Department of Education
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

Long Island City High School

High School Q450

14-30 Broadway
Queens
NY 11106

Principal: Vivian Selenikas

Date of review: April 7, 2016
Lead Reviewer: AJ Hepworth

The School Context

Long Island City High School is a high school with 2,119 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 17% Asian, 13% Black, 61% Hispanic, and 7% White students. The student body includes 12% English Language Learners and 17% 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 80.2%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
To what extent does the school…	**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	**Additional Findings**	**Proficient**
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	**Focus**	**Developing**
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		
To what extent does the school…	**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	**Celebration**	**Proficient**
Systems for Improvement		
To what extent does the school…	**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	**Additional Findings**	**Proficient**

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff and provide training. Teacher teams and staff also foster a culture of learning that includes consistently communicating high expectations for all students and offering them ongoing feedback and advisement.

Impact
A system of accountability for high expectations is established. It supports teachers in improving their practice and students as they prepare for the next level of their college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders provide staff a faculty handbook and review academic expectations in alignment with the school's core values, which include success in learning for all at professional development sessions. All Small Learning Community (SLC) teachers review the school core values with their students "to strengthen their impact." Additionally, the student handbook was revised following student input through a review of the document as non-fiction based text. The revised version was provided to all students in conjunction with learning contracts regarding student accountability.

- Through an online tracking system, students are made aware of their required credits accumulated, attendance, and Regents grades. Students representing the diverse school population verified that they check the online tracker system at least once a month, and several said they do it more frequently. Additionally, several students shared that they generate goals for themselves on goal sheets in some classes. A review of goal documents included students writing a goal with three steps that they will take to achieve the intended goal within a defined timeline.

- The opportunity for earning college credit exists for all students and most students were aware that Advanced Placement (AP) classes were an option for them to acquire college credit. Students feel the AP courses "prepare you for college" and "are really advanced." A school summary report highlights 561 students enrolled in AP courses during the 2014-2015 school year, including freshman through seniors. The majority of students received a score of 1 or 2 (85.3%) in 20 various AP courses. Staff is purposefully scheduled to instruct a wide variety of learners, inclusive of the highest and lowest achieving students in the building to build academic capacity through content.

- Students, and as well, are encouraged to attend college readiness workshops, college visitations, college fairs, and the grade 9 "boot camp." Summer "boot camp" offers students the opportunity to enroll in high school courses to acquire a preview of high school coursework. Students also participate in visits to nearby junior high schools.

- Building leaders provide feedback to teachers through the use of email and formal reports based on observations. In addition to strategic written next steps regarding building instructional focus initiatives such as student engagement and designing coherent instruction, one-to-one meetings are scheduled with various staff to support their lesson planning in the improvement of the building instructional focused initiatives.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing

Findings
Across classrooms, student work products and teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact
Student work products and discussions reflect an uneven level of student thinking, participation, and engagement in challenging tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- An instructional belief communicated by both building leaders and staff is that multiple entry points should be used to engage students. There is also a belief that teaching strategies should be informed by data, in addition to the implementation of Writing is Thinking with Strategic Inquiry (WITsi) coherently throughout the building. Although WITsi strategies were observed to be coherent throughout a majority of the classes and across grades, student engagement and opportunities to demonstrate their thinking through participation and discussions in challenging tasks was limited. For example, students in a science class were writing about carbohydrates and lipids using WITsi strategies, however, one student communicated he was just sitting and waiting "because it is easy." Once all students appeared to have completed the task, they shared their expanded sentences directly with the teacher who commented on each one respectively. During a math lesson, the teacher directed the whole group of students to "follow the procedure…just put a here, b here, and c here." Although the teacher circulated the class and looked at student work for completion, students did not engage in any conversations or share their thinking processes with the class. However, during a class where a special education teacher and English Language Arts (ELA) teacher pushed-in, students shared out their journal writing responses based on a text reading while some students received individualized instruction. Individual instruction and whole group sharing was not observed as being coherent through most classes.

- Across most classes, questions directed to individual students for the whole class were low-level Webb's *Depth of Knowledge* questions, hence limiting demonstration of student thinking. For example, in an AP math class the teacher reviewed a series of multiple-choice questions exclusively verbally with no visual supports. Additionally, he stated one question "was fairly straightforward, so [I am] going to move on," although one girl raised her hand and said "it was hard for me, could you go over it?" Similarly, in a U.S. government class, students were reviewing various court cases and asked, "What is the court's decision, in very simple terms?" Most student responses were one-word answers such that they limited opportunities for richer content knowledge, although the teacher seized the moment to expand with more detail.

- Group work is planned in most classes to engage the students and make deeper connections with the content according to building leaders and staff. Students in an English class were directed to read and annotate two passages based on satire and then discuss their findings, although some students did not engage in discussion with their respective partners. In another ELA class, students reviewed and discussed their peers' written paragraphs based on the reading of *Romeo and Juliet*, however some students said they gave their partner all 3s,simply because "he did everything right," with little reference of the rubric.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts through purposeful decisions. Additionally, curricular documents and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills across grades and subjects.

Impact
Instructional planning documents promote career and college readiness for all students to be engaged in rigorous habits and higher-order thinking skills across grades.

Supporting Evidence

- The planning of WITsi strategies both vertically and horizontally exists throughout most content areas. A review of both current and past lesson plan documents and unit plans show purposeful planning for the inclusion of WITsi strategies to improve student writing and understanding in the respective content areas. For example, a social studies exit ticket requires students to complete three paragraphs using information from a chart with the prompts “because,” “but,” and “so”. Another social studies exit ticket referencing the First Amendment is designed with lead in sentences followed by an open-ended written response beginning with “because,” “but,” and “therefore.” A chemistry handout includes space for students to complete a conclusion about an endothermic or exothermic reaction requiring an answer beginning with “because.” The WITsi strategies were shared by staff to be developing in planning instruction across all grades and content areas, including math and art, especially for English Language Learners and students with disabilities. The inclusion of WITsi strategies is used by teachers “to connect [WITsi] to the Common Core Learning Standards” according to building leadership and “how we can [focus on] collaboration and cooperation among the students.”

- Academic vocabulary is emphasized across grades and subjects. Most lesson planning documents identify essential vocabulary words so students can learn to write better and develop college and career readiness skills. For example, during a science lesson, students are provided several vocabulary words, such as endothermic reaction, exothermic reaction, and heat of reaction. Then, one member from each group is in charge of definitions and using various textual resources for support. In another science lesson plan, students are directed to explain the importance of each key vocabulary word.

- Rigorous habits are embedded throughout unit and lesson plan documents designed to engage students in discussions, reflection, and college and career readiness skills. For example, templates are provided to aid students in generating complex paragraphs through the development of a topic sentence, supporting details, and a closing sentence. The template also includes a checklist for students to reflect on their completion of required components. Most student-worksheets provide space for students to explain their thinking. For example, several task handouts include directions such as, “One question can be answered by everyone and the other is of a higher level,” “Provide your reasoning with textual evidence in support of your reasoning,” “How is this activity similar to what happens in nature,” and “Explain your group’s ‘majority’ vote.”

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula. Additionally, common assessments are used to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas.

Impact
Actionable feedback is provided to students and teachers regarding student achievement and the results are used to adjust curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use formative practices to collect information frequently at the beginning and end of an instructional period to assess students' understanding and determine next steps. For example, during an ELA lesson, students were provided an exit pass reflection sheet to complete whether they have "completed and satisfied" the task or are "still working on it." A social studies lesson exit pass was presented to students that required them to write a thoughtful response to each item, including three interesting or important things learned from the day's lesson, two important vocabulary words that could be included into their own vernacular, and one question the student still has. During a science lesson do now, students completed a WITsi activity related to their prior knowledge of predator-prey relationships. Once complete, students shared out and the teacher used the information to clarify misconceptions. Throughout instruction, student feedback (entrance ticket, exit ticket, do now) was collected and used to adjust lesson planning the following day or clarification of the current lesson. One teacher concluded her class stating, "Good job with today's lesson, however, tonight's homework is so we can assess how well you know the material."

- The social studies department collects data from each teacher following administration of the first data based question (DBQ) to help move their students forward. Teachers share areas of student struggle with two suggested strategies that can be immediately implemented to address those areas of struggle. Specific strategies planned to move the students' essay scores to a higher score on the rubric include: provision of essay writing outlines, modeling of essay writing, inclusion of similar essays as homework, and increasing the use of WITsi strategies in paragraph writing. Additionally, mock Regents were administered to all students in social studies courses ending in a Regents examination to assess current student understanding and drive future instructional content.

- Rubrics are used consistently across grades and content areas to provide students feedback regarding their achievement on tasks and assessments. A review of many rubrics used throughout content areas reveals rubrics on various point scales, including midpoints such as a 2.5 or 3.5. Actionable feedback is often written to accompany the highlighted rubric rating, including next steps, an overall score, and student reflection. For example, a student data analysis and SMART goal setting writing rubric was created by teachers for students to drive increased achievement on their final argument essay.

- Teachers analyzed student responses on questions from common assessments that caused student confusion due to linguistic difficulty, not content. Modification to instruction included providing students more exposure to similar linguistically designed questions.

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

Findings
The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations that promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards by consistently analyzing assessment data for students.

Impact
Teachers' inquiry work typically results in improved teacher practice and progress toward goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers meet weekly to provide feedback to one another and review student work samples regarding their strengths and weaknesses. Specific students are identified and targeted for implementation of strategies, although teachers note that the majority of students benefit from the strategies used. Additionally, teachers felt the benefit of purposefully focusing their energy to directly assist struggling students with content has also made them become better teachers and more focused on their own pedagogy. For example, several teachers commented how the Instructional Support Services (ISS) collaboration during inquiry has afforded them the opportunity to review student work in other classes and analyze those students' individual strengths and weaknesses so they can adjust their instruction knowing the whole child. Staff also felt the intervisitations have contributed to their improvement in teacher practice. For example, some teachers mentioned that they have designed instruction more purposefully to include non-fiction texts, WITsi strategies, and written explanations and complete sentence writing in all courses, including math.

- During inquiry meetings, teachers review student work and record noticing's, develop wonderings, and next steps. A review of minutes from a math inquiry meeting revealed teachers discussing student and teacher noticings from several intervisitations. One next step identified included the integration of accountable talk stems into daily practice. Minutes from another math inquiry meeting stated next steps within the context of the lesson are to provide appropriately timed opportunities for students to have time for both independent and paired or group work to increase the number of voices in classroom presentations.

- Inquiry teams and individual teachers report seeing a significant improvement in writing skills across all contents areas since the school-wide implementation of WITsi strategies. Several teachers noted their students are writing more full sentences and other teachers noted they have seen their students increase from a raw score of 23 to a near passing 63 on in-class Common Core Learning Standard aligned common assessments. Much of this work is accomplished by the SLC during their common planning time, where they analyze benchmark assessments, develop individual action plans, and design professional development opportunities among peers and, where appropriate, with the peer collaborative teachers.