



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

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

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2015-2016**

**Leadership Institute**

**High School X276**

**1701 Fulton Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10457**

**Principal: Marta Colon**

**Date of review: April 8, 2016  
Lead Reviewer: Daisy Concepción**

## The School Context

Leadership Institute is a high school with 186 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 0% Asian, 38% Black, 60% Hispanic, and 2% White students. The student body includes 22% English Language Learners and 27% students with disabilities. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 74.9%.

## 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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</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>Proficient</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>Focus</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>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>Proficient</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 and staff effectively communicate expectations to families connected to a path to college and career readiness. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that systematically communicates a unified set of high expectations and effective feedback and guidance support for all students.

### Impact

Partnerships between parents, school staff and the community contribute to a culture of learning and high expectations to support student progress toward college and career readiness and ensure that all students own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level.

### Supporting Evidence

- During a teacher team meeting, teachers were looking at argumentative essays and grappled with the quality of the writing so that students would not be placed in remedial English in college. Teachers in this team shared that their focus was not only to improve writing in high school so that students would pass the Regents, but also that their ultimate goal was to ensure that students had the writing skills and preparation to be able to succeed in college. Teachers stated that they tell their students explicitly that preparing students for college writing was the intention behind the Common Core Learning Standards.
- During the student meeting, students shared that their teachers across all subjects consistently make connections between what they learn in class and what they will need to be able to do in college. Students were able to speak about a path to graduation and shared strategies for receiving an Advance Regents Diploma and for re-taking Regents exams to boost their college application. Students spoke about the advisement and support that they receive from a new community-based organization (CBO) that has a very clear focus on college. Through the CBO and their teachers they have opportunities to travel across states on overnight trips to colleges and attend classes on campus and note how their work in high school prepares them for college.
- During the parent meeting, parents shared how teachers and the CBO worked together to help them understand how to prepare their children for college. They spoke about attending workshops on college planning and financial aid. They also spoke about individual academic conferences and transcript reviews that are held with parents. Parents stated that through participation on trips to colleges, they have had the opportunity to understand the demands of college. These trips created interest in the course work that students receive at the school. The principal instituted an open door policy permitting parents to visit classrooms. Two of the parents in attendance spoke about visiting classes so they could understand what the students were learning. Parents shared that as a result of these trips, and attending classes at the high school, they have more conversations about school with their children and follow up on student performance more closely.

## Area of Focus

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula and consistently use ongoing checks for understanding.

### Impact

While assessment practices provide students with feedback and check for understanding allow for revisions, there are missed opportunities to accurately assess student needs and provide feedback that is actionable so that students are aware of the next steps needed to demonstrate mastery.

### Supporting Evidence

- Actionable feedback was observed in posted student work and in a review of student documents. Feedback to one student stated, "Great job finding evidence to support your opinion of Tom. When you are speaking, state chapter & page #." This criterion was not specified in the attached rubric. While essays on Google Docs reveal actionable, specific and detailed teacher feedback in the margins instructing students on how to narrow the focus of a research project or how to strengthen an argument with supporting evidence, it is not always connected to a rubric so that students could gauge progress toward mastery.
- In some classes, teachers use a scoring rubric designed for holistic scoring to provide feedback to students. These rubrics lack specificity in the key understandings, content, or task-specific skills that a student must include in order to demonstrate mastery and thus result in limited, meaningful feedback to both students and teachers. For example, in a short student response in a Living Environment class, a student wrote about the risk to humans from bioaccumulation. The student explained that field runoff reaches rivers where it is ingested by fish that humans consume. The student received a score of 4 out of 5 for this response on the class work rubric. The criteria for this score reflected, "Student has answered all the questions completely with minimal errors in accuracy and displays minimal spelling error and displays understanding of the concept."
- Many lessons included "criteria for success" either on the interactive white board or on worksheets that students use. For example, in an algebra class, the criteria for success were listed on the student worksheet. Students had to solve the problem and explain their reasoning to a peer, identify and correct intentionally embedded errors, and provide constructive feedback on corrections.
- Checks for understanding happen in both large and small student groups. In a science lab, students worked on designing an experiment measuring how light affects the surface temperature of objects. The teacher used an iPad to record his check-in with small groups of students. He asked students, "Does the distance effect the temperature?", and "How does the angle of the light effect the temperature?" to facilitate in clarifying their hypothesis. Students were observed making revisions to their work as a result of the teacher's check-in. The teacher demonstrated how he stores this video in a grade book to track student progress. During independent writing in an English class, the teacher used a mid-lesson interruption to remind students that they needed to connect their ideas to the basic characteristics shared by the author in the opening paragraph. Subsequently, students were observed re-reading the text.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and content standards, and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher order thinking skills.

### Impact

The schools' curricular decisions ensure that rigorous curricula and tasks across grades and subjects build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all learners.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school uses the *Collections* curriculum as the English Language Arts (ELA) program, *EngageNY* for math, and *New York State Core Curricula* in science and in social studies. Curriculum maps and unit plans reflect a focus on using close reading strategies, annotations and teaching academic vocabulary across grades and subjects. For example, in a Global History unit, students are expected to use close reading skills and annotation as they read Hitler's speech, *The Final Solution*. Students are required to determine the meaning of words and phrases in their political context. Units also reflect strategies such as previewing information, frontloading vocabulary, think-pair-share, picture supports and the use of graphic organizers with sentences starters in English and in Spanish.
- In a Living Environment unit, students read a variety of texts about genetically modified food. Articles include multiple perspectives from an agricultural and scientific perspective. Through close reading, students are expected to make connections across texts and annotate the claims for and against genetically modified foods and their impact on health and the economy as well as the consumer's right to know. Students will write an argumentative essay explaining why the scientific community is divided about the safety of this food and make an argument as to whether genetically modified food is safe or not. Students will need to consider how economics influence the perspective of food safety.
- In an advance placement Spanish unit focusing on beauty and esthetics, students read various texts including *Chac Mool*, a short story using the genre of magical realism. The performance task for this unit requires students to write a narrative, whether real or imagined, using the principles of this magical realism and the central idea of the unit. In another task, students read *La siesta del martes* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez and write an analytical essay exploring the author's development of violence and social justice in the story.
- In an ELA unit, students read Kate Chopin's *The Story of an Hour*, and write a literary analysis essay that shows how the author uses literary devices to convey a central message. In another unit, students read *The Great Gatsby* and write an essay exploring the central idea of social status, money and the characters' failure to achieve the American Dream.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best and teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

### Impact

Teaching strategies and scaffolds ensure that students are engaged in challenging tasks so that they can demonstrate their thinking in both conversation and work products.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school belief and instructional focus of student engagement through activities that require reading, writing, speaking and listening were observed in all classrooms. In an Earth Science class, students discussed the findings of their experiment on insolation and revisited their lab notes. They documented their reflection on their experiment design in Google Docs on their laptops. In a Global History class, students worked in small groups to come up with a working definition of evil and hate. Students then compared their definition with one of Hitler's speeches. Across classrooms visited, students annotated texts and wrote summaries of their share-out sessions.
- Print-rich classrooms provided visual supports for students and made thinking visible with definition, timelines, prompts, strategies and content information. Accountable talk stems and discussion starters, in both Spanish and English, were either taped to desks or available on a ring for student use. In the Living Environment class, English Language Learners (ELLs) had both Spanish and English text and graphic organizers to assist them in collecting evidence for participating in the Socratic seminar discussion. Students followed lessons that clearly displayed learning targets, discussion questions and criteria for success on interactive white boards.
- ELLs and students with Individualized Education Programs (IEP) were strategically included in groups that had more fluency or content knowledge to ensure that everyone engaged in conversation. While some Spanish-speaking students served as clarifying interpreters as in a Global class discussing Nazi Germany, teachers encouraged conversation in students' native language to develop content knowledge. In the English Language Arts class, students brainstormed in Spanish; then use the supports at the table such as accountable talk stems and graphic organizer to begin to frame their ideas in English before the classroom discussion. In the Living Environment class, a student stated that allowing him to participate in discussion in Spanish provided him with opportunities to include ideas that go beyond the text such as his opinion that both funeral homes and the health industry profited from the human diseases created by modified food.
- In an English Language Arts class working on the novel *The Story of an Hour* the teacher allowed for student discussion and brainstorming as a way to collect evidence and generate ideas before engaging students in Writing Is Thinking with Strategic Inquiry (WITsi) strategies to develop their literary analysis essay.

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

Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students they share or on whom they are focused. Distributed leadership structures are in place so that teachers have built leadership capacity.

### Impact

Distributive leadership ensures that teacher team collaborations result in improved teacher practice and progress toward goals for groups of students.

### Supporting Evidence

- In a teacher team meeting, teachers used a protocol to look at student writing to determine how to best support students with vocabulary building. In the previous meeting, the team had decided to use the Frayer Model as a way of having students build a picture word bank for use in the Global History class. The teachers looked at pictures that students drew to serve as concrete reminders of the meaning of the word and noted how students used the vocabulary in context. In one example, they stated that the student was able to use the word “surplus” correctly in a sentence, but not the word “sustenance” which was used in relationship to the word surplus. While teachers initially began to strategize ways to have students remember related words, they decided that neither a synonym nor antonym demonstrated an understanding of the definition or the ability to use it in context. The teachers decided that the recommendation to the principal would be to include a dedicated word work period during lessons. This would enable teachers to focus on explicit instruction of vocabulary by teaching cognates, prefixes, suffixes and parts of speech.
- Many of the specialists at the school such as the English as a New Language (ENL) teachers and teachers who support students with disabilities would pull students out of the classroom for support services. This resulted in students falling behind in their content and those teachers with the most expertise in differentiation, practicing in isolation. Teachers voiced their requests for more help with differentiation and, subsequently, the principal changed scheduling from pull-out to push-in services. This enabled teachers to share differentiated strategies across grades and content. Teachers shared that this created a greater awareness of how students are supported to engage with content. They shared that the principal also teaches a class of ELLs and students with disabilities six periods per week and invites teachers to observe as she models many of the strategies that she asks teachers to use in their classrooms. Teachers shared that this has led to a deeper understanding of the need for more visual supports in classrooms and the use of station teaching for all students. In addition, teachers stated that they realized that the desks needed to be arranged in an H or a U shape across all classrooms to create more opportunities for student engagement and conversation.
- Teacher teamwork focused this year on improving writing through the use of the Writing Is Thinking with Strategic Inquiry (WITsi) strategies to improve Regents scores. While last year no student passed the Global History Regents exam, this year, eight students passed the Regents. On Living Environment, Algebra 1 and English Regents exams students passed with a higher pass rate than in the previous year.