

Quality Review Report

2008-2009

The Multicultural High School

High School 583

**999 Jamaica Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11208**

Principal: Altagracia Liciaga

Dates of review: March 12 – 13, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Geri Taylor-Brown

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Multicultural High School is a high school with 216 students from grade 9 through grade 10. The school population comprises 9% Hispanic students and 91% Black students. The student body includes 90% English language learners and no special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 89.6%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 60% eligibility.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

The Multicultural High School is in its second year, and students feel nurtured by their teachers who continuously encourage them to reach for the highest goals. Using the mantra, "Failure is not an option", this energetic staff holds students to high academic and social expectations. The principal is a motivational role model for students, staff and parents. She is a no-nonsense person who disciplines with love and respect. This warm, trusting feeling can be seen and felt throughout the school. Students are excited about being in a school where they know that the school leader is solidly focused on their progress. The principal knows each student by name, and is aware of details of any circumstances or challenges that they have, both in their school and in home life. Parents feel welcome in the school and are extremely appreciative of the principal's insistence on high standards for their children. However, parental involvement in official school organizations is currently limited. Administrators are eager to increase participation and all dates for future activities have already been announced.

The school does a great job in regularly and systematically collecting and analyzing student data in all core subjects. This successful practice of regular monitoring student progress is undertaken by the full school staff. This enables teachers to positively influence student success as they educate the whole child. Assessment information is reviewed in multiple ways, beginning with a thorough examination of data for each student and ending with analysis of whole school data. Effective use of this information can be seen in most classrooms. Teachers regularly include activities in lessons that are generated from the learning needs of the students in their class with good results. However, the school recognizes that that these practices require further development to ensure a more consistent use of differentiation throughout the school.

The State aligned curriculum has proven to be extremely effective in providing a basis for this largely English language learner student population. Holding students to the most rigorous course work has led to extraordinary progress on the State exams. The school leaders are successful in offering multi-leveled professional development. There is training available for all general instructional skills. Additionally, teachers work with a "buddy" teacher on some individualized professional needs, based primarily on teacher self-assessment. However, the school has not yet deepened or formalized this process to consistently connect teacher requirements with student learning needs.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is a strong leader who shares her vision for continued school growth with all constituencies by solidly focusing on improving student outcomes.
- The school collects a wide range of student data and has a clear understanding of whole school, subject-specific and individual student information which is regularly used in class lessons to impact on student learning.
- The principal serves as a successful role model for her students, staff and parents, and encourages all stakeholders to strive for greatness, as demonstrated through the motivational postings throughout the school.
- The school leaders and staff carefully review multiple sources of data at regular intervals, providing them with a whole school overview and clear picture of the progress of individuals, groups, grades and curriculum subjects.
- School leaders use creative strategies to provide resources and make organizational changes that continue to support student needs and promote academic achievement.
- There is a school culture of mutual respect between students and adults as seen in high levels of student engagement and eagerness to participate in class.
- The faculty works hard to ensure educating the whole child by offering a wide range of support services to students and their families.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen teacher skills to ensure consistency in the use of differentiated instruction across all core subjects.
- Extend parental outreach to fully engage parents in integral aspects of the development of school goals, to deepen their understanding of the data and to build their capacity to directly support their child's learning.
- Expand systems and structures to deepen the personalization of professional development and training for all teachers.

Part 3: Main Findings

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The school has a strong system of data collection and analysis. This highly effective procedure requires teachers to assess students every two weeks, to chart student progress and to develop instructional interventions to improve student performance. In encouraging teachers to take ownership of their instruction, the principal has wisely let them develop individualized data gathering systems. Some teachers use 'Delaney' cards while other use grade books. However, for analysis of data, every teacher meticulously records student assessment data in the Assessment Data Analysis (ADA) binder. Every teacher has an ADA binder for each class, with a section for every student. The power behind this process involves the portions of ADA documents where students provide written responses to queries about their success or failure on each particular assessment. Additionally, there is a portion for parents to sign. As a result, staff and students collaboratively understand where students may fall short on skills. Both parties take ownership of the positives and negatives of the data and can clearly chart a course for student progress. This constant push to examine the data has rendered excellent returns on the English language arts Regents exam where 100% of students passed the exam with 70% or better.

Within the school's large English language learner population is a sub-group of students with interrupted formal education (SIFE). This student group has become the focus of the school's inquiry team. School leaders and teachers have been very effective in scrutinizing, analyzing and monitoring the overall progress of these students. Most importantly, the attendance of this group is carefully monitored. School attendance of 100% is one of the goals of the school. As the principal states, "If the students are not here, we cannot teach them." Outreach to parents in this area is excellent. Daily telephone calls inform parents about absences, lateness and any infractions of the school uniform policy. Additionally, parents receive information about student progress via progress reports and regular report cards. Although they are not all thoroughly involved in school organizational processes, parents are fully concerned and immersed in matters regarding the academic success of their individual child. One parent stated, "This school has helped my son get on a straight path."

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The principal has carefully aligned her performance review goals with the school goals as they are stated in the Comprehensive Education Plan. Although the development of

school goals was not a fully collaborative effort, all stakeholders are keenly aware of the schools mission for perfect attendance, making all class lessons relate to real life and the focus on English language acquisition. School leaders successfully translated the Comprehensive Education Plan goals into three user-friendly school-wide goals that are clearly understood by all. A major strength is in the interpretation of these goals into classroom practice. Students and teachers collaborate regularly to discuss reasons for assessment grades. They then jointly decide the next learning steps that involve setting targets that are individualized to each student's learning needs. As a result, students and teachers have a clear understanding of any impediments that may hamper student learning. One student said, "To improve on my weakness I have to know it specifically."

The school encourages students to see their weaknesses as stepping stones towards improvements. This is echoed in the school's constant and positive celebration of success by the high quality of student work displayed throughout the school on bulletin boards. Students are aware of the expectations for all areas of their work as teachers supply clearly outlined rubrics for class work, homework, behavior, writing and teamwork. Knowing the expectations well has encouraged student participation in all aspects of school life and has empowered them to be co-owners of their learning. Posters line the hallways, charting improvements in attendance, showing honor roll academic averages, and highlighting the Regents exams outstanding results. These visual reminders boost morale and encourage excellence from students and staff members.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students' learning goals.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

One of the underpinnings of the success of the school can be seen in the wealth and quality of the resources that are directly aimed at promoting improved student learning. School leaders are creative and skillful in using both fiscal and human resources. Many teachers have access to interactive whiteboards and demonstrate expertise in utilizing this tool. Students command this item with ease as well. For example, during a math class, one student worked on the in-board calculator while her classmates worked with calculators at their desks. Additionally, the school runs a successful extended day program for academic intervention services, as well as a Saturday Academy. Enrollment of students in these additional programs is virtually the total school population. This focus of funds on providing additional and varied instruction has accelerated the student learning particularly in their mastery of English. The resources successfully work in tandem with a rigorous curriculum, which is directly aligned with the State standards. All teachers expect all students to do well in all academic areas so they have chosen to not modify the curriculum, but to modify their instruction instead. This push for excellence has effectively moved students to aspire and successfully meet State academic requirements.

Knowing that more does not necessarily mean better, the teachers skillfully dig deep into the student data to re-teach what students did not fully comprehend during regular class time. This practice is evident during regular class lessons and also during additional instructional time. Classroom instruction includes a variety of activities that engage the students in learning. One teacher said, "When I teach I have to reach the five senses." This is a great beginning to full differentiation of teaching. The principal and teachers realize that they are on a journey towards consistently individualizing every class lesson

for each student. What the school does exceptionally well is their offering of what they call “authentic” teaching. Every lesson includes a section of teaching that fluidly connects the instruction to real life situations for students. A math lesson for example, focused on measuring amounts, took on an entirely new meaning when the students viewed the measurements as the amount of time they have lived in this country. This wise and effective instructional strategy has students excitedly and eagerly anticipating this section of the lesson. Additionally, class trips are linked to learning situations. One parent spoke proudly about how his son is learning to overcome educational obstacles by things that he has learned in his social studies class and how these were connected to school trips, such as the visit to Ellis Island and the statue of Liberty.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The school provides an effective professional development plan that offers two-layered support for teachers. There are opportunities offered three times a week for teachers to participate in afterschool sessions which one staff member referred to as “PD that deals with our instructional methodology.” This intervention has successfully increased teachers’ repertoire of instructional strategies. The principal has wisely rearranged student class time to allow for a 40-minute block of time for teachers to work together, participate in workshops led by specialists or confer with ‘buddy’ teachers.

The principal effectively uses daily walkthroughs in this small school environment. These provide information for more focused discussions with teachers and informal, immediate feedback. During weekly common planning time, teachers work with their subject partners examining the curriculum or ensuring that lessons include connections to real life experiences. Additionally, there is monthly training that provides a forum for teachers to reflect upon their own practice and gives them the opportunity explore both internal and external professional development to expand their teaching knowledge. However, this aspect of more individualized training has not yet been fully explored throughout the school. There is not yet a formalized system to measure the impact of professional development against improvement in student outcomes. Teachers are however becoming more reflective in their practice. For example, if a student fails, teachers are questioning the effectiveness of their instruction.

The inquiry team has been successful in infusing the best practices in instruction and student support services. This mixed team carefully analyzes the data of SIFE students. They refer to these students as “critical care students”, and they are very specific and strategic in providing the best whole-child care possible. The inquiry process involves a thorough collection of baseline data through diagnostic testing in ESL, ELA, math, science, and social studies. Lessons are tailored to purposefully address the varied student needs. Instructionally focused lessons, academic intervention services and a full guidance plan have moved some of these students to equal and surpass their peers on improved academics both in class and on standardized exams. A critical component of this plan includes inspirational trips and motivational celebrations to recognize academic achievement as well as improved school attendance.

The school provides a wealth of services for students and their parents through the participation of community based organizations on this school campus. Medical and mental health services are provided for students and their families. Most importantly,

there are immigration services that include general education diploma (GED) preparation and help in securing affordable housing.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

Due to a creative teacher schedule that provides weekly meeting time, the school has been able to effectively monitor what is working well and to make immediate adjustments if required. These common planning times strategically serve as checkpoints to identify the influence and impact of teaching and the effectiveness of the curriculum within specific subject areas. Wise usage of multiple data sources have collectively empowered school personnel to confidently make changes that directly impact on student learning. The implementation of any new plans is monitored frequently to ensure success. For example, a school-wide re-programming in mid-September was due to a large enrollment increase. The decision to re-schedule emanated from teachers who immediately felt the impact of inappropriate student class placements. The decision to re-schedule involved multiple staff conversations, including guidance staff and a full parent meeting. This ensured that all stakeholders clearly understood the reasoning behind the change and the positive impact intended for instruction. Teachers and guidance staff continued conversations throughout the semester to make certain that these changes continued to benefit children. The assessment data analysis (ADA) system provides the basis for most major decisions as it offers an effective one-stop view of student data. Changes in teaching, re-arrangement of student groupings and transitions in student class schedules all start at this point. This direct connection to authentic student data has successfully kept teaching on track and has positively influenced student learning.

The vision for continued improvement at this school is exemplified by the leadership. The principal openly and continuously shares her vision of what the school will look like when it is fully-grown to 12th grade. Students, staff and parents believe in her vision because they have already witnessed the positive impact of their two years of work. Students are eager to uphold the vision, as they proudly wear their school uniforms. One student spoke admirably about the school uniform exclaiming that when he wears it, "It make me feel important, like President Obama."

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: The Multicultural School	Δ	➤	✓	+
Overall QR Score				X
Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?				X
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?				X
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?			X	
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1				X
Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student’s next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student’s learning.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?				X
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?			X	
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?				X
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				X

DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DYO, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.							
<i>To what extent do ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?				X			
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?			X				
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?				X			
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X			
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X			
Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.							
<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?			X				
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?				X			
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?			X				
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?				X			
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X				
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.							
<i>To what extent do...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?				X			
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?				X			
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?				X			
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?				X			
Overall score for Quality Statement 5				X			
Quality Review Scoring Key							
△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed