

Quality Review Report 2009-2010

Richmond Hill

High School Q 475

89-30 114th Street

Queens

NY 11418

Principal: Frances DeSanctis

Dates of review: May 5 - 7, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Yvette Donald

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Richmond Hill High School is a high school with 3174 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 17% Black, 48% Hispanic, 1% White, and 33% Asian students. The student body includes 18% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 80.9%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Richmond Hill High School has made great strides in moving overall student achievement. The principal and administrative team continues to develop a learning community that focuses on accelerating student and teacher learning. The administration and the school-based teacher center staff utilize student data to guide teacher development and collaboration. Supported in the understanding and application of multiple data sources that identify student performance, teachers report that “sharing best practices and working as a team” has enabled them to understand and work towards meeting the school’s instructional goals. While summative data is analyzed and utilized to apply that which has been learned, teachers do not yet supplement this information with department-wide or classroom based formative measures. In addition, the school has not yet developed systems for evaluating the processes and protocols for organizing and sharing student data across the departments and with families.

Administration frequently collects and analyzes student data, which informs the school’s instructional and organizational decisions. Students with limited English proficiency, who face the challenges of mastering the rigor of content mastery in English, are offered classes in their native language. This enables the school to build the students’ content knowledge while concurrently building their competencies in the English language. The productive work of the inquiry team, focused on vocabulary development, both across subjects and within specific content areas, has resulted in revisions to curriculum. As a result, students have a deeper understanding of subject area concepts and skills.

The school has developed very concentrated data-driven school-wide goals that provide a broad umbrella for moving its agenda forward. However, interim benchmarks are not yet embedded within all areas of the school, thereby preventing school leaders and faculty from making timely data-informed adjustments when monitoring progress that accelerates student performance at all levels.

The school has invested in an online data management system in an effort to increase communication with parents, students and staff. Collaboration between the newly hired assistant principal of assessment and accountability, the department chairpersons, and guidance team ensures that this tool provides transparency around student academic and youth development information. Parents feel “empowered to go on-line to view [their children’s] attendance, lateness and course standing” whenever they want to. While this provides parents and students with information that enables them to “keep an eye” on student performance status, the school has not yet engaged parents in ways to become more involved in school planning.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and staff have created a learning community that focuses on student outcomes with a vision to continue accelerating learning.
 - o High-leverage school goals, based on students' summative data, are embedded and aligned to the school's Comprehensive Educational Plan. Analysis of last year's Progress Report and Quality Review recommendations allowed the principal, administrative cabinet and teachers to develop focused instructional and organizational goals. As a result, the alignment of assistant principals' and teachers' goals assures united efforts towards cohesive instructional and organizational approaches.
- School leaders make informed and effective organizational decisions across all aspects of the school to support improvements in learning.
 - o In response to qualitative and quantitative data, including the school's in-house survey, administration invested in an on-line data management and communication system. This allows parents, teachers and students to access information related to student learning. As a result, all key stakeholders are informed of student performance status and progress, which allows for more focused instructional and organizational supports.
 - o Recognizing the need to support staff in the analysis and use of school data, the principal hired a full-time assistant principal that focuses on assessment and accountability. This decision ensures that the school acts on its goal of monitoring and utilizing data to inform decisions and support school-wide initiatives. Teachers are programmed to meet in department teams so that collaborative instructional planning, driven by the harvested data, occurs consistently.
- The school has developed a clear instructional focus on improving instructional practices and has aligned its professional development to support pedagogical growth and promote student achievement.
 - o The school-wide focus of differentiated instruction is efficiently supported through targeted professional development and collaboration. For example, new and inexperienced staff are "buddied" with and coached by their more experienced colleagues. Teachers are able to build capacity in identified areas for growth through ongoing conversations. As a result, there is a deepening practice of providing targeted meaningful instruction for subgroups or individual students, thereby improving student progress.
 - o The school houses a professional teacher center, offering all staff a continuum of professional learning opportunities, both in teams and individually. Supports are tiered to address the specific needs of all teachers. This has built collaboration and collegiality, and enabled teachers to share their content knowledge and deepen pedagogical skills.

- A thorough approach is used to plan for differentiated professional development that targets the achievement of school-wide goals.
 - o Teachers engage in study groups and intervisitations that expand and deepen their knowledge and understanding of the school's instructional goals. This practice surfaces teacher leaders, thereby supporting distributive leadership principles. This allows staff to take ownership of the planning and deliver meaningful learning experiences.
- Administration and staff gather a range of relevant data across most subject areas to understand cohort and relevant sub-group performance and learning needs.
 - o School leaders and teachers consistently review multiple sources of data, including credit accumulation, summative and grade reports for subgroups and individual students. This informs class placements and identifies those students in need of additional supports. As a result, the school now offers Saturday Regents prep classes, morning math intervention classes, after school tutoring, and a pilot program addressing the social and emotional needs of targeted students.
- The school has established systems for the ongoing review and modification of curriculum and instruction that drive student achievement.
 - o Continuing analysis of marking period data during teacher team meetings has led to teacher ownership of curricular revisions in English and social studies. Furthermore, teams are now integrating competency skills and content mastery into their ongoing dialogue. In addition, there is a school-wide focus on cross-content and academic vocabulary development, which emerged from the collaboration of content area and support services teachers. Consequently, teacher capacity in developing strategies to raise student achievement has increased. This initiative has yielded improvement in English grades, and an increase in global studies Regents' results.

What the school needs to improve:

- Develop a cohesive system that enables all teachers to know their individual students' needs, strengths and achievement in an ongoing basis and supports targeted instruction across all subject areas.
 - o Individual and teams of teachers engage in a deep analysis of summative data, enabling them to identify students' strengths and shortcomings. Using systems unique to each department, the analysis leads to the broad identification of concepts and skills not yet mastered. Curricula are modified to address these competencies, and teachers are able to develop instructional plans for subgroups of students. However, teachers have not yet begun to develop formative assessments that generate data at the classroom level. This inhibits them from making timely instructional modifications to address the unique needs of student subgroups within specific classrooms.

- Refine action planning by developing interim goals and benchmarks for all plans in order to measure progress, make adjustments and evaluate successes.
 - o Administration sets long-term instructional and organization goals based on school data. Occasionally, modification of curriculum has occurred to assist in meeting school-wide goals. However, adjustments are not evident across all departments. There is a lack of coherence in the revision process for all facets of school planning, including the Comprehensive Educational Plan. This prevents the school from systematically modifying goals in support the changing needs of the school.
 - o Student goal setting focuses on study habits or classroom participation, thereby engaging students in the learning process and supports departmental grading systems. The short-term steps necessary for students reach their long-term goals are not yet evident, whether framed around success in classes, passing Regents or meeting graduation requirements.
- Expand communication and collaboration with parents and students in order to convey actionable next steps in response to student levels of performance and individual student work.
 - o The administration and teachers provide parents and students with information regarding school and classroom level expectations through an online data management system and the distribution of mid-semester progress reports. Phone calls and letters also inform parents and students about activities, events and academic support services. Thus, parents are aware of the status of their children's performance in classes, lateness, attendance rates, as well as school activities and programs. This allows parents to reach out to the school for additional supports for their child and attend activities and programs. However, there is a lack of on-going reciprocal conversations between the school and a larger population of parents about student growth and ways to become more involved in school planning. This impedes a large majority of families from knowing the precise steps necessary to accelerate student progress and becoming active members in their children's learning.
- Enhance the present systems for collecting and monitoring student data so that teachers effectively use the information to track academic progress uniformly at the classroom level throughout the school.

Administration uses aggregated student data to make decisions regarding program and class offerings and shares this information with parents and students. This informs parents of student performance and ensures a focus on student need. However, there is no definitive system in place for assessing and adjusting the policies and practices for gathering, analyzing and sharing student data across departments, classrooms and with students and families. As a result, administrators and teachers are unable to track the progress of sub-group and individual students around specific programs, protocols and practices, and make adjustments as needed.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: Richmond Hill	△	▶	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	△	▶	✓	+
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?			X	
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?			X	
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?			X	
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X	
Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	▶	✓	+
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			X	
2.2 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the team and classroom level?		X		
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance trends?			X	
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?				X			
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?			X				
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			X				
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?		X					
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X			
Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?			X				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			X				
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?			X				
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals 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 progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X				
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?		X					
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?		X					
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 5				X			
Quality Review Scoring Key							
△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed