



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

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2015-2016

**High School M560 - City As School**

**High School M560**

**16 Clarkson Street  
Manhattan  
NY 10014**

**Principal: Alan Cheng**

**Date of review: January 21, 2016  
Lead Reviewer: Rod Bowen**

## The School Context

High School M560 - City As School is a high school with 621 students from grade nine through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 5% Asian, 33% Black, 43% Hispanic, and 16% White students. The student body includes 3% English Language Learners and 19% students with disabilities. Boys account for 45% of the students enrolled and girls account for 55%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 62.2%.

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

## Area of Celebration

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

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture of learning that systematically communicates a unified set of high expectations.

### Impact

Teachers receive training that results in a culture of mutual accountability for the high expectations communicated by school leaders. Students, including high need sub-groups, own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level.

### Supporting Evidence

- In addition to subject area New York Performance Standards Consortium rubrics and the Common Core Learning Standards, the school developed a unifying instructional framework called *The Four Traits*. These traits are *Agency, Critical Thinking, Self-Expression* and *Community-Mindedness*. Teacher teams work to ensure that the four traits are reflected in each other's course descriptions and project instructions by using a consultancy protocol. Minutes from a social studies team meeting listed as a next step, "We need to look at our presentation outline and revise it so that it allows for creative social studies research papers," which is informed by the traits of critical thinking and self-expression.
- In response to teacher requests for samples of curricular documents that meet the school's high expectations for planning, an email from the assistant principal directed staff to an online folder that contains moderation study documents, lesson planning resources, sample course descriptions, and Common Core Learning Standards materials. One document illustrated how to plan to promote intellectual engagement. A sample course study outline included the objective "Define and exercise agency in classroom to make learning organic, meaningful and connected to their lives beyond school."
- All students are engaged in credit-bearing internships that they choose from a list of options. The school's resource catalogue lists areas of interest and accompanying roles that students might have at partnering internship sites. In the area of activism, a student can be an Advocacy Volunteer through the organization Community Voices Heard. Those interested in business can serve as a Realtor Assistant with the real estate firm, Corcoran Realty. There are over one hundred internship possibilities across twenty four fields. Students are also programmed for internship seminars where students read articles and journals as well as engage in activities related to work force readiness.
- Students noted that they learn about themselves in internships, specifically what they are interested in, what fields they may want to pursue and what colleges might be best for them given their interests. One student claimed that he learned that he needed to get better in biology to go into the occupation he is most excited about. Another student stated that he has learned how to manage himself in a work environment; "I learned how to pace myself and set up an agenda to get work done in an orderly manner." Students also noted that they learned interviewing skills as well as how to work with a supervisor. Students articulated their ability to select and even create the internships that are best for them.

## Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, strategically integrate instructional shifts as well as emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills in a coherent way across grades and subject areas.

### Impact

Curricular coherence across grades and subject areas promotes college and career readiness for all students; requiring that all of them, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, demonstrate their thinking. However, teachers are still in the process of purposefully building curricular alignment to *The Four Traits*.

### Supporting Evidence

- All project-based portfolio courses are backward planned and informed by the Consortium rubrics which are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. *The Four Traits* are also emphasized as a means for students to make their thinking visible; however curricular documents do not consistently embed *The Four Traits* across all courses and subject areas.
- The requirements for a social studies research paper include a thesis statement, using at least three to five sources (both primary and secondary) and making sure that citations are quoted. A science paper must consist of an abstract, background research, experiment design, data table, analysis and a conclusion.
- An activity in an economics class had students rotating through work stations where they would give and receive peer feedback, look for evidence to support their writing, brainstorm evidence that would support their arguments/message, identify a topic, research question and thesis and read an assigned text.
- The expectations for students to produce artist statements require that they answer a number of questions including, "What have you experienced during the creation of this project?" and "What was the most challenging aspect of this project?"
- One of the math activities asks students to interpret geometric shapes that they manipulate: "Move the line around until you find another tangent line on the opposite side of the circle. What is the equation of the line at this location?"

## Additional Findings

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

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations. Distributed leadership structures are embedded so that there is effective teacher leadership.

### Impact

Teacher instructional capacity has strengthened through the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards, resulting in school-wide instructional coherence and achievement for all students. Teachers play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

### Supporting Evidence

- During an English Language Arts (ELA) team meeting, a teacher presented the dilemma “How do we strike a balance between providing scaffolds and supports, and engaging students in authentic and meaningful analysis in their writing?” The school’s consultancy protocol, samples of student work, a critical lens literary essay project description, and the New York State Performance Standards Consortium Performance Assessment rubric were used to guide the productivity of the meeting. Teachers were overheard asking probing questions such as, “What was your approach to class and group discussion around the text?” As the team progressed through the protocol, teachers noted the need to follow up class discussions with free writing. There was consensus in exploring the discussion-free writing strategy as a next step.
- Minutes from a science team meeting included their recommendations to the scheduling committee for cycle two. They include giving teachers the opportunity to alternate their daily schedules, encourage that teachers minimize teaching periods 2 and 3 back-to-back, and allow teachers to apply for more flexibility in their start and end schedules.
- Approximately half of the students’ school week is spent off-site at internships. Teachers play direct roles in establishing internships, at times in collaboration with students, based on student interest and credit accumulation needs. Select staff is then charged with maintaining ongoing communication with site supervisors to ensure that students successfully meet the requirements for the internships.
- Using student credit accumulation data, teachers collaborate to build individualized course schedules prior to each cycle that enable students to have varying levels of choice and support.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### **Findings**

Across the vast majority of classes, curricular aligned teaching practices reflect a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking.

### **Impact**

Pedagogical practice is informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and the instructional shifts, resulting in active student participation and ownership of their own learning.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- All projects that students were engaged in were real world applicable and informed by student interest. In a science class, a student chose a research question because she always wanted to know which product was more effective to reduce bacteria build up in a cut or wound.
- Students engaged in creating a two dimensional world with specific geometric shapes. A student was designing a house using a rectangle and an equilateral triangle. An Unidentified Flying Object (UFO) would have the shape of an isosceles triangle, and eventually be animated to fly past the house. When asked what he's learned from working on this kind of project he stated, "Now I realize that geometry is everywhere around us."
- In an art class, two students read each other's artist statements and discussed how their work created an original Afrofuturistic narrative. "I made my character bi-racial, which puts him in a stagnant position because his sides are fighting." The other student artist noted that his work challenged the idea of freedom. "I was giving the example of how people of color are physically free, but not mentally and spiritually."
- Students in a social studies class were paired and engaged in supporting each other in moving their end of cycle projects toward completion. One student was overheard telling her peer not to use the phrase, "pretty much" in his writing. Another pair was discussing the illusion of choice. Across the room, a student helped her partner clarify the counterclaim that he would present in his paper.

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

Across the vast majority of classrooms, assessment practices are aligned with the school's curricula, offer a clear portrait of student mastery and consistently reflect the varied use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

### **Impact**

Teachers and students receive actionable and meaningful feedback regarding student achievement. Teachers make effective adjustments to meet all students' learning needs and students are aware of their next learning steps.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- All students are expected to complete end of cycle projects that are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards as well as the criteria outlined in subject specific New York State Standards Consortium rubrics. Science projects are assessed by how well they have been researched and contextualized, the design of the experiment, how well data is collected, organized and analyzed, and how well the results are analyzed and interpreted. In addition, the required oral presentations are evaluated by a public speaking rubric which assesses student voice and presentation as it relates to the content of the written project.
- Student projects and papers are uploaded to an online platform which allows for ongoing feedback and communication from teachers that inform student progress and revisions. One such comment read, "So, some of this came from an outside source so you need to cite it. Also, focus on what is actually relevant to the thesis. What are you arguing and how does this information support your argument?" After addressing the issues noted in the feedback, the student followed up with the comment, "marked as resolved." In cases where the student's revision isn't sufficient, the comment reads, "re-opened", as a signal for further edits.
- In prompting students to reflect on an ELA critical lens essay which incorporates two texts, students had to prepare for a conference with their teacher by addressing questions such as "What is your next step for class today?", "What do you need after class so that you can finish your literary essay?" and "Are there specific aspects that you struggled with?"
- Students referred to rubrics and criteria check lists informing both self and peer assessment. One student noted that although he knows he's supposed to look at peer work to help them improve, he uses it as an opportunity to learn from them for his own writing. Another student noted that in her English class they always look at each other's critical lens essays to give feedback.