

# Quality Review Report 2010-2011

**Richmond Hill**

**High School Q 475**

**89-30 114<sup>th</sup> Street**

**Queens**

**NY 11418**

**Principal: Frances DeSanctis**

**Dates of review: November 3 – 5, 2010**

**Lead Reviewer: Michael L. Schurek**

## **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 15% Black, 46% Hispanic, 3% White, and 33% Asian students. The student body includes 16% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 82.6%.

### **Overall Evaluation**

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal and staff work as a unified team to create a calm, respectful and orderly environment where learning can take place and students feel supported.
  - This school is highly populated and overcrowded, yet students feel supported in their academic endeavors through personalized attention provided by this year's 9<sup>th</sup> grade small learning community, individual student annual plans for credit accumulation and numerous faculty recommended tutoring and college credit opportunities. As a result, students now follow programs designed to meet their individual needs.
  - Because of the school's very diverse population, bias discrimination training takes place each term for students and teachers in conjunction with Respect for All weeks that include school wide lessons in tolerance, resulting in incident reductions and a respectful school culture. One parent praised this aspect of the school by stating, "My child is able to wear our religion's traditional garb on a daily basis without harassment of any kind."
- Leaders make informed and effective organizational decisions to support improvements in learning.
  - The principal and her cabinet carefully analyze school needs and allocate resources to improve outcomes aligned to school goals, such as the purchase of a computer literacy support program to improve the reading and writing skills of English language learners, a decision that has contributed to recent gains and extra credit in English Language Arts Regents scores for lowest third students.
  - School leaders carefully monitor scholarship reports and Regents pass rates for each teacher and use this information to design effective assignments and make evaluative pedagogical decisions. In addition, the school has introduced a small learning community model with its Ninth Grade Academy which it plans to expand throughout the grades to increase teacher accountability in all student cohorts.
- The principal has created a learning community that is focused on student outcomes that accelerate achievement.
  - The principal seeks to personalize students' experiences through rigorous work that will make them college-bound and thereby dramatically increase graduation rates along the way. School goals spotlight the achievement of a 70% graduation rate for the 2011 cohort this August. This ongoing focus has enabled the school to increase graduation rates by 15% over the past two years.
  - A thorough analysis of data pertaining to credits earned is used to identify off track students and specific subject areas of concern, resulting in the creation of action plans to improve outcomes such as the implementation of Intermediate Algebra for students who are weak in Integrated Algebra.

- Teachers collaborate frequently to examine student work, plan together and share best practice, through a desire to improve student outcomes.
  - A vast majority of teachers meet regularly in teams to conduct inquiry. The 9<sup>th</sup> grade academy meets as an interdisciplinary team while the other grades meet weekly by department to identify root causes that hinder success and determine strategies for improvement.
  - Teachers are selected by administration to lead the 9<sup>th</sup> grade academy teams as part of the school's effort to distribute leadership. In addition, teachers facilitate professional development during bimonthly study groups. These practices enable teacher leaders to emerge and provide all teachers with a voice as key instructional decision-makers.
- Administrators use a wide range of assessment data to determine school-level needs and monitor the effectiveness of instructional and organizational decisions.
  - A broad array of data is analyzed to identify areas of need enabling the school to modify organization to increase student outcomes. For instance, science teachers now teach both recitation and lab classes to students, enabling more of them to pass and qualify for Regents exams.
  - Acuity Periodic Assessments and classroom data, such as the new department benchmark assessments, are used to analyze student subgroup trends relating to Regents performance. As a result, English language learner programs now build greater literacy skills, enabling more of these students to qualify for and take Social Studies Regents exams earlier, thereby increasing pass rates.

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

- Deepen student engagement by creating rigorous academic tasks based on State standards that are consistent across grades and subjects and meet the needs of a variety of learners.
  - Each subject department examines data and uses this information to emphasize key standards for groups of students that are compiled in an online data management system; however, rigorous academic tasks are inconsistently utilized in classrooms across the school, especially in classes containing lower achieving students, thereby limiting opportunities to accelerate student learning.
- Expand differentiation practices to include instruction that varies materials and work products resulting in challenging tasks that align to achievement levels and reflect pedagogical coherence.
  - While administrators communicate a vision of student-centered classrooms utilizing differentiation to meet student needs, these practices vary greatly within classrooms across the school and lead to uneven levels of student engagement. For instance, many teachers use cooperative learning techniques and some create tiered classroom assessments; however, almost all classes utilize the same-leveled materials. Consequently current practice deters from the school's belief of what leads to successful learning.

- Broaden data utilization practices at the classroom level to ensure that the needs of student subgroups are identified so that instructional strategies can be differentiated and individual student progress can be tracked.
  - Teachers supplement data analysis by examining Periodic Assessment results, core subject benchmark assessments and other classroom assessments to identify general areas of need for groups of students such as vocabulary development for English language learners. Teachers are not using this information to pinpoint individual students' strengths and areas of need sufficiently to effectively differentiate instruction and track progress. Teacher teams are just beginning the process of utilizing department created and classroom assessments to measure the efficacy of instructional decisions, thereby limiting program evaluation at this time.
  
- Extend the use of the school's observation tool to foster the development of school-wide instructional practices and encourage teachers to reflect on their practice and professional growth to establish a coherent school culture.
  - Differentiation, higher-order questioning techniques and formative assessment practices are the main focus of professional development. While the further development of these skills is supported by the majority of faculty as evidenced during classroom visits and interviews, pedagogy is inconsistent in this regard and does not support a coherent school culture. In addition, new teachers receive more than mandated mentoring through teaming, coaching and administrative support; however, targeted professional development opportunities have not yet begun this year, thereby missing opportunities to build capacity.
  
- Refine action planning by linking interim goals to targeted realistic benchmarks at specific intervals so that school, team and teacher action plans can be monitored to expedite revisions, maximize impact and celebrate success.
  - School action plans generally use percentage-based targets as the annual goal in the identified areas of improvement. Benchmarks measuring progress towards these goals at specific intervals during the school year are indicated but list unrealistic targets indicating a need to further develop the school's systems for measuring progress. Benchmark assessments have been designed in each core subject area to help teams and teachers measure student progress and develop interim goals; however, teacher team and class action plans do not contain interim targets for groups and individual students at this time. The lack of these structures hampers the school's ability to determine the effectiveness of their actions along the way to allow for contingencies and make timely adjustments that improve outcomes. It also limits the school's ability to align planning from one year to the next.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: Richmond Hill High School	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score		X		
<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>	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	
<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>	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		

<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.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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?			<b>X</b>				
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?		<b>X</b>					
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?		<b>X</b>					
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?		<b>X</b>					
<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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?		<b>X</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>X</b>				
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?		<b>X</b>					
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?			<b>X</b>				
<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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?		<b>X</b>					
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?		<b>X</b>					
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?		<b>X</b>					
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?		<b>X</b>					
<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>