



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

Monroe Academy for Visual Arts and Design

High School X692

**1300 Boynton Avenue
Bronx
NY 10472**

Principal: Brendan Lyons

**Date of review: March 8, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Deborah Burnett-Worthy**

The School Context

Monroe Academy for Visual Arts & Design is a high school with 420 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 1% Asian, 16% Black, 79% Hispanic, and 1% White students. The student body includes 25% English Language Learners and 27% students with disabilities. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 77.1%.

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	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	Developing
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	Developing
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:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits.

Impact

College and career readiness is promoted schoolwide. Rigorous tasks are accessible to a variety of learners.

Supporting Evidence

- The curricula chosen by the school are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and to the schools beliefs about how students learn best. Curricular resources from *EngageNY* in English Language Arts (ELA) and math, and from the State and City scope and sequence for social studies and science emphasize rigorous habits. Curriculum maps and daily lesson plans across grades and content areas include tasks that require students to engage in discussions, cite text evidence, and explain their reasoning.
- School leaders utilize Hess' *Cognitive Rigor Matrix* to ensure that teachers revise their lesson and unit plans from tasks and questions that are predominantly level one and level two to learning tasks that require students to analyze, critique, and hypothesize in preparation for the next academic level.
- English Language Learners and students with disabilities are provided access to the aligned curriculum because the program has been restructured. School leaders created a push-in and integrated co-teaching model in place of the pull-out model that was formerly used. With supports from paraprofessionals, these two student subgroups are now exposed to the same curriculum as the general population resulting in all students having access to the Common Core-aligned curricula.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to the curricula and are beginning to reflect the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Student work products currently do not require consistent and even levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact

Across grades and content areas, students have limited opportunities to participate actively in peer-to-peer discussions with thought provoking questions that deepen their thinking and learning. Work products reflect uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- In some classes, teachers assigned rigorous tasks requiring students to engage in activities such as reading texts to cite evidence for responses to tasks, examining primary sources and making inferences, and using academic vocabulary to explain solutions to problems. By contrast, in other classes, some tasks were of low demand. For example, students were completing fill-in questions on a worksheet with a word bank from which to select answers; few of the questions pushed their thinking past level one recall. There were also several missed opportunities for student discussion and accountable talk throughout classrooms.
- An English teacher circulated through the room checking for understanding and conferencing with students by using a check-in system in which yellow means “teacher slow down, check-in.” The teacher went immediately to a student holding up a yellow circle. Students in this class were encouraged to talk to each other. The teacher remarked to two students, “You can’t just say you’re stuck. Don’t you think you would understand this sentence more if you discussed it?” After listening to a short student discussion that demonstrated the students understood, she commented, “You see, you don’t need me for all the answers; you have them on your own.”
- Teachers provided prompts to evoke discussion in a few classes and also to attempt to engage students in sharing ideas about how to complete tasks. In a class including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, the teacher used handouts and pictures to engage students in peer-to-peer exploration of vocabulary words and concepts. This peer-to-peer accountable talk was not evident in other classrooms. Some lessons were teacher-dominated as evidenced by teachers urging students to sit quietly and listen to the teacher. Only the same few students had the opportunity to respond to questions.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use assessments that are loosely aligned with the school's curricula. Teachers' assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding.

Impact

Opportunities to check student thinking and give feedback to students regarding student achievement is limited and inconsistent.

Supporting Evidence

- According to school leaders and teachers, checking for understanding is a new focus that is now included in lesson plans. Although there is an assessment section in most lesson plans, the alignment to the school curricula is inconsistent. One science teacher did not have a check for understanding included in the lesson plan and, as a result, no such assessment took place during the class. Another teacher had students make a list of plants, animals, and fungus and then classify these organisms. The subsequent exit assessment question, "What did you learn today?" did not allow students to demonstrate attainment of the specific learning objective.
- Although there was teacher feedback attached to student work on display and in portfolios, actionable feedback was inconsistent. In Spanish, social studies, and math classrooms, feedback included phrases such as "good effort" and "good job" and checks on a rubric with no additional comments. However, in other classrooms, feedback included more detailed next steps, such as directing students to label solutions, include more relevant information, and remember to include a conclusion.
- Opportunities for teachers to use checks for understanding to inform feedback to students were inconsistent across classrooms. An English lesson plan outlined the lesson assessment as "Figure out who can't do it, and (maybe) re-teach or make a note to re-teach in the next lesson." Other English lessons in the same unit, however, included detailed checks for understanding that would assess student thinking and provide opportunities for feedback. For example, one lesson plan required students to respond individually to a writing prompt, discussing how point of view and structural choices contribute to the development of a central idea over the course of the text. Students were also required to complete a variety of summative assessments directly supporting the lesson foci.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

School leaders are beginning to establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations of college and career readiness to students. School leaders and staff are also beginning to develop systems to provide feedback to families regarding student progress towards meeting those expectations.

Impact

Feedback and guidance supports that prepare students for college and career and supports families in understanding student progress toward meeting expectations are being developed.

Supporting Evidence

- Although school leaders and staff are developing workshops, calendars, and fliers to communicate high expectations and provide feedback to families regarding student progress, parents currently are not satisfied with the communication in this area. Several parents stated that they do not always receive the printed information and therefore are sometimes not aware of or have not been able to take advantage of family events created to provide information on college and career readiness. Sixty-five percent of students earned enough credits in grade 9 to be on track for graduation, which is below the citywide average.
- Although students report that teachers in their math, social studies and English classes are “helpful when you do not understand something,” there is not much discussion about college and career goal setting or next steps in their content classes. Students in the student meeting unanimously agreed that the use of the Writing is Thinking through Strategic Inquiry (WITsi) program helped them to write better essays and provided them with next steps on how to get higher scores. Students indicated they are also encouraged to retake Regents exams to get higher scores to prove themselves college ready.
- Although students are now experiencing trips to colleges, opportunities to meet one on one with a guidance counselor about community service, graduation requirements, and military service are not yet consistent. As a result, interviewed students currently report feeling under advised about preparations and expectations for college.

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured inquiry-based professional collaborations. Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students they share or target.

Impact

Teacher teams promote school goals and the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Review of student work results in improved teacher practice and progress towards goals for targeted students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams are programmed for collaboration periods once a week in their department. Math and science teams meet on Mondays, and English and social studies teams meet on Thursdays. During these meetings, staff members engage in structured inquiry-based work that promotes the achievement of the school’s instructional focus and strengthens the alignment of instruction to the Common Core. All teams engaged in a process of examining the Common Core and creating and adjusting the fall units of instruction. Teams will conduct another round of inquiry to revise the spring units.
- All teachers are programmed for a daily structured collaboration period that takes place during seventh period. They meet as department teams or grade teams depending on the day of the week. All teams are responsible for the implementation of data driven instruction based on the review of student work. This school goal is achieved by following inquiry protocols and implementing adjustments to meet the needs of targeted students. For example, after a review of targeted students’ work, the math team discovered that although students were able to transform word problems into equations, they were not remembering to label their work. A decision was made to re-teach this skill with the necessary support for this group of students. Documentation from previous meetings showed that similar adjustments resulted in increased periodic assessment scores for groups of targeted students.
- Teacher teams consistently analyze the data of targeted populations using WITsi baseline forms that support the team in breaking down a task by skill. The team then collects data on each skill by reviewing student work, tracking mastery, and answering the following questions: “What patterns do you see?”, “Who struggles most?”, “What skills do students struggle with the most?”, and “Where will you begin and with whom?” Using this method has resulted in documented proof of progress towards goals for groups of students. For example, analyzed student work revealed that eight out of ten students were able to provide details supported by cited text upon request as opposed to three out of ten prior to inquiry team intervention.