. This year, teachers adjusted the original MEAL rubric to include a space for teacher comments and the identification of specific errors in convention, voice, and formatting. Teacher feedback on a science report highlights the use of data and relevant information and reminds a student to cite references. Teacher feedback on an argumentative essay in an ELA class highlights a student's explicit statement of position in the introduction paragraph and recommends the use of transitional phrases. Student work folders provide evidence that students use teacher feedback from the rubrics on their drafts and MEAL paragraphs to improve and complete final assignments.
- Teachers administer baseline assessments in September and October to assess proficiency levels in ELA and math and Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) baseline assessments to determine proficiency levels in the other content areas. Students who enter the school late in the year or as "newcomers" to the school system also take the baseline assessment. Teachers administer periodic assessments in January and March to assess student progress from baseline assessments. Teachers administer MOSL end-of-year assessments in May and end-of-year periodic assessments in June to assess progress from the interim benchmark. Teachers use data from common assessments to assess student progress toward goals and plan targeted instruction. Based on identified student needs in reading, writing, and speaking, teachers have incorporated the use of MEAL, "word of the week" and Cornell notes school-wide, and they have prioritized the teaching of 12 reading strategies focusing on two strategies each marking period. As an outgrowth of analyses of the January 2016 ELA Regents, teachers determined that students had difficulty analyzing quotes and tone. Thus, teachers identified three next steps, including direct teaching of perspectives, identification of vocabulary words that introduce perspective, and teaching transitional words that represent shifts in tone.

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

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations and provide training to the entire staff. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning and provide ongoing guidance and support for students.

**Impact**

Structures are in place to hold teachers accountable, and consistent communication and detailed feedback from teachers and staff prepares students for the next level of learning.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School leaders communicate expectations to the entire staff via faculty meetings, ongoing observation and feedback, weekly coaching in ELA and math, data analysis, and professional learning sessions. This year, school leaders reviewed the instructional focus with all staff. It states, “Teachers will model effective discussion techniques, create language objectives aligned to core curriculum, and explicitly teach effective writing strategies, then students will develop the ability to use evidence to support arguments in discussion and writing.” To meet these expectations, teachers create language objectives aligned to the core content and are using WITsi strategies and MEAL paragraphs to support the explicit teaching of writing.
- School leadership provides training to support the school-wide instructional focus and clarifies expectations with teachers via emails and follow-up sessions after professional learning and data analysis. Teachers have participated in professional learning sessions on the use of WITsi strategies, Cornell notes, the Marzano word of the week structure, and the creation of language objectives. In a May 2016 email regarding “Mock Regents” item analysis, the school leader provided all staff with electronic access to the mock Regents results and informed staff of 10 dedicated hours of common planning time to evaluate, review, and plan based on the results. The school leader asked teachers to answer three essential questions including, “What are the implications of this data for the last few weeks of school?” Teachers responded with clear next steps for instruction and curriculum pacing in their assigned content area.
- Teacher teams and staff provide students with ongoing supports and monitor student progress in an effort to keep them on track to complete grade level requirements and graduate. Faculty closely monitors students who are off-track and provide supports through the Multicultural High School “We Can, We Will” program. Students in this program meet with faculty of their choice to review report cards and receive academic support in their area of need, as well as participate in Socratic seminars and transcript reviews. Multicultural High school students participate in College Now courses, local and overnight college trips, and a “College Knowledge Day” that brings in professionals from the Latin community to share their college and career paths. Teachers and staff communicate high expectations for college and the school has a dedicated college counselor who organizes college and career workshops for students and families. In 2014-2015, 48% of grade 12 students applied to college and all were accepted. This year, 91% of grade 12 students applied to college and 100% of the students that applied have been accepted.