

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

High School for Youth and Community Development at
Erasmus

High School 537

911 FLATBUSH AVENUE
BROOKLYN
NY 11226

Principal: MARY PRENDERGAST

Dates of review: May 30-31, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Karen Watts

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

High School for Youth and Community Development at Erasmus is a high school with 407 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 85% Black, 9% Hispanic, 1% White, 1% Asian students and 4% other students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 61% of the students enrolled and girls account for 39%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 84.5%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school's curriculum aligns to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in planned modules that provide content and build students' academic skills for postsecondary success. (1.1)
 - The school offers many visual and performance art courses to address students' interest in the Arts, as well as College Now and advanced placement courses to expose students to college level work so that they can be prepared for post secondary success. The school develops its core curriculum offerings through its participation in the Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC). These LDC modules/units, that are CCSS aligned, clearly show what the task is, whether it is informational or explanatory, and what CCSS are being addressed. The modules promote the use of informational texts, citing evidence when formulating an argument and spiraling content and skills throughout the school year to increase rigor and higher order thinking and increased academic achievement for all students including English language learners and students with disabilities.
- The school staff has a clear understanding of students' needs that drives supports to strengthen students' social emotional learning and their desire to succeed. (1.4)
 - The school has extensive youth development supports that range from targeted advisories that address student groups, such as those who are suspended to those who are graduating. There is a strong young minority male development initiative where students are encouraged to focus on all that they are, can do and achieve through their participation in a performance based class. The attendance team, comprised of the guidance counselor, the parent coordinator, and cohort and attendance teachers, ensures that students are in school daily and the team has even been able to return a 12th grader back to school after an extended absence. The hallway patrol conducts sweeps to ensure that all students are in their classes every period. All students are well known by an adult at the school, whether it is the special education students who are supported by their paraprofessionals and teachers or other students who have access to an art therapist, art teachers, a social worker and a guidance counselor who remains with the cohort for four years, and a dean who supports suspended students. All students have open access to the principal and assistant principals, and student leaders participate in a leadership class. As a result, students state that they feel supported to be successful in school.
- The principal's vision evolves from data trends and is supported by action plans that target students' academic and social emotional growth. (3.1)
 - School leaders involve the school community in the gathering and analysis of a range of data to identify trends in student behavior and academic outcomes so that students' needs are addressed. The faculty has set goals to increase graduation rate, Regent pass rates and credit accumulation along with action plans to achieve them. As a result students' schedules ensure that they fulfill their graduation requirements in four years, that they take courses that prepare them to pass the Regent exams and that they have access to academic supports that increase their success in their classes. These practices have resulted in an increase in the four year graduation rate at the school.

- The school uses electronic and other communication tools to provide timely information to families about students' progress and performance that improves student achievement. (2.4)
 - Parents say that the parent coordinator reaches out to them frequently to keep them informed of what is going on at the school, to invite them to Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings and to assist them in finding jobs. In addition to information received at PTA meetings on how to use Datacaton, the school's electronic data reporting system, and the use of ARIS to receive information regarding their children's academic and behavioral progress, parents attend cohort night where they receive the syllabi for their child's courses. Parents also receive numerous phone calls, report cards and progress reports from the school regarding their child's progress. Parents feel that they are welcomed at the school and can come to the school at any time to meet with school staff and discuss their child's attendance, behavior and academic performance. These practices keep parents informed of the next steps that their children should take whether it is to participate in enrichment activities or to attend tutoring to improve their academic achievement.
- The school's guidance structures, along with internal and external partnerships, provide opportunities for students' to develop their college and career pathways. (4.4)
 - The school provides a summer bridge program for its incoming 9th graders at CUNY's Brooklyn College and its network provides a college advisor who works closely with the guidance counselor to ensure that all students apply to college. Students participate in arts and media internships at the Brooklyn Museum, the Central Park Conservancy, and in the Project Reach internship program that provides them with real world learning opportunities. These opportunities illuminate students' college and career pathways.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine teaching strategies and questioning techniques to foster high levels of peer discussions and students' ownership of learning so that student achievement increase. (1.2)
 - The school believes that students learn by working collaboratively and that they should have similar instructional experiences in every classroom. To that end, all teachers use the workshop model to allow students to learn collaboratively in groups or in pairs. Additionally, teachers use the unit's essential question and an open ended question as the aim of each lesson to guide student learning. Students are taught to use the question formulation technique to develop their own high quality questions. However, during classroom visits, the use of the workshop model was inconsistent because most lessons began without explicit teaching in a mini lesson that would offer all students entry into the lesson and confidence in transitioning to activity periods of differentiated work where students would be able to formulate questions and answer them with text based evidence. As a result, despite the availability of discussion prompts, students were unable to meaningfully contribute and participate during classroom discussions thereby limiting their ability to learn from each other.
- Strategize the use of the school's resources and scheduling so that cognitively engaging academic tasks result in high quality student work products. (1.3)

- The school makes intentional decisions around hiring staff, organizing schedules, procuring programs, increasing technology, and teacher assignments to align its resources with school-wide goals of improving teaching practices and learning. However, teachers' collaborative efforts are only now being directed towards the improvement of the quality of academic tasks to challenge students to think deeply and produce high quality student work products. As result in most classrooms, students were not engaged in challenging tasks resulting in poor quality work products and only minimal improvements in student learning outcomes.
- Enhance the classroom level assessment practices so that on-going checks for understanding result in instructional adjustments that improve student mastery. (2.2)
 - Most teachers incorporate a daily quiz, exit slips and students' use of rubrics to guide essay development. Some teachers use open ended questions to develop the lesson, however they do not utilize closed questions at strategic times during the lesson to check for understanding before moving the lesson forward nor do they conference and keep a running record of students' progress in groups or during individual assignments. As a result, teachers are not able to make instructional adjustments as the lesson progresses in order to meet the needs of all students, including special education students or English language learners, therefore limiting student learning and achievement. Additionally, some rubrics utilized by students are not yet aligned to key standards, making it difficult for teachers and students to assess students' progress toward the standards as they complete a task, consequently hindering student mastery.
- Provide actionable feedback to teachers on effective instructional strategies that improve pedagogical practices and increase students' performance. (4.1)
 - The school participates in the Department of Education's talent management pilot that includes a talent management coach who visits once per week to provide support for the implementation of the pilot that addresses one competency of the Danielson rubric. Administrators visit all teachers' classrooms on a frequent basis for both formal and mini observations with verbal feedback taking place during post observation conferences followed by written feedback. However, a review of the data from the pilot shows that although there was growth of teacher practice in the areas of planning instruction and managing student behavior, there was only minimal growth in effectively engaging students in learning thereby limiting students' academic achievement. Additionally, the feedback was ineffective in providing teachers with specific actionable steps to improve instructional strategies so that the engagement of students in their learning leads to mastery of the standards.
- Deepen professional collaborations to ensure that all teacher teams use an inquiry approach to investigate trends in student learning in order to improve learning outcomes. (4.2)
 - Teachers on subject area teams use the inquiry approach as they look at student work and are starting to shift the focus to their practice to identify changes that have to be made to academic tasks and instructional delivery in order to improve student work outcomes. However, cohort teacher teams focus on what targeted students need to be successful, whether it is access to books at certain reading levels, access to instructional software programs, or participation in after-school and tutoring programs, and on whether or not students are making academic progress. As a result, the work of the cohort teams is not yet focusing on improvements in teacher practice thereby limiting the potential to increase student learning.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: High School for Youth and Community Development at Erasmus	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 as evidenced by meaningful student work products?		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, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?		X		
2.3 Use grading policies and tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends to inform instruction and curriculum?			X	
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students' progress toward school and class expectations?			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 staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?		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, guidance/advisement 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, with particular attention to the CCLS?		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
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