



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

**Middle College High School at LaGuardia Community
College**

High School Q520

**45-35 Van Dam Street
Queens
NY 11101**

Principal: Linda Siegmund

**Date of review: December 16, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Carolyn Yaffe**

The School Context

Middle College High School at LaGuardia Community College is a high school with 514 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 9% Asian, 5% Black, 78% Hispanic, and 7% White students. The student body includes 1% English Language Learners and 16% students with disabilities. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 92.8%.

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 | 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 <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:

Proficient

Findings

The school community invests time in developing, monitoring, and revising end of cycle performance-based assessments. Scope and sequence and tasks are aligned to both standards for early college courses and NYC Consortium performance-based assessment standards.

Impact

College and career readiness is promoted for all students through a carefully thought out scope and sequence and all students consistently participate in rigorous performance-based assessments across grades and subject areas.

Supporting Evidence

- The Scope and sequence for each key content area is aligned towards the consortium rubrics that outline graduation readiness. Teacher teams in each discipline determine which areas of the rubric to focus on at each grade level to assure completing all aspects of the rubric for graduation. The faculty also adjust the curricular scope and sequence and culminating tasks so they are aligned to the City College of New York (CUNY) entrance exams. This ensures that students are prepared for the early college work they experience while still in high school and maximizes post-secondary opportunities.
- Teacher teams in the various content areas as well as individual teachers, regularly analyze student work. The standards outlined by the rubrics are used to refine performance tasks, and instruction to support all students in their execution of the task. For example, after a review of student work over the course of the fall semester, a member of the English Language Arts team instituted a structure that provides a template for students to organize their writing using topic sentences, introduction of evidence, examples, and discussion.
- Across grades and subject areas, teachers plan for students to engage in rigorous performance tasks that require research, revision and the real-world application of content and skill. Students spoke passionately about such assignments as comparing symbolism in *Like Water for Chocolate* and *A Glass Menagerie*, or exploring the issue of human trafficking to write a children's book on the subject. In a social studies lesson plan, the task required students to research a current war or conflict and analyze its representation in the social media. In all subject areas there are planned opportunities for extended writing and revision with the required use of the appropriate citations from all research sources.

Area of Focus

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

Findings

There are structures for teacher collaborations at both the grade level and within each core discipline that allow teams to examine student work and other instructional artifacts on a regular basis. Through the work of these teams, teachers have developed their leadership capacity.

Impact

While these collaborative structures result in improved teacher practice, they have not yet resulted in mastery of goals for all groups of students. Teachers have a voice in decisions that affect student learning, but do not yet play an integral role in those decisions.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher team meetings are facilitated by selected teacher leaders and are driven by agendas that include goal setting, monitoring of goals, task moderations and the examination of student work. The principal meets with the teacher leaders to identify agenda items for upcoming department meetings, but these meetings do not yet provide a clear path for improved facilitation of and accountability for items discussed during teacher team meetings.
- Teacher teams and individual teachers play a key role in the instructional and programmatic decision-making of the school, such as determining the block schedule. Teachers use feedback from task moderations to inform their own design of culminating assessments.
- Teacher teams develop goals that are aligned with the school's goals of improving credit accumulation, with a special focus on students with disabilities and the students in the lowest one-third in performance. In one teacher team meeting, teachers discussed current pass rates and compared them to former pass rates. However, teachers did not have data in front of them to inform their discussions and there was not a rigorous conversation about the attainment of goals for all groups of students.

Additional Findings

| | | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Quality Indicator: | 2.2 Assessment | Rating: | Proficient |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-------------------|

Findings

The school community utilizes assessments aligned to the NYC Consortium rubrics across grades and subject areas in order to understand student progress towards a set of unified standards.

Impact

Data regarding student performance measured against school-wide rubrics is used to inform and adjust curricula and instruction. Students are provided actionable feedback as a result of these assessments.

Supporting Evidence

- The design of all culminating tasks is driven by the New York Performance Standards Consortium rubrics. A common set of skills associated with each subject area discipline is focused on and assessed throughout the school community. While culminating tasks are not always common across a subject and grade, the skills required of the culminating tasks are common. This allows valuable and actionable information to be gathered on student progress towards the common skills outlined for each discipline. For example, in the science department, the sharing of assessment data allowed team members to pinpoint struggles that ninth and tenth graders were having completing lab reports. This analysis resulted in the adoption of developing a sequence for lab report writing. Emphasizing specific skills in the lower grades and building up to a full lab report in the upper grades was adopted as a teaching practice within the department.
- Students speak with knowledge about the skills from the New York Performance Standards Consortium rubrics and how the feedback allows them to move towards or deepen their skills. A review of student work across subject areas revealed detailed feedback aligned to the rubrics. For example, across many pieces of student work in the humanities, there was specific and consistent feedback on thesis development as well as how to develop and analyze supporting evidence for a thesis.
- There are varying levels of practice for gathering and analyzing aggregate information yielded from assessments. While discipline teams regularly exam tasks and student work during moderations, not all teams record and analyze rubric data across a grade or subject area to provide a big picture view of progress towards standards.

| | | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: | Proficient |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|-------------------|

Findings

The school community has established a culture that revolves around early college expectations for all students. There are clear systems, and structures to communicate these expectations to all students and their families.

Impact

These high expectations result in students taking early college courses that are offered. Detailed information to help them understand how to shape options and opportunities for themselves is ongoing and prepares them for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- Parents unanimously lauded the structures for communication employed by the school leadership and the teaching faculty, as well as the open door policy established by the administration. Parents described the sharing of class syllabi, progress reports and credit accumulation data as key information that keeps them informed of their children's progress toward graduation. They also shared that they receive a great deal of informal communication from teachers and feel that teachers and administrators are accessible for questions.
- The school provides supports towards meeting high expectations. Before school, after school, and Saturday extra help provide opportunities for students to gain mastery over skills and content identified by teachers as needing additional work. A full-time college counselor was added during this school year to add support for college preparation and provide a greater understanding of the nuts and bolts of the college selection and application process.
- The school structure revolves around performance-based assessments that assess competency for graduation. Students describe the rigorous interim benchmarks that all students experience towards demonstrating graduation level competency, including the tenth grade "gateway" presentations that replicate the graduation defense process on a smaller scale. Students describe how these projects give them a clear picture of the graduation level expectations and believe that the projects help them in developing the skills necessary to present an appropriate defense of their work at that time. Students also describe the supportive mentoring process that helps them prepare to defend their portfolio of graduation work, which includes projects in each core subject area and the oral defense of a chosen performance task in order to fulfill graduation requirements.
- Parents shared that they feel supported in understanding the school's performance-based assessments and early college model performance projects. They stated that they are guided in making post-secondary decisions for their children. For example, one parent spoke of extensive consultation with his son's guidance counselor in order to ultimately choose the route of remaining in high school for one additional year and gaining an Associate's Degree during that time.

| | | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Quality Indicator: | 1.2 Pedagogy | Rating: | Proficient |
|---------------------------|---------------------|----------------|-------------------|

Findings

Across most classrooms, students have access to and are engaged in appropriately rigorous tasks, However, teaching practices are not fully aligned to the school's instructional vision.

Impact

Although students are demonstrating complex understandings through culminating written work products, the instruction across a few classrooms did not fully align with the vision adopted by the administration.

Supporting Evidence

- In a grade 10 Earth Science class, students were asked to investigate the question: "How does the substrate affect earthquake magnitude?" They worked in clearly defined groups to generate a spreadsheet to capture data from earthquake trials they had performed with models. Students were able to articulate the hypothesis they had formed prior to the trial and how they would be asked to analyze data from their spreadsheets to produce a lab report.
- In an Integrated Algebra class, students were asked to apply their understanding of how linear equations are used to solve problems in practical applications. Students sat in clearly defined groups of three or four and engaged collaboratively in solving linear equations and readying themselves to present solutions to classmates. Students were able to articulate what they working on and how it aligned to their final project, which involves linear modeling as it applies to car loans and financing.
- In a grade 10 English class, the task centered on the idea of the tragic flaws that exist in contemporary historical and cultural figures. Students worked individually or in pairs to identify the characteristics of individuals with tragic flaws, apply those characteristics to their chosen figures, and prepare oral presentations to persuade their classmates that these flaws affected history.
- In a comparative literature course, students were asked to interpret a film director's interpretation of *King Lear*. While the overall objective allowed students to use and demonstrate their own critical thinking, in the implementation of the lesson, the teacher relied on a few students to answer the majority of questions. Despite the school's stated instructional vision for purposeful groupings, there were no clearly defined groups and although students were asked to analyze techniques in the summary task, most students produced only a generic list of techniques, rather than an analysis of how the use of those techniques contributed to a clear interpretation of *King Lear*.