

# Quality Review Report

## 2018-2019

**The Metropolitan Soundview High School**

**High school 12X521**

**1300 Boynton Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10472**

**Principal: Emarilix Lopez**

**Dates of Review:  
January 10, 2019 - January 11, 2019**

**Lead Reviewer: Jorge Estrella**

## The Quality Review Report

The Quality Review is a two-day school visit by an experienced educator. During the review, the reviewer visits classrooms, talks with parents, students, teachers, and school leaders and uses a rubric to evaluate how well the school is organized to support student achievement.

The Quality Review Report provides a rating for all ten indicators of the Quality Review Rubric in three categories: Instructional Core, School Culture, and Systems for Improvement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Celebration** to highlight an area in which the school does well to support student learning and achievement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Focus** to highlight an area the school should work on to support student learning and achievement. The remaining indicators are identified as **Additional Finding**. This report presents written findings, impact, and site-specific supporting evidence for six indicators.

## Information about the School

The Metropolitan Soundview High School serves students in grade 9 through grade 12. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at <http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm>.

## School Quality Ratings

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area	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	<b>Additional Finding</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>Additional Finding</b>	<b>Proficient</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>Area of Focus</b>	<b>Developing</b>

## School Quality Ratings continued

School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area	Rating
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults	<b>Additional Finding</b>	<b>Proficient</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>Additional Finding</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area	Rating
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products	<b>Additional Finding</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community	<b>Area of Celebration</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection	<b>Additional Finding</b>	<b>Developing</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 Finding</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
5.1 Evaluate the quality of school- level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS	<b>Additional Finding</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.1 Goals and Action Plans</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
---------------------------	-----------------------------------	----------------	-----------------------

### Findings

There is a theory of action, which includes a school-community collaborative approach, for the short list of clear, focused school-level goals and action plans apparent in the Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) and other planning documents. School leaders effectively involve and communicate with all stakeholders, including teachers, families, and students.

### Impact

School goals are tracked for progress and are carefully modified to leverage changes that explicitly link to accelerated student learning and social-emotional growth. School leaders ensure that school improvement plans and decision-making processes are understood and supported by the entire school community.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school's theory of action is grounded on the importance of having all stakeholders working together to collectively attain the school's goals. The planning process of the CEP is conducted via embedded structures for collaboration, such as the School Leadership Team (SLT), instructional cabinet, and department teams, which allow school leaders, faculty, staff, and parents to have a stake in the design of overarching goals and action plans to support student progress and positive social-emotional growth. In June 2018, school teams reviewed student achievement trends, formulating ideas for improving instruction and social-emotional support in the following year and relating them to overall school program decisions. During the summer, school teams refined the CEP goals and action plans based on data, including attendance, the Online Occurrence Reporting System report, a school survey, Measures of Teacher Practice report, and qualitative feedback. Teams determined that students struggled with writing across grades and content areas, which was a key element that prevented some students from meeting their academic targets. Also, teams determined that attendance and behavior needed attention, resulting in the school including advisory sessions to support social-emotional learning needs. Moreover, the school introduced a writing program aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, using Regents rubrics as well as student-friendly rubrics to foster student self-evaluation, meet the needs of diverse students, and ensure coherent academic structures.
- The CEP reflects a thorough needs-assessment analysis which is used to arrive at goals and action plans. The targeted list of priorities includes improving informational and argumentative writing, providing students with social-emotional learning opportunities via advisories to reinforce and actualize college readiness, using formative and summative assessment data, developing strategic action plans to address students' content and skill needs, increasing credit accumulation, and enhancing parent participation. Also, each department and teacher develops an action plan based on data. Using this baseline data analysis, each teacher selects a skill to focus on and a strategy to teach the selected skill. For this school year, the skill is annotation, which is supported by a research-based note-taking system. This ongoing action plan process led to an increased number of interim benchmark checks. As a result, goal-setting and progress monitoring are beginning to drive efforts to accelerate student learning.
- School leaders make ongoing efforts to promote an inclusive culture around school improvement and decision-making by including all stakeholders in the schoolwide planning process. For example, parents shared that they participated with the goal-setting process during SLT meetings and shared their ideas to support the goals, such as promoting better attendance. Also, students stated that school leaders share schoolwide goals via town halls and advisories, where they have more opportunities to discuss their own instructional challenges and graduation requirement needs with teachers. As a result of the ongoing communication efforts between school leaders and the school community, there is a shared commitment from all members to improve student learning.

## Area of Focus

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

### Findings

Across classrooms, teachers implement a schoolwide grading policy and create assessments and rubrics loosely aligned with the school's curricula, providing limited actionable feedback to students. Across classrooms, teachers' assessment practices are inconsistent in their use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

### Impact

While some students receive comments on their work, teachers' feedback has yet to consistently ensure that all students are being made aware of their next learning steps for each subject, thus limiting opportunities to accelerate students' academic achievement.

### Supporting Evidence

- There is a schoolwide grading policy that incorporates standardized categories. This policy was designed to promote writing throughout content areas and includes 25 percent for classwork, 10 percent, portfolio, 15 percent for class participation, 15 percent for assessments, 30 percent for writing assignments, and 5 percent for homework. Students articulated this grading policy and stated that they keep track of their grades using an online system. School leaders and teachers reported that the school uses Regents rubrics as well as teacher-created rubrics for specific assignments. However, during classroom visits and a review of student work, there was little evidence of consistent use of rubrics across classrooms.
- A review of student work products revealed that some students receive comments and that student work is graded. However, in most assignments, there was an inconsistent approach to providing actionable feedback that offered students guidance on what elements were met and which elements needed to be improved. While one comment indicates, "Well done! Your two experiences are well written. Great use of descriptive language! Next time work to explain why your belief makes you who you are today," another note indicated that the work was incomplete, with a grade of 66 and no comment. In addition, some of the student work presented lacked feedback, comments, or grades. In a student meeting, they shared that feedback was both verbal and written, and it mainly addressed the areas in which they needed to improve to get better grades. However, some students were not able to articulate their next steps to improve their work and were not clear about why they obtained a specific grade for an assignment. Inconsistent teacher practices using actionable feedback as a pathway to support student progress hinder student opportunities to improve work products and meet instructional targets.
- Classroom visits revealed inconsistent implementation of checks for understanding. For example, while students worked independently in an art class, the teacher circulated about the room checking whether they understood the tasks. Based on this, the teacher used different approaches to ensure students' understanding, such as offering peer or one-on-one support and providing graphic organizers. In a tenth-grade Global Studies class, the teacher conferenced with students, addressing common misconceptions and asking probing questions to ensure understanding. However, in other classes, teachers just checked for procedures, not interacting to determine whether students grasped concepts or had misconceptions. In only two classrooms observed did teachers use formative assessment tools to capture data from students' responses. This inconsistent implementation of checks for understanding hinders on-the-spot adjustments to lessons, resulting in missed opportunities to meet all students' diverse learning needs.
- Although students reported that they engage in self-assessment, student work reviewed did not provide evidence that this is a consistent practice in the school. Furthermore, in only two classes were students engaged in peer assessment activities and in only one class were students asked to complete exit slips. Moreover, in most classes they did not have enough time to finish tasks.

## Additional Finding

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

### Findings

School leaders and teachers collaborate to incorporate writing into the curricula aligned to the Common Core and instructional shifts. Academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills.

### Impact

School leaders and teachers make purposeful decisions to build coherence and promote college and career readiness, such as incorporating writing across all grades and content areas to build students' stamina. These practices ensure that a diversity of learners have access to curricula and tasks and are cognitively engaged.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and faculty collaborate to align curricula across all grade levels and subjects with New York State Standards, the Common Core, and the instructional shifts by developing curriculum maps, units of study, and lesson plans emphasizing key standards and reflecting academic challenges. In addition to integrating writing across all content areas and grades, instructional planning documents include instructional shifts such as writing from sources, citing specific textual evidence to support analysis of central ideas, justify a claim, or make a counter-claim, supporting deep understanding of problem-solving in math, and organizing learning to present the thinking process. In an eleventh-grade English Language Arts (ELA) unit, students are asked to develop a personal narrative based on an experience that has shaped who they are as individuals thus far. In a history unit, students are tasked with writing a five-paragraph informative essay describing how American democracy has evolved from 1776 to today, referring to primary sources they studied in class. In an Algebra unit, students create a table of inputs and outputs for linear, quadratic, exponential, and absolute value, determining a function that models real-world data and mathematical contexts using differences such as sales, cost of clothing, and comparing salaries with bonuses. This alignment has resulted in coherence across grades and subject areas, promoting strong content knowledge and college and career readiness.
- A review of instructional planning documents revealed that academic tasks are planned to engage students in challenging tasks. English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities receive the same rigorous curricula tailored to their needs and are supported with scaffolds such as graphic organizers, visuals, assisted technology, leveled texts, outlines, sentence stems, and one-on-one support from teachers, paraprofessionals, and peers. Thus, ELLs and students with disabilities access lessons, gaining content knowledge and an understanding of units taught. In a tenth-grade Global History lesson plan, students evaluate various enduring issues as they relate to the Enlightenment, French Revolution, nationalism, and the industrial revolution. As a culminating task, students are expected to design a concept map supporting their claims. In an Algebra lesson, students work on analyzing and solving a system of linear equations and are required to justify their solutions in written form. As a result, all students are better equipped to complete rigorous writing tasks, with an emphasis on appropriate transitions, phrases, and writing that coherently matches the task.
- Students are taught college and career readiness skills while making connections to real world applications. In an Economics unit, students create their own businesses, give presentations to the class, and write short papers about each business and the process of creating it. In a reviewed art unit, teachers craft tasks where students will begin to ask themselves what type of person they think they are versus others' perceptions of them. Students discover how characteristic traits, habits, and presentation can have a direct effect on an artist's style. Students also work together with their peers promoting collaborative thinking and team building. Hence, with the school's rigorous curriculum, students participate in challenging tasks that promote high level thinking and engage students in authentic and relevant learning experiences.

## Additional Finding

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
---------------------------	---------------------	----------------	-------------------

### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, reflecting the school's articulated beliefs about how students learn best, with a focus on student engagement and content-area writing. Teaching strategies that provide multiple entry points and promote higher-order thinking skills for students are apparent.

### Impact

Across classrooms, students engage in lessons that promote collaboration and participation so that all learners produce meaningful work products, and students have the opportunity to make visible their higher-order thinking skills.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers believe that student engagement, as per the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, is the core of all good instruction and promotes a culture of thinking in the classrooms. Teachers' lessons reflect this belief, with an emphasis on writing across content areas, incorporating various student tasks such as note-taking, citing specific textual evidence, analyzing primary and secondary sources, and integrating information from diverse sources into a coherent understanding of a concept. This belief is implemented across most classrooms through the teachers' pedagogical practices and students' participation in lessons that reflect alignment to curricula through the inclusion of Common Core skills and the integration of instructional shifts. In a ninth-grade, Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, all students were reading two different articles about instructional technology. Next, they engaged in group discussions about the use technology in the classroom from the varied perspectives of teachers, parents, and students. Students then shared their own perspectives of technology in writing, using evidence from the articles.
- Across classrooms visited, students collaborated in predetermined groups, as indicated in lesson plans. For example, in a Geometry class, students were grouped based on responses to prior assessment questions to work on quadrilateral problems. Students collaborated with each other and were observed discussing different approaches to solving their problems, such as organizing their ideas in concept maps. When students reached a consensus on a proposed solution, they then justified their mathematical solution in writing. In an Economics class, the students' group task was to analyze the benefits of renting or owning. Most students were engaged in the task, and, in most cases, students were encouraged to use prior knowledge. Students were randomly assigned cards with specific topics, such as buying or leasing cars or buying or renting houses. They then collaborated in writing justifications of why they felt it would be better to buy or rent/lease in each situation. As a result of this activity, students had the opportunity to participate in an authentic, real-world task while also making their thinking visible.
- Differentiation of instruction exists in most classrooms, thus providing students with multiple entry points into the curricula. Students with disabilities and ELLs were provided supportive structures and opportunities to be engaged in their learning. During lessons, most teachers allocate time to confer with students in a group setting or one-on-one and are aware of each student's level of understanding and participation. This practice of differentiating instruction was demonstrated in an ICT Living Environment class with ELLs, where students had access to different graphic organizers, language supports, assisted technology, and visuals to engage them in learning about homeostasis and osmosis, including why humans should avoid drinking sea water. In other lessons, teachers supported students in their native language by using vocabulary development strategies, sentence frames, and illustrations as well as translated texts, when necessary. Thus, all students observed were engaged in higher-order thinking tasks through their interactions with peers and teachers.

## Additional Finding

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------	-----------------------

### Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to staff and students and provide the supports needed to meet those expectations. The school's programs, such as an online grading system and the Summer Bridge onboarding program, offer opportunities for school leaders and staff to set high expectations connected to a path of college and career readiness for all students and their families.

### Impact

A culture of mutual accountability, connected to the observation cycle, ensures that school leaders and staff contribute to the establishment of high expectations, where all staff support students' progress toward graduation and college and career readiness.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders consistently convey high expectations to the entire staff through a weekly newsletter, "One Vision—One Voice," which delineates to the staff instructional expectations, memorable moments, professional resources, and shout-outs. Also, at the beginning of the school year the staff handbook is posted in the online file-sharing system. It details expectations related to instruction, professional development (PD), professional collaborations, logistics, policies, norms, and regulations. Furthermore, school leaders facilitate PD activities during which teachers have opportunities to deepen their understanding of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. The focus for PD this year is on student engagement. Teachers reported that their participation in the sessions on visible thinking strategies has been instrumental in helping them improve their practice and better formulate questions which lead to engaging students in active class participation. Teachers reported that after PD sessions, they complete surveys to indicate what they have learned and how the sessions could be improved.
- The principal holds the staff accountable for expectations by conducting cycles of teacher observations, including conferences, walkthroughs, and regular classroom visits, and providing actionable feedback. Observations support teachers in strengthening their instructional practice and building a culture of mutual accountability. School leaders meet with each teacher individually to discuss the results of units of study assessments for their students, their action plans, and the adjustments they have or will make based on students' progress. At these meetings, leaders also discuss individualized supports, provide teachers with resources, and foster mutual accountability. As a result of these structures, teachers are reflective about their craft and receive targeted, ongoing support that further improves the quality of their practice.
- School leaders clearly articulate high expectations for students and parents via a student handbook, a parent handbook, monthly newsletters, college and career bulletins, emails, school blogs, and a website. In addition, all stakeholders reported that the online grading system used schoolwide provides real-time information about students' progress in meeting their instructional targets. Parents shared that access to this online system promotes collaboration with teachers and helps them identify when their children are facing challenges, so they can design a plan to support them at home. Before the start of school in September, freshman students and their families have a chance to participate in a Summer Bridge program, where they can meet with the staff and learn about the school's high expectations as part of their transition from middle to high school. Furthermore, the school offers several workshops to parents around the Common Core, mathematics, and expectations to meet graduation requirements. Parents value the support they and their children receive during the college application process, including learning about available financial aid. Students reported that they participate in college tours, visiting several colleges outside New York City, as well as a College Fair organized by the New York City Department of Education. As a result of these supports, the school's partnership with families has contributed to students' progress towards college and career readiness.



## Additional Finding

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
---------------------------	---	----------------	-------------------

### Findings

All teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations, such as grade-level and student study teams, and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) that promote the achievement of school goals and build leadership capacity in teachers.

### Impact

Teachers have strengthened their instructional capacity, resulting in adjustments in practices and ensuring that teachers have a voice in decisions made at the school to meet students' learning needs.

### Supporting Evidence

- Through the PLC structure, all teachers meet weekly to conduct lesson studies and provide one another with peer feedback. Ongoing PD sessions serve to develop schoolwide instructional strategies. Department teams meet weekly to revise curricula, engage in protocols of lesson study, and look at student work. Teachers incorporate student data in their action plans to identify skills students need to learn in order to graduate. They also use student data to inform their professional learning requirements, and teachers give each other constructive feedback, with a focus on improving instruction through student engagement. Grade teams review overall instructional and social-emotional data and trends. They are directly engaged in closing the achievement gap, using multiple sources of student data for a variety of purposes, such as identifying interventions with appropriate follow-up to measure progress. Teachers stated that they work collaboratively on lesson study to ensure that lessons meet student needs. This approach has strengthened their instructional practices by enabling them to incorporate new strategies to support student engagement, such as using data to differentiate content and create strategic groupings and using read-alouds and think-alouds to model annotation. As a result, the 2018 school survey reflects that 96 percent of the teachers say that they had opportunities to work productively with colleagues at their school on professional development.
- During the tenth grade "Kid Talk" teacher team meeting, teachers examined student work from an ELL student who has been referred for an evaluation. Teachers reviewed his portfolio, which included work from different subject areas and teachers' notes from their interactions with him. The team noted that the student had a short attention span and was easily distracted by interactions with classmates, affecting his ability to organize his work and preventing him from accomplishing his tasks. Teachers discussed several strategies to address his needs, such as providing a checklist to help with self-starting, shortening the length of his assignments, offering graphic organizers, and allowing him to discuss his ideas out loud in a small group before completing a writing assignment. A review of teacher team meetings agendas and minutes revealed that teachers consistently discuss student work, addressing their instructional and social-emotional needs as well as discussing teaching strategies to address those needs. Teachers shared that looking at the overall progress of students has helped them cohesively provide instructional supports across content areas.
- School leaders are committed to distributed leadership, implementing structures so that teachers have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school. The Instructional cabinet is made up of department leads, grade leads, model teachers, and peer teacher collaborators. They use student data to review department action plans and select, monitor, and adjust schoolwide strategies learned in PD. In addition, there are special education and English as a New Language coordinators. School leaders shared that the hiring process is horizontal, with teachers having input on decision-making. Teachers also have input in the organization of the Summer Bridge program, parent night, college trips, clubs, and even new courses. For instance, the art teacher developed a technology-based art course. These decisions impact student learning. The 2017-2018 School Quality Snapshot showed that 86 percent of ninth-graders earned enough credits to be on track for graduation, higher than city, borough, and comparison groups.