



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

High School for Medical Professions

High School K633

**1600 Rockaway Parkway
Brooklyn
NY 11236**

Principal: Pauline O'Brien

**Date of review: March 17, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Rod Bowen**

The School Context

High School for Medical Professions is a high school with 418 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 4% Asian, 80% Black, 13% Hispanic, and 1% White students. The student body includes 1% English Language Learners and 15% students with disabilities. Boys account for 34% of the students enrolled and girls account for 66%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 91.8%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	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	Celebration	Well Developed
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	Additional Findings	Proficient
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		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	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		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	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	Focus	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

School staff ensures that curricula align with the Common Core Learning Standards, strategically integrate a balance between informational and literary text, as well as emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills in a coherent way across grades and subject areas.

Impact

All learners in all grades and content areas are using curricula that promote college and career readiness, and require the demonstration of student thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- Curricula across three different subject areas focused on the use of informational text. The key learning tasks in a social studies lesson utilized primary documents reflecting various perspectives on the Treaty of Versailles. They included a letter from a German army general, the German Declaration of War, and a statement from the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs. An earth science activity required students to read an article about the identification of a distant galaxy from the early cosmos.
- An English Language Arts (ELA) unit plan outlined how students would use literature, informational text and personal opinion to develop informative and motivational self-help manuals for teens. In addition to informational articles provided by teachers, they would also choose articles from periodicals and the *New York Times*.
- In the planning documents for another ELA course, students seeking to understand his motivations would analyze Macbeth's final soliloquy. The summarizing activity for the day's lesson was for students to write about how they would connect the soliloquy to informational text analyzed previously about the presidential candidates.
- The lesson plan for an Advanced Placement science course began with the use of an article pertaining to the validity of scientific experiments. The activity embedded the ELA reading standard involving citing textual evidence to support analysis and inferences.
- A math performance task aligned to Common Core Learning Standards that required students to add polynomials, multiply monomials and binomials, as well as factor and graph quadratic functions, provided students with the opportunity to apply these skills by calculating the area of various rooms in a house renovation project.

Area of Focus

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

Though the majority of teachers are engaged in structured, professional collaborations that promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards, the effective use of inquiry varies across teams. Teacher teams are systematically analyzing key elements of assessment data and student work.

Impact

The instructional capacity of teachers is strengthening, as is the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards, however, the school community is still working toward consistent instructional coherence and increased student achievement for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- The school acquired a clear protocol for looking at student work. The steps include analyzing the task itself, examining the instructional context and the alignment of the task to Common Core State Standards, analyzing the individual student work, analyzing the collection of student work, and providing suggestions for improvement. During a teacher team meeting focused on student work, the presenting teacher did a brief overview of the task. They discussed the challenges of adapting the State standards to the common rubric, and then reviewed the student work samples. Though participants did not talk in-depth about either an individual student's work, or a concentrated analysis of the collection of samples provided, they did identify issues with syntax, grammar and spelling. One teacher added, "One of the biggest problems we have, yes, is syntax, but we have to stay with what's the purpose and who is the audience." Another teacher shared that though the school has an essay rubric, they need to develop one for narrative writing. Since the analysis of student work in this particular meeting was not focused, there was no clear next step noted.
- Minutes from a number of team meetings across grades show that looking at student work is a consistent practice. Teachers shared that the impact on their instruction included reading and analyzing primary documents in social studies, breaking down questions and teaching general academic vocabulary in science and using sentence starters and graphic organizers to teach writing across subject areas.
- One team focused on inquiry began with the questions, "Where can we create a space for question development in our lesson plan? How can we raise the rigor of questions asked by our students?" Documentation of this inquiry cycle indicated goals, mid-cycle formative benchmarks, end of cycle summative benchmarks, as well as the notes from various meetings. An example of what worked was purposefully designing activities that required students to come up with questions. What did not work is getting students to serve as audience members to effectively ask questions of a presenter. A next step was to add more question development into the next unit's performance task and research based student projects.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers consistently implement strategies that reflect the belief that students learn best when they are engaged in discussion with each other.

Impact

Students, including those with learning disabilities, are engaged in curricula-aligned, challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in their work products.

Supporting Evidence

- Pairs of students stood and faced each other in a history class. Each person in each pair represented a side, arguing whether or not to engage in World War I. The teacher circulated and coached her students, reminding them to back their reasons up with evidence. In addition, they needed to take notes on their opponent's points so that they could prepare a rebuttal. In one pair, a student asserted, "The United States should join the war because we don't want to seem weak." The other student replied, "If they had never gone to war, we would have never lost so many lives." At one point, the pairs separated so that the two teams represented in the debate could caucus and share their notes on the opposing team's positions.
- An ELA teacher consistently encouraged his students to discuss with and engage each other as they addressed character choices in *Macbeth*. "Say it to her not me. You're arguing with her." "Do you mind if she disagrees with you? Why?" He also clarified, "Remember, a rebuttal is not an opinion. You need to use facts." Students discussed why Lady Macbeth committed suicide using evidence from the text as well as from the film version they had viewed.
- The teacher of a math class asked leveled questions throughout the lesson such as: "So how should we actually solve this problem?", "How can I find the area of this rectangle?" and "What is a binomial?" He also pushed student discussion with prompts like "Can someone help him?", and "Does anyone have questions for him about how he distributed?" A student built on the thinking of a peer with, "I did not agree because he added and didn't multiply, so he should try it a different way."
- During a science lesson, the teacher posed questions intended for students to engage in discussion. "If it starts moving toward us, what happens to the spectrum?", and "How could we use the Doppler effect in astronomy?" However, students were not familiar enough with the content to engage in any class conversation.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use and create assessments and rubrics aligned to the school's curricula. In addition, teachers use common assessments to determine student progress across grades and subject areas.

Impact

Students and teachers receive actionable feedback from ongoing assessment practices. Data from common assessments inform curricular and instructional adjustments.

Supporting Evidence

- Students demonstrated a clear understanding of how to improve their work based on feedback provided to them. Their comments included, "In this essay, I was supposed to compare the author with a character in her book. I wasn't consistent with using relevant evidence from the book. I think I focused too much on my opinion", "In this Spanish assignment, my answers were too short and I didn't use the present and the past tense right.", and "We had to write an argument, but I wasn't clear on the reason for my position. I didn't explain it well."
- Celebrated skills found in a student's work included sufficient use of evidence and skillful organization. The area of focus was little use of citation (parenthetical). On another student's writing, the teacher commended her use of insightful claims, yet pushed the student to develop conclusions with more details.
- After analyzing the data from a math assessment, the following skills were targeted for re-teaching: factoring quadratic expressions, finding zeros of functions, close reading to understand key vocabulary in the questions, using the calculator to get a table or graph, and manipulating equations with multiple variables. The essential question of the next unit was, "How can we use close reading to understand what the Regents question is asking?" A lesson from that unit provided students with time to understand the origin of common misconceptions.
- Analysis of data from a chemistry exam showed that half of the students incorrectly answered the two items pertaining to the topic of moles. A subsequent lesson plan shows the teacher would clearly define moles again for the class, model how moles can be calculated, and provide students with an opportunity to do similar calculations in addition to evidencing their understanding of moles as a unit of measurement for mass.
- Comparative data showed an increase in students' proper use of present tense endings in Spanish. The teacher revisited the skill after the initial assessment through interactive games, chants and short writing tasks.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations pertaining to discussion and writing across classrooms. School leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations to families that are connected to a path to college and careers.

Impact

School leaders provide training to staff and there is a system of accountability for the school leader's expectations. Families understand their children's progress toward the school's high expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- The prevalence of the school leaders' focused expectations are found in various contexts throughout the school. A review of teacher goals includes statements such as "I will assess students on their ability to provide a purpose for their work through the use of claim, provide evidence, demonstrate awareness for an opposing view, cite their sources, and organize their writing so that it is clear and cohesive."
- Observation feedback to teachers is also aligned to the school's instructional foci. One piece of constructive feedback read, "In order to hold all students individually accountable for the reading and discussion, require a writing piece within the lesson in which the students can use evidence from both their reading and small group discussion."
- The professional development plan that informs the efforts of the school's math/science consultant notes that he is to work with teachers on developing student expertise in writing across the math and science curriculum as well as questioning and discussion techniques. One school wide professional learning session earlier in the school year focused on the problem of practice: Struggling with building discussion into class activities without devoting an entire period to discussion, debate, or following a protocol.
- Parents interviewed unanimously agreed that the school communicates with parents regarding student progress in a variety of ways including emails, phone calls, and postal mail. In addition, parents have access to an on-line grading and communication system, which keeps them up to date with assignment completion, assessment scores and course grades. A parent noted that she gets regular notifications on her phone when there are updates to the on-line system.
- Parents also mentioned a progress tracker shared during conferences that clearly shows their children's status toward graduation.