

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Bushwick Community High School 564
231 Palmetto Street
Brooklyn
NY 11221

Principal: Tira Randall

Dates of review: June 5 - 6, 2012
Lead Reviewer: Lillian Druck

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Bushwick Community High School is a transfer high school with 420 students enrolled in grade 10 through grade 12. The school population comprises 40% Black, 58% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 20% 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 2010 - 2011 was 77.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school's inclusive and nurturing environment promotes a high level of trust and positive attitudes toward learning, which strongly enhance students' academic and personal development. (1.4)
 - The school's motto, "Where Education is Liberation" empowers students as they transition towards positive social transformation. Students feel respected by staff who know them very well. The guidance counselors and social workers foster students' academic and social success by maintaining open lines of communication, providing academic counseling and assisting students in seeking solutions to issues that impact their lives. Students share that the personalized, caring environment and the intensive social emotional supports help them overcome day-to-day obstacles, resulting in renewed aspirations toward high school graduation and post secondary plans.
 - Students take great pride in maintaining a high standard of conduct. They learn about the school's zero tolerance policy at an orientation prior to admittance to the school and take very seriously their responsibility to maintain a school environment that is physically and emotionally sound for all. Attendance is closely monitored by the attendance teacher and on the school's online system, thus enabling the attendance team to provide individualized attention to high-needs students. This results in a positive school culture as noted in a negligible number of occurrences, zero superintendent suspensions, and above average attendance as compared to peer schools.
- The school effectively supports staff in creating a safe and respectful environment and works collaboratively with a wide range of internal supports and external partnerships, thereby meeting students' needs. (4.4)
 - The school offers sessions on topics such as Managing Student Behavior, Positive Discipline, Creating a Professional Learning Climate, and Behavior Management Techniques for the 21st Century, which provide the staff with strategies to foster and sustain a respectful learning environment. Incentives and celebrations acknowledge students who meet or exceed benchmarks and include special trips, tickets to Broadway shows, letters of recognition, and the posting of names on the school's Wall of Fame. As a result, collaborations among staff members are highly effective in maintaining a safe building, and students' academic and personal successes are acknowledged, which in turn supports their learning.
 - The school works closely with the Learning to Work Program (LTW) which provides targeted, data informed services including academic support, career exploration, work preparation and internships. Students participate in college and career seminars, work readiness workshops, and paid internships thus allowing them to be engaged in real-world learning opportunities and in the development of life goals.

Consequently, this results in strong academic and social-emotional support as noted in conversations with students and parents.

- School leaders and faculty consistently communicate high expectations and provide necessary supports to students and families, resulting in positive learning outcomes. (3.4)
 - Daily morning faculty meetings provide opportunities for the principal to consistently communicate high expectations to the staff regarding the school's beliefs about how students learn best and the common teaching framework used to improve instruction. Additionally, department meetings, teacher teams, and conversations with staff, offer professional development sessions and training, which assist the staff in understanding and meeting the school's expectations for themselves as teachers and for students, resulting in a culture of mutual accountability to meet the school's goals.
 - Incoming students and their families who attend a two-day orientation and in-take session at the beginning of the school year are informed of the school's high expectations for attendance, behavior, academic performance, and post secondary planning. The school's LTW staff, guidance counselors, and social work department staff, assist students in meeting the school's expectations through various support groups, assistance with Regents tutoring, mentoring connections, and setting of post graduation plans. As a result, more students are on track for credit accumulation and articulate clear future planning.
- The principal makes purposeful organizational decisions that are well aligned with the schools goals so that learning needs are met. (1.3)
 - Allocated resources were effectively utilized to launch a blended learning model called Dig/IT to provide relevant college and career readiness skills to students via technology-based modules. Five teachers worked with small groups of students after school to create a learning environment focused on digital literacy. Students produced power point presentations, excel spreadsheets, business e-mails, and I-movie videos. Each student who successfully met the requirements of the course earned 1 credit and received a lap top computer. At the conclusion of the program, the school held a Dig/IT Expo which showcased students' projects. Consequently, students sharpened their research skills, created meaningful work products, and enhanced their learning, as noted by the quality of projects produced.
 - The school's programming allows for teacher teams to meet regularly, focus on the learning needs of groups of students, and engage in collaborative practices to improve learning outcomes. The school's post secondary and academic team provides intensive personal and academic support for seniors engaging them in appropriate goal setting so they are on track to graduate. Team members track the progress of the students across subjects and ensure that they develop positive personal habits. This results in a shared responsibility around meeting needs and planning for success in attaining a high school diploma and pursuing suitable post secondary plans.

- Teachers use varied assessments that are aligned to the curriculum to guide instructional decisions and adjust classroom practice, which results in a clear understanding of the performance of students. (2.2)
 - Across each department the school uses teacher designed interim formative assessments that mirror Regents' exams and incorporate common core aligned tasks and rubrics. The assessment data is recorded into Skedula, the school's on-line grade book, which generates spreadsheets and aggregate reports. Teachers examine the data closely to identify the strengths and learning deficits of subgroups within each department, thus guiding their instructional and curricular decisions. A close analysis of short response writing tasks assisted the English department in revising their teaching to include strategic lessons with a focus on specific skills, such as dialogue, characterization, and literary elements. Revisions to classroom level instructional practices contributed to improved student outcomes as noted by an increase from 24% students scoring Level 2 on short response Regents' tasks in June 2011 to 55% scoring at the same level in January 2012.
- School leaders evaluate instructional practices with a focus on promoting professional growth and reflection thereby impacting classroom instruction. (4.1)
 - The supervisory team utilizes a research-based rubric to communicate clear expectations for teacher practice and provide feedback from informal classroom observations and review of student data. Feedback captures strengths, challenges, and next steps, to support teachers' development, with a focus on planning and preparation, classroom environment and instructional practices. The focus on these domains results in actionable feedback to teachers that is relevant to improving instruction, and identifies common effective practices across the school, thus positively impacting student learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve planning of academic tasks and curricula so that lessons and learning activities promote higher levels of thinking and enhance cognitive engagement for individual students and relevant subgroups. (1.1)
 - The school's curriculum maps and pacing calendars reflect steps taken toward alignment with State standards and the integration of Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). However, learning activities and lessons that emphasize rigorous habits and demand higher order thinking skills are inconsistent across grades and subjects. In addition, intentional planning to engage all students in developing critical thinking is not a consistent practice across the school. This hinders the achievement of some students as noted in their low course pass rates, particularly for students with disabilities.
- Strengthen systems for reviewing curricular and instructional decisions to increase school-wide alignment of practices. (5.1)
 - School leaders are developing structures to regularly evaluate and adjust curricular and instructional practices in response to students' learning

needs and the expectations of the CCLS. Teacher teams revise curriculum maps and make adjustments to course syllabi, rubrics, and classroom practice, so that lessons are aligned to CCLS and follow a logical sequence to address learning deficits. However, protocols to evaluate the impact of these systems are still emerging. This hinders the school's ability to align practices that lead to increased school-wide coherence in the delivery of instruction.

- Enhance teachers' ability in the use of instructional strategies that strategically accommodate varied learning styles, extend thinking and increase student interactions, so that all learners are fully challenged. (1.2)
 - Classroom practices are aligned to the curriculum and reflect the school's belief that all students can be successful with the appropriate supports. Classroom visits demonstrate the use of oral, written, and technology-based projects, including power point projects and student videos. However, instructional strategies and questioning techniques do not strategically provide purposeful supports and lesson extensions to push thinking and broaden students' learning experiences. As a result, there is a general level of engagement and students are not always motivated to fully participate in class thus impacting their work products.
- Refine goal setting by identifying short-term goals specifically targeted to meet identified needs of subgroups of students in order to increase their learning outcomes. (3.2)
 - Teachers and teacher teams use course outcomes to set students' goals within each department and students are provided with an individual plan to graduation. However, goals for academic improvement are sometimes broad and lack specific interim benchmarks. Consequently, adjustments to learning goals are not always timely, suitably effected, nor well defined for all learners, thus hindering opportunities to monitor student progress and close the achievement gap.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Bushwick Community 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 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