



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Manhattan Village Academy

High School M439

**43 West 22 Street
Manhattan
NY 10010**

Principal: Hector Geager

**Date of review: December 9, 2014
Reviewer: Eva Ostrum**

The School Context

Manhattan Village Academy is a high school with 414 students from grade nine through grade 12. The school population comprises 12% Black, 73% Hispanic, 7% White, and 6% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 33% of the students enrolled and girls account for 67%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 97%.

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	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 Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	Additional Findings	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	Focus	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	Additional Findings	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:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are emphasized in curricula and academic tasks for all learners.

Impact

Curricula coherence across grades and subject areas promote college and career readiness for all students. All learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities demonstrate their thinking in meaningful work products.

Supporting Evidence

- Twice yearly, all faculty members engage in developing portfolio assessment tasks that delve deeply into an aspect of the curriculum aligned with the Common Core Learning Standards. For example, an autobiography portfolio project asked students to collect and create a range of artifacts, all of which aligned to specific Common Core standards, and included research on the historical nature of the student's neighborhood, a persuasive piece arguing for change, and a creative writing collection. Student portfolios include a rich body of work in response to this Common Core-aligned series of tasks, and reflect student readiness to succeed beyond high school.
- Unit and lesson plans across subject areas provide opportunities for students to delve deeply into texts, both fiction and non-fiction, to analyze characterization, as observed in a 9th grade English language arts class. In a 9th grade Earth Science lesson plan, students were asked to develop scientific explanations, and in a 12th grade Advanced Placement European History lesson plan, students were asked to construct interpretations of historical events. A curriculum map for Global History includes detailed plans for differentiation that create access to a rigorous curriculum for all learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities.
- Across subject areas, unit and lesson plans include a focus on students integrating a high level of academic vocabulary into their work, including terms like significance, implications, rationale, and supporting evidence. School leaders shared that this emphasis on academic vocabulary stems from a school-wide focus on the nine intellectual standards of critical thinking applied to eight naturally occurring elements of thought. Displays of the nine standards and eight elements of thought appear as curricular supports for students throughout the school.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use common assessments to determine student progress towards goals across grades and subject areas, track progress, and adjust curricular and instructional decisions. Teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding, although the use student self-assessment is not yet embedded in all lessons.

Impact

As a result of assessment practices, all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, demonstrate increased mastery. Teachers' use of varied checks for understanding lead to effective instructional adjustments to meet all students learning needs. However, students do not always self-assess, so that some learners are not aware of their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers across subject areas administer common diagnostic and benchmark assessments in September and January to assess what their students know and can do. Teachers then refine their curricula and the academic tasks in response to the analysis of assessment data. For example, this cycle took place with the Integrated Algebra curriculum, resulting in increased emphasis on re-teaching systems of inequalities.
- Teachers engage in an item skills analysis of the preceding year's Regents results, examining trends in the data to identify skill sets that they need to reinforce with students. For example, trend analysis in the math department included a review of previous Regents results for the same cohort of students to determine the point in the four years of curricula that might necessitate re-teaching. Teachers concluded that students needed to do additional work on functions, went back to address that topic again at strategic points in the curriculum, and continue to track performance on function questions for the targeted cohort of students to confirm mastery.
- Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers effectively check for student understanding during lessons, and use the formative assessment data to shape how they support students, clarify points of confusion, and solidify learning. For example, in a math classroom, the teacher circulated to speak with groups of students throughout the period. In those conversations, the teacher used targeted questioning to determine areas in which they needed continued support and/or clarification. In a physics class, the teacher interrupted group work to address the relationship between velocity and direction after identifying a common area of misunderstanding across several groups. However, in this class, students did not self-assess their progress or take ownership of next learning steps.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best. Students are engaged in creating meaningful work products and in rigorous discussions.

Impact

Coherence in teaching practices informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching supports a high level of student thinking, participation, and ownership.

Supporting Evidence

- Across grades and content areas, teachers posed higher-order critical thinking questions throughout the class period. For example, in a 9th grade Integrated Algebra class, the teacher asked students to explain how number 4 is different from number 3. This level of questioning pushed students to identify alternative strategies to solve problems. In a 9th grade Earth Science class, the teacher expected students to cite evidence for their thinking, asking, “What is one piece of evidence that proves this theory?” In this class, the teacher also asked students to elaborate on the significance of the evidence that they cited.
- Across subject areas, student work products reflected high levels of student thinking and participation. For example, all students in a 12th grade Physics class were engaged in collaboratively solving a physics problem set on velocity, acceleration, and deceleration. In a 9th grade Integrated Algebra classroom, all students were observed working in groups to solve a problem set on substitution to solve equations.
- Across the vast majority of classrooms, students were observed engaged in high-level discussions. For example, 9th grade students in an English Language arts class were observed citing supporting textual details regarding one of the characters in *A Tale of Two Cities*. Student groups in an Advanced Placement Global History class were observed discussing the causes and effects of the French Revolution based on close readings of both primary and secondary sources. In this class, the teacher asked groups to address the question, “What would be the five most significant questions you could gather from the primary source documents that you read?” Student groups discussed specific pieces of evidence, and a number of students then constructed critical thinking wheels aligned with the nine intellectual standards of critical thinking applied to eight naturally occurring elements of thought that the school emphasizes across classrooms and subject areas.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations regarding professionalism, instruction, communication and other elements of the Danielson Framework for Teaching to the entire staff, and provide training aligned to those expectations. School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness to families.

Impact

Communication and training aligned to high expectations result in a culture of mutual accountability. A system of reciprocal communication with parents leads to a successful partnership with families, and ensures student progress towards college and career expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders have worked with the professional development committee to create a year-long calendar of Monday professional development sessions. Twice monthly, the whole staff addresses a specific aspect of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. For example, sessions in the fall focused on student engagement. Initially, the faculty participated in norming activities to establish common definitions and points of evidence for student engagement. The staff then probed student engagement more deeply, both as a whole faculty and in departments, including through video clips and Learning Opportunities on ARIS. The alternating venues for presentation and exploration of the material (whole staff and department teams) make it possible for smaller groups of faculty to tailor the professional development to meet their own needs. Staff members express shared ownership of their professional growth. Teachers contribute to the development of the overall professional development plan, and implement the recommendations that grow out of the training.
- School leaders provide ongoing training for individual teachers who express an interest in delving deeply into a particular area. For example, a social studies teacher has received training for three consecutive years on the intellectual standards of critical thinking and elements of thought that have become part of the intellectual culture of the school. As staff members develop expertise in particular areas, they share responsibility and accountability with the administration for implementation of the specific initiatives.
- Parents shared that the school promotes a college-going culture, and provided examples of the partnership that the school forges with parents. For example, parents of students in 10th through 12th grade partnered with the school to support their children's participation in a college tour this year. Parents shared that the school expects all students to apply to the City University of New York, State University of New York, as well as to private colleges. Parent partnership serves a vital role in this process, as students complete multiple applications to schools that might be located far from home. A parent shared that her child graduated from the school and is now attending the University of Rochester on a scholarship. Other parents concurred that this level of expectation is the norm at the school. A parent described the school as a private school without the tuition.

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

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations that promote the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards. Teacher teams systematically analyze key elements of teacher work including classroom practice, assessment data, and student work for students they share or on whom they are focused.

Impact

Teacher collaborations strengthen teacher practice and result in school-wide instructional coherence. Teacher team work results in shared improvement in teacher practice and mastery of goals for groups of students, as evidenced in student credit accrual and graduation rate.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers participate in grade team meetings twice each week. At one of those two weekly meetings, teachers conduct a protocol-driven discussion in which they examine a teacher's lesson plan, and review the student work from that lesson. For example, during a cross content team meeting, teachers shared examples of Common Core-aligned tasks that they then revised in response to peer feedback on the task and peer analysis of the corresponding student work. This cyclical process of ongoing revision of curricula, lesson plans, and academic tasks leads to ongoing student success, as evidenced over the past two successive years by 100% of students accruing 10 or more credits in their first year.
- Teachers conduct a minimum of two inter-visitations a year to analyze each other's classroom practice, and use this analysis in formative discussions regarding their professional growth. These visitations supplement weekly staff development sessions, contributing to a culture of mutual accountability. In addition, the system of inter-visitations provides teachers with an opportunity to observe their students in other classrooms, and deepens teachers' understanding of students' strengths and challenges across content areas. This shared understanding of student need contributes to the school's 97% four year graduation rate.
- In weekly grade team meetings, teachers discuss data on students performing in the lowest third in their classes, and propose interventions and supports for those students. Credit accrual for students in the school's lowest third provides evidence of the school's approach. For example, for the past two years, 100% of students in the school's lowest third have accrued 10 or more credits in their first and second years, a level of performance that exceeds peer schools by almost 20%.