



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

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**Professional Pathways High School**

**High School K630**

**3000 Avenue X  
Brooklyn  
NY 11235**

**Principal: David DeCamp**

**Date of review: May 18, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Miatheresa Pate**

## The School Context

Professional Pathways is a high school with 177 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population consists of 33% Black, 32% Hispanic, 24% White, and 8% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 68.9%.

## 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 Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Developing</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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Developing</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>Proficient</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>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

The school leader consistently communicates high expectations to staff and the staff offers continuous feedback to help families understand these expectations.

### Impact

Structures and partnerships exist at the school to ensure that expectations are met. Families understand what is needed for their child to make advancement towards those expectations.

### Supporting Evidence

- The parents revealed that the teachers and the principal are committed to helping students succeed in high school and be prepared for having a career and going to college despite a student's setbacks or issues." Parents further revealed that "teachers and the principal have an open door policy. We are updated all the time by phone and in person. Parents can come in for to one to one." The administration revealed that their partnership with CAMBA, Learning to Work (LTW), provides students with paid internships. The school has a teacher leader who serves as the coordinator/liaison. The teacher leader affirmed that the partnership "gives more than 20 students annually experience in the world of work and a weekly seminar that helps students address the soft-skills necessary for success in the workplace."
- Students revealed that the College Confident program "helps us with filling out college applications, FAFSA, application letters, and college tours." The administration noted that the school goal is to have 100% of our students complete all of their college paperwork and have identified at least three post-secondary colleges they wish to apply to. Teachers noted that they help support students with college essays through editing and revision.
- Documentation revealed that the school has a graduation guardians structure in which each staff member meets with between seven and ten students on a regular basis to discuss their progress, identify current challenges, formulate goals and strategize on how to attain these goals. Staff members make phone calls and conduct home visits for students with attendance issues.
- A review of documents revealed that teachers are held accountable via observations and are expected to improve based on the feedback and professional development they receive. For instance, feedback for one teacher stated "The materials and resources supported the learning goals and required intellectual engagement. As a next step continue work with scientific literacy to incorporate more complex scientific text into the class. This is a school wide goal as well" Another teacher's feedback stated, "The planning and preparation was not structured appropriately for demonstrating how to find a missing variable. As a next step have modelled examples ready before demonstrating to the class to avoid confusing students. Also, remember to use more wait time for students to answer the questions posed." The review of the school professional development documents and discussions with teachers evidenced the aforementioned recommendations being supported through professional development.

## Area of Focus

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

Teaching strategies inconsistently provide entry points and dialogue between students reflects uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

### Impact

Inconsistent entry points into the lessons and tasks that are unevenly challenging have limited the level of engagement of all students in high levels of thinking and participation that conclude in meaningful work products.

### Supporting Evidence

- Classrooms observed reflect inconsistent levels of student thinking and participation. During a Global History class, students were tasked to determine if an individual's rights were more important than those of society as a whole. Students were not provided a rubric to guide them in supporting their claims nor did the teacher scaffold or provide an example. This activity was a warm-up that was lacking in clarity and pacing. Students were not guided to turn and talk nor did the teacher use higher leveled questions to push student thinking and discussion. This demonstration of limited entry points and discussion was observed across classrooms and has hindered students' ability to engage in higher levels of student to student discussion.
- Teaching practices inconsistently leverage strategies such as questioning that prompt higher order thinking. Although the use of graphic organizers and rubrics were observed in a few classrooms, both were observed inconsistently across all classrooms visited. Consequently, while teacher strategies are being honed around lesson delivery, student work products and discussions including those of English language learners and students with disabilities reflect uneven levels of student thinking and participation.
- The administration noted that the school's instructional focus is on Danielson 3B, Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques. To support this focus teachers have adopted strategies such as turn and talk, speed sharing, group annotation of texts, and classroom debates. When observing classrooms, turn and talk was evident in three out of seven rooms, speed sharing was not observed, and group annotation was seen in two classes.

## Additional Findings

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

Administration and staff ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and that academic tasks consistently stress higher order skills for all learners.

### Impact

The school has made strategic curricular decisions that promote college and career readiness across grades and subjects and for English language learners and students with disabilities.

### Supporting Evidence

- Professional Pathways is a part of the Transfer School Common Core Institute. The Institute partnership has supported the school in developing common core aligned curricula. The common core shifts emphasize critical-thinking while teaching the skills necessary for students to think deeply about the problems they are expected to solve or texts they are reading. The review of the math and English language arts curricula required students to explain their thinking in writing as well as to provide supportive evidence. This expectation was also observed within lesson plans in science.
- The school focuses on the English language arts (ELA) Staircase of Complexity, which encourages students to engage in grade appropriate text connected to classroom instruction and on Writing from Source, which stresses the use of evidence from sources to inform or support a student's argument. The school has a school-wide assessment that evaluates students' argumentative writing skills using the New York State Common Core Argumentative Writing Rubric to identify their current level. Administration revealed that "teachers use the data to create individual plans that identify the sub-skills in need of improvement such as making a claim or using supporting evidence. Lesson plans focus on using evidence to support the claim(s). For instance, an ELA mixed grade class tasked students with determining how conflict brings change and how characters' values evolve. Student partners had to determine where their character falls on a timeline using text evidence to support their stance.
- The school has a focus on the shifts of developing fluency and deep understanding in math. Administration noted that students have struggled with "basic fluency, which makes teaching complex topics more difficult because students are struggling with basic multiplication and division facts." Teachers shared that they do fluency drills that monitor student progress. A review of curriculum for Algebra 1 and Geometry have embedded opportunities to practice fluency.

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

Teachers' assessment practices across classrooms inconsistently reflect the use of rubrics, ongoing checks for understanding, student self-assessments, and limited feedback.

### Impact

As a result of inconsistent assessment practices and inadequate checks for understanding, feedback to students regarding performance is limited, instruction is not adjusted to meet student needs and students' opportunities for self-reflection and goal setting are negatively impacted.

### Supporting Evidence

- Administration revealed that teachers use exit slips, journals and reflections to assess students' daily progress. These provide benchmarks for improvement. Self-assessment exercises enable students to identify where they did well and their areas in need. Students noted the use of exit slips and reflections. However, when questioned about self-assessment, they noted "if you want to know your next step the teacher will tell you." The students also noted that they use rubrics. However, students stated that rubrics are used mostly for writing pieces. Rubrics were observed in only a few classrooms.
- Teachers across classrooms are in the process of honing the skill of using questioning and discussion as a tool for checking for understanding. However, checking for understanding was evidenced in only three out of seven classrooms. For instance, in a mixed grade living environment class, the teacher required students to concretize their understanding using a four step approach: circle what is important, rephrase/paraphrase new learning, box what is unknown/unclear within the text, and underline important supportive details. The teacher conferred with students and asked clarifying questions such as "Why do Blue Angels pilots wear G suits?" One student responded, "to make oxygen move around their bodies." This level of checking for understanding was inconsistent across classrooms.
- The review of student work products revealed inconsistent and limited feedback across classrooms. For instance, the feedback on one ELA work product read "excellent job, further develop conclusion to strengthen claim rather than just reiterating, vary sentence structure, word use to improve voice, remember to use the same tone throughout essay." However, during the classroom visits, limited feedback was found in portfolios. Additionally, feedback was limited on bulletin boards in content areas other than literacy.

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

### Impact

The work of teacher teams has resulted in strengthening the instructional capacity of teachers and typically results in improved teacher practice and student progress.

### Supporting Evidence

- The administration revealed and teachers confirmed that teacher teams meet daily. Administration revealed that common planning time has been built into all content area teachers' daily schedule. There are four common planning time groups (ELA, history, science, and math). Each group helps each other in the design of engaging and rigorous lessons, best questioning and discussion entry points, evaluating student work, evaluating baseline and school-wide assessments, and Regents data to tailor instruction for individual needs. The teams have developed structures including agendas, protocols, minutes, and other supplemental materials to support inquiry aimed at increasing students' progress. The focus of these meetings is outlined daily for common planning. On Monday teachers examine student work to refine curriculum and reflect on next steps. On Tuesday teams participate and collaborate on an Eskolta/Re-design inquiry team. On Wednesday, teachers re-visit inquiry examination of student work to refine curriculum and reflect on next steps. On Thursday teachers participate in inter-visitations. On Friday, teams de-brief during the first 15 minutes of the common planning session. Teams then determine whether next step strategies are working based on student work and make plans for new next steps.
- The school has adopted the NYCDOE model for inter-visitation. Teachers use an inter-visitation cycle in order to observe and be observed by their peers using the Danielson Rubric as a lens for feedback. Documentation evidenced an inter-visitation calendar for each trimester. Documentation revealed that teachers use a school-wide note-taking sheet when engaging in inter-visitations. Teacher reflection notes revealed a strengthening of teacher capacity and improved teacher practice. For instance, one teacher gave warm feedback and next steps to another teacher stating, "You challenged students to justify their thinking and have successfully engaged most students. As a next step, focus on domain 3b. Have students back up their argument with evidence and have student peers respond to the claims." The reflection further indicated via a check box that the recommendation can be implemented within two days and should be prioritized. Team meeting agenda notes surfaced the focus of improving pedagogy and creating a cohesive ELA team. Meeting minutes identified a focus for each teacher. For instance, the focus for one teacher was to improve classroom management and wait-time. For another teacher the focus was on improving questioning techniques, and a focus for a third teacher was to improve facilitation of student discussions.
- The inquiry team documentation noted that students were lacking in their ability to provide a counterclaim and/or refute their claims across content areas. As a next step teachers have developed templates to support students. A review of student work demonstrated students providing evidence for their claims. For instance, a science student wrote "this research was conducted to explore how our smell and taste are connected to each other. According to the Society for Neuroscience only taste, not the food odors, are being detected."