

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

Aspirations Diploma Plus

**High School 646
1495 Herkimer Street
Brooklyn
NY 11233**

Principal: Matt Molloy

**Dates of review: October 26 - 27, 2010
Lead Reviewer: Ainslie Cumberbatch**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Aspirations Diploma Plus is a high school with 262 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 75% Black, 21% Hispanic, 2% Asian and less than 1% White students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 5% special education students. Boys account for 44% of the students enrolled and girls account for 56%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 57.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School staff deliver an engaging standards-based curriculum that addresses the needs of a diverse group of learners.
 - The school recognizes the challenges of motivating a transfer student and designs a range of standard-based courses that students state attract their interest. These classes include film and writing, college prep English and algebraic reasoning, taught alongside courses like global history and trigonometry. This line-up, rooted in Regents' preparation, holds students' interest and builds college-ready skills.
 - Teachers have the flexibility to create and refine courses that meet the needs and interests of students. This freedom allows teachers to capitalize on their own strengths and interests to offer courses that motivate both the teacher and students and results in improved student engagement as evidenced by student participation.
- Students focus on their learning goals and demonstrate a strong commitment to reaching their full potential.
 - Classroom instruction reflects a style of teaching that provides students with multiple opportunities to unpack curriculum using a variety of modalities. Using desktop computers, Smartboards, discussion sessions, videos and online writing experiences in classrooms, provides suitable supports that impact on student outcomes. As a result, students appear motivated in the classroom and interact with peers and teachers in a positive way, stating, "Teachers help you with the work."
 - The school uses a variety of professional development methods to support staff in delivering instruction that reflects project-based learning with benchmark assessments aligned to Common Core Standards. Consequently, students work with rubrics within units to develop work products that evidence mastery of key concepts and celebrate this success with teachers at benchmark periods.
- School leaders make strategic organizational decisions that align with school priorities and serve to accelerate student learning.
 - Based on an assessment of the work of the partner organization, the principal requested a complete revision of the partnership agreement and an entirely new support team to optimize this resource. As a result, the school's partner now provides students with strong counseling support to ensure that every student has at least one person to confide in. Counselors also collaborate with teachers to address goal setting with students. Consequently, students report strong relationships with staff and describe the school as "cool" and "supportive".
 - A newly hired and dynamic assistant principal enhances the administrative team by providing instructional support to teachers as they help students strive for a college career, something students thought beyond their reach. Subsequently, school teams focus more closely on the instructional agenda and student progress, thereby increasing student success on benchmark assessments.

- Teams of teachers work collaboratively to examine school-based data and develop tools to strengthen curriculum and instruction.
 - Teacher teams carefully review Regents' examination data to identify the effect of classroom instruction on student outcomes. One school team is investigating the lack of correlation between course pass rates in global studies and Regents' pass rates in that subject area. As a result, team members plan to conduct classroom visits to observe teaching strategies and student behavior to more accurately inform feedback to staff and identify implications for instruction.
 - A school wide benchmark assessment system captures and demonstrates student mastery. Students complete benchmark performance tasks every three to four weeks that assess knowledge and skills learned during that timeframe. This practice serves to help teachers align work they do in the classroom to larger student learning goals established at the start of a unit and the course.
- School administrators use the observation tool and data based systems to support teacher practice with a focus on improving student outcomes.
 - School leaders support instructional coherence by looking at teacher practice and student outcomes using an assessment rubric to ensure standards-based work. As a result, all lesson plans reference elements of a school-wide benchmark assessment system designed to ensure students work towards excellence and incorporate a focus on higher-order thinking skills.
 - Two consultant coaches visit the school one to four times a month to mentor teachers in their classrooms and to support the ongoing professional development and work of teacher teams. Consequently, this support enables teachers to better focus on using data to improve student outcomes.
- Staff use collaborative, data-driven processes to set school-level goals that focus on accelerating student outcomes.
 - Teams identify priorities through ongoing data analysis and use this information to develop goals and action plans at regular planning sessions to improve credit accumulation and attendance. Data that includes scholarship and attendance statistics drives intensive inquiry leading to cohesive intervention plans for academic and social-emotional support by teachers and the school's partner.
 - School staff and personnel from the partner organization plan together well using assorted streams of data that include information from student work, Regents' results, periodic assessments, and student transcripts to develop goals around supporting struggling students. As a result, the partner plans to launch an after-school support program for students in November.

What the school needs to improve

- Expand the level of parent engagement to include consistent opportunities for parents to participate in school decision-making.
 - Parents share that the school's environment is "awesome" and that staff communicate well with them through an online program called SNAPP grades. However, the school partner does not communicate with parents well about post-secondary plans and support student social/emotional growth.

- The school reaches out to parents regularly to encourage their participation in school events such as the school carnival and award ceremonies. However, the lack of an established parents' association, and absence of interesting parent workshops offered by the parent coordinator, hamper efforts to promote greater parent involvement in the school community.
- Further develop school structures to ensure that effective teacher practice and use of resources result in student mastery of current and evolving State standards.
 - The school's team structure and benchmark system facilitate the examination of student progress and movement towards meeting emerging Common Core State Standards. A review of student scholarship last year highlighted the need to examine the alignment of classroom instruction to State standards. However, the school does not yet have fully developed procedures to ensure that classroom teaching translates into student competency on State exams.
 - School staff instituted department meetings as a means of monitoring and improving the effectiveness of its benchmark system. However, as this meeting structure is not yet fully institutionalized at the school level alignment, coherence between what is taught, and how it is taught, is evolving.
- Refine action planning to include long-term goals that focus on student progress as you move to implement the Common Core Standards.
 - Administrators identify school priorities in the Comprehensive Educational Plan and other planning documents that address annual goals. However, long-range plans that reflect the principal's vision, such as integrating a career and technical component into the curricula, are yet to surface publicly and become part of a formal structure to inform the work of staff based on students' needs.
 - School plans for student success include a review of student work through the lens of the Common Core Standards and the alignment of assessments to unit plans. At present, a formal process for monitoring and assessing the impact of school-wide plans that goes beyond scholarship results and identifies effective organizational and instructional practices is emerging. As a result, the lack of this structure limits the school's ability to determine the effect of its actions.
- Promote greater consistency in the use of classroom-level data to differentiate goal setting so that all lessons are rigorous and engage students at their level.
 - Although all teachers consistently generate progress reports and set goals for groups of students based on classroom benchmark assessments, not every teacher uses this data effectively to establish individual learning goals for students or suitable targets for on-going improvement reflective of annual and short-term goals. Consequently, students' progress and achievements varies across the school.
 - Teachers analyze data and plan for differentiated programming for students so that each student can engage in relevant classes to meet his or her own needs and progress towards graduation. However, within each class there is not yet a refined focus on goal setting that propels students to achieve to their fullest.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: Aspirations Diploma Plus High School	UD	D	P	WD
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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	
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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 Align assessments to curriculum and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, 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	

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				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed