



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

The Metropolitan Soundview High School

High School X521

**1300 Boynton Avenue
Bronx
NY 10472**

Principal: Emarilix Lopez

**Date of review: November 5, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Jacqueline Gonzalez**

The School Context

The Metropolitan Soundview High School is a high school with 431 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 3% Asian, 26% Black, 68% Hispanic, and 2% White students. The student body includes 11% English Language Learners and 22% students with disabilities. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 78.8%.

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	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 <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	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		
<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	Celebration	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	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and staff effectively communicate high expectations for college and career readiness to students and families and provide strategic supports to ensure that students are able to meet those expectations.

Impact

Students, including those in high needs subgroups and their families are able to track progress towards graduation, own their educational experience and prepare for success beyond graduation.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal, although new to the position, is one of the founders of the school and helped to create the vision of high academic expectations for all students at the Metropolitan Soundview High School (MSHS). The administration and staff have prioritized initiatives including daily advisement and mentoring supports for all students and holding students accountable for monitoring their progress towards graduation using an online system, Pupil Path, send a clear message about expectations and have resulted in the school meeting and exceeding targets for graduation rates and college readiness as evidenced by the metrics reported on 2014-2015 School Quality Guide.
- The expectation that all students will enter college and career following graduation from MSHS is clearly embedded in initiatives such as the Peer Group Connection which trains teachers, guidance counselors and seniors to run advisory programs in the school. Students are mentored by upperclassmen and receive advisement from guidance counselors. As a result all ninth-grade students are supported with the information they need to transition academically as well as socially and emotionally from middle school in order to meet the expectations of high school curricula and prepare for post-graduation study and career.
- Criteria for effective teaching practices are outlined early in the school year and are defined in the components of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. The school's "no excuses" expectation that all students will be supported to develop the skills and concepts that they will need in order to be grade- level and graduation ready serves as the premise that holds all stakeholders accountable for students' achievement and success. Credit accumulation data and graduation rates reflect a steady increase over the past three years for the number of students completing grade level requirements on time. Additionally over 70% of students graduating from The Metropolitan Soundview High School able begin their college freshman year without any remediation in math or English Language Arts.
- Parents receive information about their children's progress towards graduation. Parents stated that administrators and teachers are focused on ensuring that their children complete all the requirements for their courses as well as supporting their longer term college and career goals. Families are pleased with the initiatives provided at MSHS such as college trips that widen students' options when making decisions about career and educational goals. They feel supported in helping their children meet the high expectations that have been articulated by the administration.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Across the school, some lessons reflect the pedagogical strategies that engage students in collaborative problem-solving and rigorous tasks. Teaching strategies that facilitate student thinking and discussion are emerging.

Impact

Teacher use of group work, questioning and facilitation strategies do not always extend student thinking or promote participation across classrooms. Thus, some lessons do not yield opportunities for all learners to demonstrate their thinking skills or to complete challenging tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- In classrooms visited across grades and subject areas, school wide expectations for instructional strategies such as questioning, small group work, high levels of student engagement and participation, were inconsistent. In a 10th grade Global History class for example, students worked in groups and were asked to analyze the social and working conditions during the Industrial Revolution from the perspective of different members of the community in that time period. All students were engaged in peer discussion and when prompted by the teacher, they were eager to participate and contribute their thinking. However, this level of discussion was not the trend for most of the lessons observed. The inconsistent use of questioning strategies and student involvement in their own learning results in some missed opportunities to cognitively engage all students.
- Across classrooms and content areas teachers vary in their implementation of strategies for engaging all students in discussions. For example in a science class with English Language Learners, the teacher posed several questions to check student understanding about dominant and recessive genes. Some students responded with one word answers and the resulting discussion although aimed at developing higher order analysis of a process, was mostly teacher directed. In a social studies lesson similarly, the teacher made strong attempts to encourage student thinking and discussion in meaningful group activities that required students to closely read a text and analyze the strength of the contrasting viewpoints on the same topic. However, students in one group struggled with the text and the discussion following the activity only engaged a subset of students, thus the acceleration of thinking and learning is uneven across classrooms.
- A review of student work revealed that teachers ask students to incorporate writing across the content areas. In a math task, students are asked to explain their thinking. In Social Studies, students were asked to pose arguments and develop an essay to support their argument with details from texts used in class as well as additional resources. Student writing varies however, from completing prompts to fully developed essays. Some texts in classroom lessons include scaffolds, for example with new vocabulary highlighted, especially for English Language Learners to ensure that all students are able to access the same learning goals and targets. However, the scaffolds and discussions related to the tasks inconsistently yield student participation in high level discussions.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school's curricula are aligned to key Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts designed to promote rigor and engage students in challenging academic tasks.

Impact

Lessons and activities provide relevant academic experiences and require that students demonstrate their higher-order thinking skills and produce meaningful work products.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers have implemented their learning from professional development offerings by the New York City Department of Education as well as with consultants from the Generation Ready on integration of the Common Core Learning Standards across all content areas, as evidenced by a review of curriculum and lesson planning documents. Additionally the planning documents reflect the integration of instructional shifts in English Language Arts and math. All content areas are also aligned to specific New York State content standards.
- Lesson objectives across grades and subject areas include 1-2 essential questions to guide discussions such as “Why are some countries more modern than or developed than others, even today?” and “How do the unique geographic features of Greece, affect culture and civilization?” As a result, lessons emphasize rigor higher order thinking for all learners including English Language Learners and students with disabilities. Teachers include plans for multiple entry points such as small group supports, scaffolds for new texts and vocabulary and choices for how to demonstrate their learning via final products.
- Revisions to curriculum are made based on teachers’ analysis of student work and observations from classrooms. For example, last year, English Language Arts teachers identified student engagement as an area for improvement. They reviewed resources and reading lists and determined the lack of connection and interest was due to limited relevance of reading material and unit topics. As a result, teachers reviewed the Common Core Learning Standards reading list and selected more relevant texts and created essential questions to pique student interest. Similar adjustments were made in Social Studies to help students apply prior knowledge in one unit to new units of study about different time periods in history. Teachers decided to connect texts to student interest and help them apply their learning promoted access to curricular tasks and has increased engagement.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teachers create rubrics and analyze data from common assessments to determine trends in student performance and progress. Feedback to students is rubric-based and provides information to teachers about student progress.

Impact

Teachers use analysis of data from common assessments and student work to make adjustments to instruction and units of study. Students use their individual assessment results and teacher feedback to revise and improve their work.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has adopted Common Core aligned assessment practices that align the curricula to content standards and ensure that they are able to assess development and progress of student skills and conceptual understanding across grades. Across classrooms teachers have identified writing as an area for focus and further development by using a common writing rubric to assess student writing and integrating writing tasks in all content areas requiring student reflection and explanation of their learning experiences. Teachers use the school wide, common grading policy to assess performance tasks, essays and projects.
- Teacher teams regularly review data from grade and content common assessments, rubric-based analyses of student work, and responses to classroom tasks and end -of unit - assessments. They use the information from their collaborative review of student work to make adjustments to lessons and provide actionable feedback to students about their next learning step. Students indicated that teacher feedback is helpful to them as they work to improve their writing or "learn from their mistakes" thus helping them "to get 4's on the rubric".
- The use of the online system for managing and tracking student work and progress, Pupil Path, by teachers, staff and families is consistent across grades. The system is used daily to enter how students are faring in completion of tasks and notes what is coming next in their learning. Students and parents state that the system is very helpful because it helps them to understand where they are in relation to the curricular expectations. For example one parent said by looking at Pupil Path information she is able to discuss missing or incomplete assignments with her child. Teachers, students and parents stated that they have a clear picture of individual student progress towards goals.

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in professional collaborations focusing on student work and data analysis via inquiry-based protocols. Teacher team structures provide opportunities for teacher leadership across the school and promote their participation in decision-making about student learning.

Impact

The work of teacher teams across the school strengthens leadership structures and teachers' pedagogical capacity resulting in improved practice that affects student progress.

Supporting Evidence

- The administration and teachers have established thoughtful structures for teacher collaboration that are described by staff as being one of the most supportive mechanisms for strengthening their pedagogical practices and cohesiveness as a staff. Teachers meet weekly by departments, grade level and in leadership collaborations focused on school-wide discipline, accreditation, family engagement, school improvement and student activities. Teachers state that these structures have engendered a culture of collaboration and accountability of teachers towards the attainment of school-wide goals for supporting student learning and achievement. Teachers also say the sharing of best practices within these structures strengthens their pedagogical effectiveness and allows them to build coherent expectations school wide.
- An area of focus for teacher teams is that of meeting individualized students' learning needs. As observed on one team, teachers use protocols for a process called "Kid Talk". As evidenced by the observation of the tenth grade team, this process begins with teachers' identification of students to focus on. Each teacher then brings student work to be analyzed collaboratively to determine the student's strengths and areas for improvement. Specific instructional strategies are agreed upon, and decisions about progress monitoring and frequency of conferences with the student are made. Teachers state that, across the school, as they use the Kid Talk protocol, they have become increasingly targeted about instructional supports for students based on their particular needs. As a result teachers have particularly observed improvement in student writing across content areas, especially in organization and attention to details as they explain their thinking.
- Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) use protocols from the National School Reform to review student work and focus on data analysis to inform adjustments to teaching. This has led to improved planning of lessons and common assessments school wide. For example, as a result school wide adjustments have been made to transition lessons from teacher directed to student centered as evidenced by more group work and facilitation of student discussions. Additionally, the development of common rubrics for writing and assessments on these teams has streamlined and clarified expectations for students enabling them to build on their learning across content areas and grade levels.