

# Quality Review Report 2010-2011

**Bushwick Community High School**

**32K564**

**231 Palmetto Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11221**

**Principal: Tira Randall**

**Dates of review: February 7 and 8, 2011**

**Lead Reviewer: Catherine M. Powis**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Bushwick Community High School is a transfer high school with 383 students enrolled in grade 10. The school population comprises 37% Black, 61% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 74.5%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- An extensive network of social-emotional and culturally relevant support combined with a range of effective academically driven external partnerships leads to students' academic as well as personal growth.
  - The school embraces some of the city's most over-aged and under-credited students reflecting their philosophy that all students deserve a second chance. To this end, all stakeholders are highly effective in collectively supporting the specific needs of each individual student in a safe, secure environment that students love to come to. Regular kid-talk sessions led by the deans provide a forum for teachers to share counseling and discipline strategies. Community partnerships reinforce their efforts. For example, the staff of St. Nicks Alliance, a neighborhood organization, has been an integral partner through their Learning to Work program that provides students with structured internships, postsecondary planning, and intensive interventions to increase overall school attendance. The average attendance this year as of February 5<sup>th</sup> is 77.2% compared to last year's average attendance rate of 74.5%.
- School leaders and faculty are highly effective in consistently conveying high expectations to students and families that positively impact student progress.
  - Through College Summit and Senior Seminar students are exposed to a yearlong curriculum that prepares them for college and guides them through the college admission process. As a result, in June, 2010, all graduates completed college applications and the acceptance rate improved significantly from last year. This, coupled with several incentives for students with good or improved attendance, plays a key role in improved student presence at school.
  - A full-time parent coordinator addresses the ongoing challenges of parent involvement by planning several events and celebrations throughout the year, such as, Hispanic Heritage Cook Out for seniors, Gallery Night, and talents shows. In addition, lines of communication to parents continually reinforce the high expectations for student success. Parents, and big brothers and sisters who have themselves graduated from this school, speak very highly about how they always felt "connected" to the school and the high expectations for success communicated from the student orientation through graduation day. As a result, family involvement supports student success as confirmed by positive responses on the Learning Environment Survey.
- Relationships among students, teachers and school leaders are caring and respectful, resulting in a warm, nurturing environment that supports the educational and social-emotional growth of all students.
  - Each student is well known by several adults in the building who make a concerted effort to support the management of the myriad of personal challenges that most students bring with them. Guidance counselors, social workers, deans, and teachers support a "Men's" and "Women's" group session every Friday where coping skills and other supports are discussed, and where these 17 to 22 year old students highly value being able to have a voice in their learning. As one student shared and others wholeheartedly agreed, "This school motivates me. Teachers make me feel smart and take me away from my problems. I have a chance to graduate."
- There is a clear sense of the vision and mission of the school that is pervasive throughout the building to support student achievement goals and expectations for accelerating learning.

- School level goals are clearly focused on re-engaging students inside and outside of the classroom who have given up on high school. To this end, a vision and mission of academic and personal transformation are supported by specific and measurable goals for improving course pass rates, increasing Regents passing rates and attendance rates. This is based on a very comprehensive needs-assessment described in the school's Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) that analyzes various measures of student outcomes. Goals and matching action plans reflect annual, interim and long-range impact and are directly linked to trends, accomplishments, and barriers to success as per the school's past Quality Reviews, Progress Report data and State accountability data. As a result, students continue to make progress in various Regents passing rates, and the average change in student attendance is significantly higher relative to the school's peer horizon.
- The principal, in collaboration with staff and her administrative team, makes informed and effective organizational decisions that are aligned to the school's instructional goals and support improvements in learning.
  - Each classroom is equipped with an interactive Smart board that is used effectively as a teaching and learning tool. For example, the social studies teacher accesses primary documents online to provide visuals for various time periods in history to enhance students' understanding of the topic. Additionally, a full-time UFT Teacher Center coach lends her expertise in providing hands-on and group professional development to support classroom and grade level instructional goals to meet student learning needs.
  - Having surveyed staff talents, teacher assignments reflect several specialized courses in response to student interest, cultural backgrounds and/or learning deficits. Course offerings such as Slavery, Video Production, and Forensic Science add variety and interest to the electives. A Reading Foundations course supports students that enter Bushwick Community High School with reading deficits, and this year's "Introduction to Psychology" is an advanced placement course offered to challenge higher achievers.
- Explicit feedback by school leaders with clear next steps improves pedagogy that is aligned to school-wide goals and leads to gains in student achievement.
  - School leaders and faculty support a cohesive school culture that creates a supportive community among all stakeholders. A common instructional focus is clearly delineated in a detailed Staff Handbook and the (CEP) that are revisited and modified every year based on improvement of student outcomes.
  - School leaders enlist research-based methods and an analysis of student data for walkthroughs that provide immediate feedback to teachers to improve their practices. Formal observation reports provide more detailed next steps for improvement with differentiated support as a follow-up to unsatisfactory performance, and to gain expertise in specific pedagogy for satisfactory performance. Such monitoring and support results in proactive tenure and retention decisions that enhance student learning.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Develop curriculum that challenges students and incorporates higher order thinking skills through more rigorous academic tasks and precise indicators to ensure gains in student achievement.
  - Curricula are aligned to State standards and elective course offerings are often based on student interest and culture. In some instances curriculum maps reflect standards that are

prioritized, such as in writing, and can positively impact on the results of all Regents exams. However, lessons are not always planned around curricula that sufficiently challenge and actively engage students with rigorous academic tasks that improve cognitive capacity. Therefore, not all students at varying levels of performance make necessary academic progress.

- Develop teaching practices that provide differentiated approaches to learning so that all lessons offer suitable challenges at each student's independent level and elicit higher order thinking that leads to improvements in student progress.
  - Most teachers believe that students learn best through whole-group and guided practice driven by a learning objective. Exit assessments routinely check for understanding. However, some classrooms utilize the same materials for all students that lead to limited levels of engagement and specific subgroups are not effectively challenged by them. Furthermore, not all classrooms engage students in higher order tasks and opportunities for accountable conversations. This hampers opportunities for improved comprehension and student outcomes.
  - In some classrooms, stations provide higher achievers exercises to push their thinking. Nevertheless, little opportunity is offered to most students to work at their independent levels as some teachers still plan teacher-directed lessons leaving little difference in work products between the higher performer and the struggling students.
- Align the school's professional development plan more precisely with necessary improvements in teacher pedagogy that will have long-term impact on improving student outcomes.
  - The faculty meets and discusses their teaching practice regularly and objectives are usually linked to CEP school-wide goals for improvement. The yearlong plan for professional development is driven by the specific work of several teacher teams, an action plan for content-based literacy, and a full-time coach. In some instances their activities positively impact on whole class approaches to learning. Nevertheless, problems of practice and their solutions do not always reach the classroom to ensure that individual student needs are thoroughly met through skill-based and content-based differentiated approaches. This hampers opportunities for greater levels of student success as seen in their work products.
- Formalize effective systems that regularly evaluate the quality of curricular and instructional decisions with a lens on modifying policies and practices that ensure coherence across classrooms.
  - Capacity-building practices are developing through the work of several teacher teams, some with a lens on organizational practices and school-wide student data trends, and others on curriculum and instruction, and personal growth. However, formalized systems are developing to determine the effectiveness of their work to modify curriculum, instructional and organizational practices that ensures consistently rigorous expectations for student learning and outcomes.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

<b>School name: Bushwick Community High School</b>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?		<b>X</b>		
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?		<b>X</b>		
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?			<b>X</b>	
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				<b>X</b>
<b>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.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			<b>X</b>	
2.2 Align assessments to curriculum and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?			<b>X</b>	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends?			<b>X</b>	
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?			<b>X</b>	

**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>	UD	D	P	WD
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

**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>	UD	D	P	WD
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

**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>	UD	D	P	WD
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	

<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>