



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

Maspeth High School

High School Q585

**54-40 74th Street
Queens
NY 11373**

Principal: Khurshid Abdul Mutakabbir

**Date of review: December 8, 2015
Lead Reviewer: AJ Hepworth**

The School Context

Maspeth High School is a high school with 1,003 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 17% Asian, 2% Black, 43% Hispanic, and 36% White students. The student body includes 1% English Language Learners and 13% students with disabilities. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 92.4%.

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	Additional Findings	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	Celebration	Well Developed
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	Well Developed
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	Focus	Well Developed
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	Additional Findings	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best by working in small groups independently where the teacher serves as a facilitator using strategies informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and the instructional shifts.

Impact

Discussions about teaching practices and curricula at the team and school level have led to classrooms, student work products and discussions reflecting high levels of student thinking, participation, and ownership.

Supporting Evidence

- In a science class, students in small groups were investigating the difference between mechanical and chemical digestion by recording their observations while chewing a cracker. A purposeful grouping of students who struggle with more difficult concepts were guided by questions from the teacher who asked them to return to the reading and their notes on the types of digestion. After having reread the information one student realized, "Oh, we are doing both chemical and mechanical!" The teacher asked her to further explain to her group members using her notes and extrapolate more of a complex answer as to why chewing food with saliva helps break down food further.
- Students in a Global Studies class engaged in a rich discussion and collaborative analysis of the West African epic poem of *Sundiata*. Students in small groups discussed the criteria, based on their reflection of a rubric, required for a perfect score on the activity. One student served as room facilitator in front of the class while all other students provided evidence based on the text and recorded the findings in their notes. In an English class, students discussed and highlighted important concepts and key aspects with a partner of the components necessary for a successful essay on Edgar Allan Poe's use of rhetorical devices. When asked, several students confirmed they do this for all assignments so "we know what to do to be successful."
- For a previous night's homework assignment in a history class, students read a series of articles related to the four main theories on the start of World War I. At the beginning of class, students raised their hand to share which of the four theories they mostly felt was the true cause of the start of the war. They were then grouped around the room based upon their opinion. In the small groups ranging from two students to twelve, they had to develop a strategy to share out and advocate their group's opinion. Additional homework assignments and notes were used to further collect evidence in the groups. One group shared out their thoughts that the race to mass produce arms between Britain and Germany created the tensions while another thought that the nationalism during the time of mass imperialism was the "last straw declaring war" the breaking point.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and staff consistently engage in practices that convey high expectations and communicate high expectations and offer feedback to families and students that are connected to a path to college and career readiness.

Impact

Families and students understand their progress towards college and career expectations and are aware of supports in place that help them own their educational experience and prepare for the next level through the development of a culture of mutual accountability with staff. However, parents stated they would like to see a greater role in their partnership with the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Parents expressed they feel the students are well prepared for college as evidenced by their exposure to the level of rigor and the quality of readings. All students read the same materials in each grade, for example, all grade 9 students read *The Odyssey*. Most parents agreed the inclusion of classical literature warranting high-levels of understanding in grade 9 “is meaningful and makes them [student] well prepared.” Additionally, parents agreed their students are far more versed in conversations as a result of the number of debates they engage as their instructional expectations. One parent stated that her daughter is now a “tiger and can carry a conversation.” Another said her daughter never participated in class previously and is now a member of the debate club and has tremendous confidence. Notwithstanding, the rigorous expectations and preparation their children are receiving through the school, parents uniformly agreed they would like to serve in more of a partnership role with the staff as it relates to their child’s education.
- Students expressed they are fully aware of their expectations in all of their classes and they understand their next steps. Several students shared that the school has established mandatory office hours for students to receive guidance and advisement in areas they need improvement. They note these hours are even provided during student lunch time. One student said, there is a “building understanding that we correct work,” in reference to being questioned about, “What kind of individual help you get from your teachers to ensure high expectations are achieved?”
- School leaders and staff have developed several strategies designed to provide feedback and support high expectations for the entire staff. School leaders regularly give “glow and grows” in a non-evaluative, informal observation which is welcomed by staff through rich dialogue. Following a brief observation, staff members will receive a report with specific evaluator notes that offers suggestions to improve instruction, thus providing individualized professional development. More recently, staff has begun a practice of video-taping themselves and sharing it with their department colleagues using the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. School leaders are not involved with the video reviews and staff shared the practice has impacted their pedagogy through developing a deeper understanding of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Additionally, several staff members communicated the practice has resulted in a culture of mutual accountability by affording them the opportunity to look specifically at their colleagues’ pedagogy.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and strategic integration of the instructional shifts are embedded across grades and subject areas and academic tasks emphasize rigorous habits and higher order skills coherently to support all learners.

Impact

Across grades, all students engage in rigorous curricula and academic tasks that promote higher order thinking as well as college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- Unit maps, lesson plans and student work reviewed show academic tasks that are strategic in their alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards and focus on mastery of the instructional shifts. In all content areas, students are immersed in essential questions to cognitively engage them. In a Shakespearian tragedy lesson plan, students are asked to identify the major themes, motifs, and complex characters that emerge in Act One of *Macbeth* while preparing to share their soliloquies and passages of Act One. In a grade 9 biology lesson plan, students are expected to identify the difference between living and nonliving things by answering a series of guided questions based on Bloom's taxonomy including, remembering the nine characteristics of life and creating a table identifying the nine characteristics of life with specific examples of each. All building lesson planning documents have a specific section for teachers to strategically plan guided questions based upon Bloom's Taxonomy.
- Rigorous habits are emphasized in the vast majority of planning documents evidenced by the inclusion of the main standard addressed in each lesson and learning objectives stated in terms of what students will be able to do at the mastery level. In a Mandarin Chinese One lesson plan, the level of mastery expected for all students is to use words of professions and yes/no questions to confirm someone's profession. In an Algebra 2 Trigonometry lesson plan, the objective for mastery states that students will be able to solve for a variable in order to find the inverse of a function algebraically.
- Classical literature from the ancient civilizations is the primary lens used to guide rigorous tasks and higher-order thinking instructional planning across all grades and subject areas. The foundation of the school's curricula includes the memorization of facts, development of logic, and understanding of reasoning embedded in all aspects of the curriculum including science, history, art, and math. The school requires lessons to include Socratic seminars weekly in lesson plans so students are well prepared for speaking and discussions and defending their claims.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use assessments, rubrics and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula and offer a clear portrait of student mastery and a varied use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

Actionable and meaningful feedback is given to students so teachers and students are able to make effective adjustments to their work and be aware of the next steps in the learning process.

Supporting Evidence

- In a theater class, students performed a self-selected Shakespearian monologue in front of their peers. Students provided feedback to each other based on their class performance. The teacher explained the feedback is to consist of warm and cool feedback using the class rubric as a guide. Prior to sharing the individual feedback, groups of two students would share their personal thoughts first. Comments shared to the performers included: good facial expression, very loud and clear diction, emotion in what you were saying was convincing, the pauses could have been shorter, good blocking, and talk a little slower. Other students acknowledged the feedback and often agreed with their classmates while sometimes other disagreed. The rubric was specific for the performance task and required the audience to consider the actors preparation, acting technique, voice and diction, and physicality and stage movement.
- Math classes use both a three and four point rubric to assess student work, similar to the style used by the State assessments. Students are assessed on their ability to answer correctly and not have conceptual or computational errors. Using a rubric, student samples display the level of student achievement as well as anecdotal comments written on the sheet. Examples of teacher feedback include: "Be careful with your notation here. $F(x)$ represents a function. How can you show you are finding the value $x=3$?"; "It seems like you did a reflection instead of a translation. How do they differ?"; "Is this 1 necessary in the denominator? How can the solution be rewritten?"
- Students are expected to self-evaluate in many of their classes. In a social studies class, small teams of students were given a debate rubric prior to their understanding of an assignment where they would have to argue and support a position and opposing position. Once the debate was delivered, they completed a debate analysis and feedback form and ranked their performance on a scale of 'poor to excellent'. The day after the debate students had to complete a self-evaluation sheet consisting of ten questions such as: "What were the strengths of your team?"; "Which parts of the debate did you find most challenging?"; "What areas would you like to improve upon?"; "Did you personally agree with the side you had to defend?".
- In all classes observed, teacher's checks for understanding occurred throughout instruction seamlessly to either promote or redirect the learning. In a math class the teacher reminded groups to "leave no one behind," and spoke intimately with each group and had them clarify their findings and explain the differences between problems when students did not agree on the initial answer. During an English lesson, the teacher questioned a girl how she should make connections when writing her essay using the rubric before she began to create an outline. The student suggested she use a paradox and make good allusions before the teacher moved on to another student.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

During scheduled professional collaborations, teams of teachers share content knowledge and instructional strategies for improving teaching and learning across the school. Distributed leadership practices offer staff members varied opportunities to work with peers and school leaders in making high level decisions about school improvement goals and initiatives.

Impact

The inclusion of all staff in a multitude of teams empowers all teachers to assume responsibility for collectively improving teacher practice and student mastery of applicable performance standards and provides opportunities for teachers to be deeply involved in school level decision-making that affects student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers identified as experts and able to provide additional leadership for the school are offered positions designed to build teacher capacity. Several teachers serve on the building leadership team from various departments including the guidance office. Additionally, the principal supports his building leaders in their personal pursuit of professional goals in administration. Further, all staff serve on a department team where they elect annually one member to be the department leader. In some departments, the elected teacher is an untenured or new teacher who has been identified by the department as a quality candidate capable of serving the department and learning the necessary skills to help further the goals of the school. The department leader meets weekly with the principal to develop an agenda for the week based on feedback from the prior week’s meeting and pressing school issues.
- Teachers have shared responsibility for leadership roles related to their own personal professional development and the schools. Teachers serve as resources to their colleagues by being provided many opportunities to engage in professional opportunities such as attendance at off-site workshops, trying new clubs, or visiting China to understand their pedagogical practices which will improve student achievement. Students are being considered for the trip to China this coming year as well.
- Staff is given the opportunity weekly “to model something we feel strong about and are able to do a professional development session presenting something on a rotating schedule.” Several teachers have shared best practices related to Socratic seminar in content areas, data, student praising, and how to use Skedula, PupilPath, and the interactive white board.
- Teachers observed during an inquiry meeting reviewed videos of each other’s teaching practice and provided warm and cool low-inference feedback. All members of the team videotape themselves at various points of the year and share with their team. Colleagues provide feedback in a manner as directed by the team facilitator that has actionable next steps to improve the presenter’s pedagogy. A first year teacher shared he has been videotaping himself frequently and when the team shares their feedback, it provides him with supports that he may not have noticed without the process and, “We hear ourselves and we see things that we didn’t know such as kids that may not have gotten it.”