



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

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

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2014-2015**

**Newcomers High School**

**High School Q555**

**28-01 41<sup>st</sup> Avenue  
Queens  
NY 11101**

**Principal: Orlando Sarmiento**

**Date of review: May 29, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Steven Strull**

## The School Context

Newcomers High School is a high school with 993 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 2% Black, 55% Hispanic, 6% White, and 37% Asian students. The student body includes 80% English language learners and 1% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 88.1%.

## 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>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</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

The school leaders consistently and clearly communicate high expectations to the entire staff. The schools' culture for learning supports and ensures that almost all students are prepared for college.

### Impact

Consistent communication of high expectations yields a college and career readiness bound culture and holds all stakeholders accountable for student success.

### Supporting Evidence

- There is a student and teacher contract in place in every classroom for every child. The contract includes behavior and academic expectations as well as assessment and grading policies. An example of this is the Living Environment syllabus and class contract including course goals and objectives, course requirements and expectations, as well as themes and topics. There is also an assessment policy, teacher contact information, parent/teacher conference information, followed by student and parent signatures.
- There is a well-articulated teacher team meeting schedule including cross-curricular inquiry teams, common planning time for teachers who share students at the same level, and department meetings where syllabi, unit plans, and lesson plans are reviewed and modified. As an example, in an inquiry team meeting, a social studies teacher presented a newly designed assessment rubric on claim and counter claim for feedback from her colleagues. The English as a Second Language teacher on the team provided detailed feedback and helped revise the rubric for both the social studies class and the English as a second language class clarifying the language consistent with best practices for English language acquisition for non-native speakers.
- The school maintains a close relationship with LaGuardia Community College as part of its overall college going strategy. Students are given the opportunity to attend orientation sessions at LaGuardia Community College. The school prepares students to meet minimum City University of New York entrance requirements by either passing the entry level proficiency tests administered at LaGuardia or provides opportunities for students to score a minimum of 75 on the English Language Arts (ELA) Regents Examination and an 80 on the Math Regents Examination by offering both supplemental instruction after school and on Saturdays.
- School guidance counselors meet with each student annually to review their academic performance and set academic goals for the year. As part of the goal-setting process, students are expected to complete a course of study leading not only to a Regents Diploma, but whenever possible, an Advanced Regents Diploma. Students uniformly report that their teachers and counselors expect them to achieve at the highest levels and in the student interview portion of the Quality Review, each child understood that the expectation of the school was to prepare them for college.

## Area of Focus

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

Teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Teachers further align their pedagogy to best practices of English language acquisition for non-native speakers consistent with the instructional focus of the school.

### Impact

Students are engaged in learning environments and activities that promote academic language proficiency in English.

### Supporting Evidence

- In a geometry class, the students were engaged in peer to peer discussions reflecting a high level of student thinking and participation. The lesson focused on triangle similarity and after the teacher modeled a sample problem on the overhead projector, students were expected to work in pairs to complete the remainder of the task. Some students finished before others, and they were asked to assist a group that was still challenged while the teacher circulated the room and monitored the pairs' conversations and the completion of the task. A further extension of student ownership was the apparent understanding in the class that each student pair was to be successful on the task by an organic re-grouping of students matching students who were having success on the task with leaners who were struggling. The teacher did not prompt this, but the expectation that everyone was to be successful was clear as students seamlessly worked together to solve the problems.
- In every classroom observed, teachers were not only teaching to the content, but were aligning their teaching to best practices of English language acquisition. There is a consistent set of beliefs, that children may concomitantly learn course content and academic English simultaneously. There are strategies in place for supporting English language development in the content areas such as sentence starters, dialogue writing, literature circles, vocabulary word maps, graphic organizers, note-taking, question formation, gallery walks, vocabulary review jig-saw, strategic pairing of students, teacher modeling, partner reading, text-coding, and analyzing a visual.
- While many classes are taught using a whole group method, with teacher teaching from the front of the room, students are overwhelmingly engaged. The reliance of teacher led pedagogy stems from a belief in modeling content knowledge, skill development, and language acquisition. Even with this predominant pedagogical strategy, students own their work and learning and are encouraged to speak and write in English.

## Additional Findings

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

The school aligns its curriculum to the Common Core Learning Standards with attention to the instructional shifts and consistently uses engaging and rigorous curriculum in all the content areas that embeds academic tasks that promote critical thinking across grades and subjects for all students.

### Impact

Teachers rely on the Common Core Learning Standards in their planning with both content and language objectives in every lesson that foster higher order thinking skills and promote college and career readiness for all students.

### Supporting Evidence

- Unit and lesson planning begin with a curriculum map. The maps include time frame, content/topic/theme, resources, Common Core Learning Standards, English language conventions and skills, learning activities, and assessment. Maps are developed by two to three teachers per department and reviewed by departments acting as a curriculum committee for each department. These curriculum maps and departmental review reflect attention to the Common Core Learning Standards, the instructional shifts, and the school's focus on English language acquisition.
- Every class has a language objective embedded in the lesson plan. This is an extension of the school's focus on English language acquisition in addition to content knowledge. As an example, in a 9<sup>th</sup> grade bilingual Spanish Living Environment class, the language objectives included the following: summarizing, identifying, describing, explaining, and analyzing. In a geometry class, the language objective was to pair English learners and English speakers in small groups to provide their own lists for the tasks, share their thinking with the class, and ask them to compare their conjectures.
- An inquiry team structure is in place where teachers continuously look at student work and lesson plans toward planning and refining curricula and academic tasks. Teacher teams and department teams are in place which allow for on-going consultation ensuring that academic tasks are cognitively engaging for both English speakers and non-English speakers.
- For each level of English language learners, the school created a document that lists core competencies and skills coupled with the domains of reading, writing, speaking, listening, conventions, and vocabulary. The competencies and skills along with the domains are mapped to specific Common Core Learning Standards. These documents are used to help teachers and departments prepare their curriculum maps, unit plans, and lesson plans.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### **Findings**

The school's assessments of student progress are aligned to the curricula and the school has an accurate understanding of each student's progress while providing actionable and meaningful feedback to students and teachers. Common assessments are used within departments toward creating a clear portrait of student progress across grades and subjects allowing faculty to adjust curricular and instructional decisions.

### **Impact**

Teachers are able to adjust their curriculum and instructional decisions based on data gleaned from state assessments (Regents and New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test), department assessments including uniform final examinations by subject, and formative classroom assessments including the regular practice of looking at student work where various teacher teams look at and discuss both portfolios of individual student's work and cross sections of multiple students from the same class.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Based on an item analysis of the Common Core Algebra Regents Examination, the math department was able to adjust their curriculum map by increasing days of instruction in relationships between quantities and reasoning with equations and their graphs.
- Assessment criteria have been created by subject. As an example, in earth science the criteria are: examinations 40%, quizzes 20%, homework and labs 20%, notebook projects 10%, and effort and participation are 10%. Another example is in geometry where exams and quizzes are 50%, homework 20%, notebooks, and projects 15%, and effort and participation are 15%. These assessment criteria are also reflected in student teacher contracts in each class.
- Within social studies classrooms, student work is assessed based on a common rubric. In each class visited, the student work is prominently displayed along with the rubric used to assess the work. Additionally, teachers write actionable feedback to each student based on the assessment criteria outlined in the rubric. An example of this feedback in an Advanced Placement Spanish Literature and Culture class is a sample of student work with the assessment rubric. The teacher's actionable feedback is written directly on the work and asks the student to include citations of the text when using textual evidence.
- Students' programs are determined based on student needs derived from NYSESLAT assessment data to decide how students are programmed in both English as a Second Language (ESL) class and their English Language Arts (ELA) class. An example is students who are assessed as a beginning level ESL student are recommended for a six hour ESL class and a three hour ESL class per week, the latter which serves as their ELA class. Students assessed as Advanced ESL are recommended to take one ELA and one ESL class.

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

Every teacher is engaged in several collaborative structures consistently relying on an inquiry approach to their work strengthening teacher instructional capacity while promoting the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards including the instructional shifts that has resulted in school-wide instructional coherence and increased student achievement. Teachers meet regularly in structured teacher team collaborations and analyze key aspects of their practice, assessment data, and student work for students they have in common.

### Impact

The teacher teaming structures allow for teachers to feel empowered in their practice and make decisions about teaching and learning that positively affect student outcomes.

### Supporting Evidence

- The chapter used a school-based option to split professional activity time to allow for weekly inquiry team meetings and common planning time. These meetings are programmed directly into each teacher's schedule. Common planning time is used for 2-3 teachers who teach a common subject to align their curriculum maps, unit plans, and lesson plans. Inquiry team meetings are interdisciplinary groups of approximately 8-10 teachers led by a facilitator to look at student work and adjust curricular and pedagogical decisions.
- In an inquiry team meeting, an English language arts teacher presented student work from a lesson on Romeo and Juliet. The work showed the student's progression in analyzing and explaining the significance of literary devices in a quote from the text coupled with background on who said what to whom and in what situation. As a result of this teacher sharing a portion of her practice with her colleagues, the social studies teacher on the team was able to understand that she asks her students to apply a similar process in social studies. Both teachers were able to take this new knowledge back to their classrooms and explain to their students that even though they were using different words to describe the processes in each class, the process itself was very similar. This led to students understanding that a skill developed in one class may very well be similar or identical to a skill from another class.
- Teacher teams report commonly held beliefs about student potential and that their lived experience is woven into curriculum development and pedagogical practices leading to increases in student achievement. Many of the teachers are English language learners themselves, and while they may empathize with their students, they uniformly report they are able to make improvements in their practice based on their own experiences. Based on this modeling and shared experiences, the students find themselves among adults worth emulating. The unique make-up of the faculty and student body creates an environment where there are no "outsiders." A result of this type of teacher leadership allows for mastery of goals for overlapping groups of students creating a college and career readiness metric that will approach 30% this school year.