



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

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2015-2016

**High School of Economics and Finance**

**High School M489**

**100 Trinity Place  
Manhattan  
NY 10006**

**Principal: Michael Stanzione**

**Date of review: April 14, 2016  
Lead Reviewer: Debra Freeman**

## The School Context

High School of Economics and Finance is a high school with 763 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 22% Asian, 22% Black, 47% Hispanic, and 8% White students. The student body includes 5% English Language Learners and 19% students with disabilities. Boys account for 59% of the students enrolled and girls account for 41%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 88.7%.

## 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>Well Developed</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>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>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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-----------------------

### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, strategically integrate the instructional shifts, and emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order thinking.

### Impact

The school's curricula and academic tasks create school-wide instructional coherence, promote college and career readiness, and result in all learners given opportunities to demonstrate their thinking.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school created a four-year research-writing program that accelerates in task rigor each year. Ninth grade students begin in a 16-week freshman seminar during which they learn how to write a perfect paragraph and build competency toward completing their first English Language Arts (ELA) essay on whether traditions empower people to meet their full potential. In history, students write biographies after researching American historical figures, and this year Algebra students do the same with famous mathematicians. At the close of this course, students write essays that outline their lives after the school day ends, and learn how to revise and peer edit. Students learn effective researching skills, use of library resources, and writing skills such as the five-paragraph essay. By the eleventh grade, students are focused on applying Modern Language Association (MLA) citations and defending thesis statements using multiple sources. In their senior year, students take a college writing class where they learn to write papers that reflect what they will experience in college. Student work products reviewed reflected improvements in writing over the four years.
- Curricula emphasize student research to engage students' in high-level skills needed for college and career. For example, for a statistics survey project students select a topic to explore in depth by first developing and administering a survey. This requires students to analyze collected data and prepare a written report that provides background on the investigation, a description and reflection on the methodology employed, and graphical and numerical summaries. In a class presentation, students collectively offer interpretations of their findings, generalizations drawn, and the pitfalls encountered throughout the research process. Similarly, after reading *Lord of the Flies*, students were required to find information on Hitler's rise to power and his treatment of the Jews, and compare or contrast Jack's rise to power and his treatment of Piggy and Ralph. Another choice offered to students was to research human rights abuses in current governments such as Rwanda or Israel and to connect this learning to Golding's philosophy.
- All lesson plans include supports for students with disabilities and English Language Learners. For example, academic vocabulary or word banks are provided across content area units and lessons. Math curricula provide opportunities for students to advance or receive support at their levels. Teachers across content areas include in their plans the specific ways they group their students so that students collaborate on work products such as discussing findings in a text on relationships in Living Environment or estimating probability in math.

## Area of Focus

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
---------------------------	---------------------	----------------	-------------------

### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies inconsistently provided multiple entry points into curricula and uneven opportunities for students to be engaged in challenging tasks and discussion.

### Impact

All learners were not able to consistently demonstrate higher order thinking skills either through participation or in their work products.

### Supporting Evidence

- In a tenth grade ELA class students worked in groups to craft a letter using evidence from Martin Luther King's *Letter from Birmingham Jail* that would offer insight into King's purpose for writing the letter. Students would do so by assuming the role of the clergymen he addressed in his letter. Students were grouped by both behavioral and performance levels such as "introvert" or "low" as indicated on the lesson plan. Further, according to the lesson plan, students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs) were given the text the night before and asked to find synonyms for unfamiliar vocabulary words. The task engaged some students with searching for evidence in the text to gain a perspective into the minds of clergymen; however, participation was uneven, with only some students participating, while others remained silent.
- In two math classrooms visited, students noted that they review content at home and then assess how well they did on the independent assignment in class. This enables students to advance to more difficult problems, and gives the teacher the ability to target students for additional support. In both classes, teachers worked with a small group of students, while other students worked independently, or in partnerships to support each other. Several students noted their appreciation for independent work time, "I like working by myself because there are no distractions and if I can do it myself, I can move to more difficult problems." However, there was minimal evidence of support for students who just needed a quick check-in relative to their work before moving on to their next task.
- In the Virtual Enterprise classroom, students showed ownership of their work to create a business plan and presentation for the Citywide Business Plan Competition. One student, the classroom Chief of Operations (CEO), introduced each committee from the sales team to the accounting team along with each team's action plans. The CEO offered, "We have been planning this idea for selling 401K plans to the public for months", further stating that this work strengthens "our financial literacy." However, in most classes, teachers generated all questions, often at low Depth of Knowledge (DOK) levels, and students responded to teacher-generated questioning. For example, students in the United States History class were working on a document-based (DBQ) Regents task regarding World War I. The teacher posed questions that required a single word answer, such as "Is this different or the same?" in reference to a political cartoon. When a student asked a question, the teacher deferred, "We'll get to that" and the teacher's line of questioning continued, "What is one reason to support prohibition?" When students responded, the teacher moved on without engaging students in a discussion asking them to add to or disagree with each other's responses or to use text evidence to justify statements.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

### Findings

Across classrooms teachers use or create common assessments aligned to the school's curricula to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subjects.

### Impact

Students and teachers share actionable feedback regarding student achievement and student results are used to adjust curricula and instruction.

### Supporting Evidence

- At the start of the school's second semester in February all students meet with their teachers across subjects to identify a reachable and a stretch goal based on fall assessment data. Students create actionable steps they will take to reach their goals. In goals reviewed, students noted the importance of paying closer attention to class notes and exam outcomes to guide their study habits, or identified targeted grades to aspire to. Additionally, all students receive ongoing feedback from their teachers via both the school's online grading platform, which is updated at a minimum of twice monthly, and on their authentic work products. One student noted that as a result of her teacher's feedback she realized that to strengthen her essay thesis she would need to provide more evidence. Similarly, another student who struggled with support for a counterclaim said his teacher provided practice assessments to strengthen his fluency in this skill. After the set of assessments, and ongoing teacher and peer feedback, he received a 95 on the next exam. "The essay was worrisome because I am a good essay writer, but the counterclaim is hard. I now use the teacher's study guide to open my mind."
- There are several ways the school tracks student progress toward goals, using the data to provide feedback to students and to inform teachers' adjustments to instruction. The school's pivot table called the "Credit Grail" targets students falling below two credits in scholarship or missing out on attaining their grade average, thus in need of academic support. Math teachers aggregate assessment data either to determine topics necessary for reteaching or to identify students who require additional practice in a skill. All lesson plans include exit ticket questions aligned to learning targets and thus provide information to drive the next day's instruction, student groupings, or lesson pacing. Jupiter Grades provides students with ongoing and timely feedback so they can address missed work or areas in which they need to improve. One student shared that after receiving an 82 on an ELA essay, it was his teacher's feedback relative to decisively analyzing text, to connect the claim and counterclaim, that helped him earn a 95.
- After examining data from the previous Common Core Algebra Regents teachers in the math department learned that students struggled with understanding what was required on short answer exam questions. To help students prepare for the upcoming June exam, the teachers created a weekly seminar for 30 targeted students with an emphasis on the academic vocabulary in exam questions that would help them to understand the math terms that "tell me to show my work." Students, therefore, analyzed the language in the January Regents to alert them to what must be considered before solving the problem. For further support, students reflect on the problems' level of difficulty from easy or medium to challenging. As a result, after taking the culminating exam, all but 3 students earned college readiness grade levels.

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

### Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to all staff aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. The school's staff establishes a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations to all students.

### Impact

All staff receives training so that they are accountable for meeting expectations. Students receive ongoing and detailed feedback to prepare them for their next academic level.

### Supporting Evidence

- As articulated in the school's professional development plan, teachers met during common planning time for six-sessions of training led by school administrators, on the elements in the *Danielson Framework for Teaching*. Additionally, teachers then met across disciplines to engage in topics such as using questioning and discussion techniques and engaging students in learning. Furthermore, the principal created a set of new teacher workshops for professional development in time management, grading policy, online grading, and best practices. New teachers and school leaders read *Grade Smarter, Not Harder*, and visited model classrooms where teachers implemented practices aligned to Danielson.
- In partnership with Working in Support of Education (WISE), 50 to 60% of incoming ninth graders begin the school year in the month of July and are enrolled in a 75-hour bridge program that offers courses in ELA, math, and Introduction to Finance. Academic expectations are set as students ready for the transition to their first year in high school. Students learn about the school's graduation requirements, are introduced to the school's college planning timeline that begins in freshman year, and during breakfast meetings discuss topics such as nine ways to study that work. Additionally, all students take the Algebra Regents at the end of the program, which serves to identify students for either a one or two-year Algebra sequence. As a result of this early acceleration and after completion of a one-year Algebra course, one assistant principal shared that over two thirds of his 2015 class earned college readiness levels on the Regents exam. High academic expectations are further addressed through the summer-required reading of two books that are introduced in the first ELA course.
- The school employs a full time college advisor who hosts four college nights, a transcript week, and maintains the school's "Are You Green" spreadsheet that notifies students of their progress toward college and career readiness. Additionally, the school's online grading platform offers students feedback on progress toward their next academic level. A student shared that the school's partnership with Pace College provides all students with additional support in college readiness. Students have many opportunities through the WISE Institute to prepare for college and career in 8 week cycles in work-based learning experiences. One student shared that he has done this eight times because participating on a job site gives him a window into his future. Additionally, students are able to participate in 8-week modules that target financial career interests with opportunities to pursue internships. The school's focus on building students college and career readiness, therefore, resulted in 98% of last year's graduating class being accepted into two or four-year colleges.

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

### Findings

The majority of teachers engage in professional collaborations that promote school goals and implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Teacher teams analyze assessment data and student work for students they share or are focused on.

### Impact

The work of teacher teams typically results in strengthening teacher capacity and results in progress toward goals for groups of students.

### Supporting Evidence

- In the math team meeting, two math general education teachers, who had completed their Unit 6 Algebra plan and assessed their students' understanding, shared what they learned with their colleagues who teach an Integrated Co-Teaching class. The purpose for this sharing of practice was to collectively develop an action plan for reteaching specific skills such as writing exponential equations or simplifying a fraction. After assessing what their students understood, they realized that students' ability to work with exponential formulas would need to be reinforced. They also shared that they want to improve in provide ongoing feedback on exit tickets to strengthen students' skills in this area. Additionally, after examining the unit's assessments, they learned that students had difficulty calculating the average rate of change of a function or using the properties of exponents to transform expressions for exponential functions. The team agreed to next steps, viewed the two presenting math teachers' classroom videos, and engaged in solving the problem themselves to more accurately surface potential misconceptions and adjust their instruction accordingly. Thus, the team reflected on areas for their own improvement while also supporting their colleagues. As one teacher offered, "We want students to understand the why in math processes."
- The Common Planning Team engages in ongoing work around planning and adjusting curricula, providing feedback to each other on resource choices, and creating midterm, final, and formative assessments. The products of their collaborative work are stored on a Google Doc for feedback from peers and for the team to maintain accountability with school leaders. The ICT team's work supports the department teams in that it meets bimonthly to create pacing calendars and address accommodations for students with disabilities when they are administered uniform exams. Their work includes modified outlines for the thematic essay or document-based essays, and as one teacher stated, "We learn areas where we need to be repetitive, for example, students have trouble with cause and effect questions. We also offer opportunities for all students to retake tests and exit tickets." Additionally, a member of the accounting team shared that providing her students with self-evaluations aligned to math concepts mastered increased their performance, and was coherent with the math and ELA teams' goals for improved performance in writing and math.
- After reviewing the text-heavy content of the new ELA Regents exams, and reviewing previous exam results, the ELA team allocated additional weekly time for silent sustained reading, revised curricula emphasizing non-fiction texts, and increased nonfiction texts in classroom libraries. Additionally, the team's ongoing work to strengthen the school's four-year writing program has resulted in 95% of eleventh graders passing the ELA Regents, and two-thirds of students earning college-ready status on the January Regents exam.