

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Multicultural High School
High School 583

999 JAMAICA AVENUE
BROOKLYN
NY 11208

Principal: ALEXANDRA HERNANDEZ

Dates of review: May 29 - 30, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Holly Reichert

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Multicultural High School is a high school with 378 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 1% Black, 95% Hispanic, and 4% other students. The student body includes 86% English language learners and 1% 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 88.7%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school and its community-based organization provide integrated student support, opportunities for learning, and college advisement, leading to postsecondary readiness. (4.4)
 - o In collaboration, the guidance department, dean, and the school's community based organization, provide support and track graduation requirements and college application processes to ensure each student in the senior class has the potential to graduate on time and attend college. Utilizing an online follow-up system so that student information is tracked weekly, the relevant parties address student credit accumulation, attendance, social emotional needs, and college advisement. When a student issue arises, immediate action is taken by the appropriate member of the team and recorded for follow up. This collaborative approach also integrates hands-on opportunities for students to gain leadership experience in school, understand their credit and Regents' projections and the college application process, and receive support on how to take responsibility for their learning and future. Students go on college visits, work as tutors and youth leaders, attend workshops on the college interview process and SAT and Regents' preparation classes, as well as participate in empowerment programs. As a result, the school has seen an increase in postsecondary readiness as evidence by the number of potential graduates and college acceptance letters.
- The school's collaborative learning environment promotes both student and adult engagement and growth resulting in improved student performance. (1.4)
 - o When students enter school, staff from the guidance department and deans welcome them. Thus, a students' day starts with modeled behaviors and staff have an opportunity to address student behaviors requiring attention. Students stated that staffs dedicated time and attention to their success has allowed them to improve. Additionally, students know that their teachers and the staff have an open door policy allowing them to seek out adult support when needed. Student voice is heard through the school's monthly town meetings when students speak to what is working in the school and offer proposed ideas for additional activities. Staff and students also collaborate on academic tasks before, during, and after school. As partners in the learning process, students and staff follow up frequently about both social, emotional, and academic needs. A 5% increase in attendance is attributed to staff-supported student-to-student outreach started this year as a community service activity proposed during town hall. As a result of staff and student collaboration, students take responsibility for their learning and actions and actively participate in contributing to their school.
- The school strategically uses resources to address the specific needs of its students and teachers to increase student achievement and teacher effectiveness. (1.3)
 - o Administrators use students' level of English language proficiency, to program them into collaboratively taught English and bilingual content classes, thus addressing specific language proficiency needs and promoting accelerated acquisition and content mastery. This programming protocol, along with the allocation of teacher team time to work collaboratively, has been key in driving the school's focus on academic language learning. As a result, teachers are

- more effectively addressing student language and content learning needs as evidenced by an increase in spoken English in and out of the classroom and written academic English evidenced by completed work in student folders.
- o Shifting to an integrative collaborative teaching (ICT) model for English, adding a reading specialist, and hiring teachers with K-8 experience, drive the school's English initiative. Teachers, scheduled for department and grade team meetings four days a week, are able to focus on instructional planning, data, student work analysis, as well as discuss student and subgroup needs across a grade. Teacher scheduling allows for common planning so that ICT pairings plan together focusing on language and content. Teachers stated that these changes now provide them with time to work together. One teacher shared that the collaborative model has helped with planning for and addressing language proficiency levels with differentiated materials and resources. Students said that their English has improved and that they are proud of their writing. As a result, teacher assignments and student grouping has led to instruction that is more effective and students' increasing their language acquisition.
 - The school's system for observing classroom practice connects to school wide pillars and goals leading to uniform instructional practices increasing student mastery of language and content. (4.1)
 - o The administration has methodically implemented an observation process for improving teacher effectiveness aligned to the school's four pillars of engagement, environment, English language acquisition, and assessment. The school uses articulated questions for pre-, post-conferences, and checklists for walk-throughs. Observation reports are kept chronologically in binders tracking the development of teacher pedagogy for both tenured and untenured teachers. Written and oral feedback is given to teachers and records are maintained in binders. Thus administration tracks growth of particular elements of instruction with checklists with suitable feedback and highlighted next steps. Follow-up visits evidence improvement in classroom environment elements over the course of the year. Teachers stated that the school's uniform structures have led to improvements in instruction and student outcomes. As a result of this articulated system aimed at managing teacher pedagogical development, the administration has been able to provide aligned and actionable feedback as well as make decisions regarding tenure and retention.
 - Following a careful analysis of its data, the school developed its goals and actions plans aimed at accelerating student learning. (3.1)
 - o A deliberate focus on English language acquisition and staff collaboration drives the work of the school and serves as the two focuses of its work. As an outgrowth, the school strategically set an action plan to facilitate changes in student programming, teacher assignments, schedules, and the coordination and alignment of professional development for staff. The school communicated the results of the needs assessment and the proposed changes as per the identified goals to the community, who enthusiastically embraced and credited these goals as a catalyst for increasing student learning. Consequently, teachers shared that guided inquiry team collaboration has led to the development of uniform structures agreed to by all. Furthermore, there is evidence of improvements in student engagement, English, and written work in classes. Parents shared that their children's level of English has improved, whole-heartedly supporting the English initiative. As a result, the school is on a trajectory in support of increasing the number of students who pass the English Regents.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop rigorous, college ready curriculum incorporating key standards that engage all students in language rich tasks and promote critical thinking skills. (1.1)
 - o The school has been developing curriculum for its core subjects and the arts, and uses the common core bundles in English language arts and math. English language arts and English as a second language teachers have developed units focused on reading texts that are more complex and providing evidence to support a claim. A collaboration between 11th grade English language arts and U.S. History teachers led to the development of humanities curricula, marrying the two content areas aligned to key standards. Curriculum maps in math and history align to Regents' exams and textbook topics. In some subjects and classes, units and lessons have been planned for the specific needs of the diversity of English language proficiency levels. However, this practice is not evident school wide. While the school has documentation in place to show what they are teaching, complete curriculum maps and units of study showing an explicit alignment to key standards focusing on language development and critical thinking delineating content and skills development across grades has not been fully articulated. As a result, the planning and delivery of standards-based instruction that engages all students in language rich tasks and critical thinking is inconsistent and differentiation based on language proficiency is uneven across the school, reducing the school's capacity to further accelerate students' English language acquisition and content mastery.
- Strengthen pedagogical practice so that it reflects the school's belief about how students learn best and is differentiated for all learners so that instruction is consistent across the school. (1.2)
 - o The school believes students learn best when they do the work, have structure, and are provided with feedback and next steps. The school's lesson plan template connects to this shared belief. Teachers use the template to plan instruction, and provide a written agenda for the students to follow. Some teachers use student performance data to plan differentiated activities. In some classrooms, students have the opportunity to participate in structured ways as observed during a class debate. In another class, students were learning how to write a critical lens essay and students' learning was differentiated during independent work. Some students were using a template to support their essay writing, while others worked with a guided graphic organizer to organize ideas, and another group was working with the content at the word and sentence level. While the school's instructional practices engage some students in differentiated tasks aligned to standards and language proficiency levels, this is not consistent across the school. In some classes, students did not know or understand what to do, and in other rooms, some students finished their work quickly and sat waiting for directions from the teacher. As a result, the delivery of student-centered and differentiated instruction that reflects the school's shared set of beliefs is uneven, limiting the school's capacity to fully address language proficiency needs, engage all learners cognitively, and provide challenging extensions.
- Deepen teams' and individual teachers' curriculum-based assessment practices to identify subgroups in order to accelerate student mastery of content across the school. (2.2)
 - o During team meetings, teachers look at summative and formative data to guide decisions regarding instructional next steps to better address students needs. In an English class, a teacher said she grouped students based on daily formative

assessments including her observation notes, exit tickets, and student writing. The three groupings, identified from assessment data, allow for targeted instruction and differentiated tasks and materials. Students in these groups spoke easily about what they were doing and why. In another class, students were grouped and received different graphic organizers; however, they were unsure what to do, how to do it, and were not fully engaged in the activity. While instructional plans indicate how student understanding will be checked during a lesson and how groups of students will be provided differentiated supports, the delivery of instruction and execution of articulated structures did not engage all students, and checks for understanding did not take place in all classrooms. As a result, formative assessment practices and the strategic use of groupings for differentiation are inconsistently executed across the school hindering opportunities to accurately identify and meet student-learning needs.

- Ensure teams and individual teachers set differentiated learning goals for the diversity of student and subgroup needs. (3.2)
 - During the English team meeting, teachers discussed instructional next steps using provisional data from a State language test. Members of the math team shared how they used Regents' Exam item analysis to identify topics for continued practice in preparation for June exams. In some classrooms, students were grouped and provided differentiated materials based on identified content needs and/or level of language proficiency. In one classroom, students knew what they were working on and could articulate why they were doing a particular task. Other students were not able to articulate or said they did not know what they were doing or why. While it was clear that teams and teachers have analyzed data, created student groupings with similar learning needs, and in some cases have created group specific differentiated tasks, goals have not been set for individual students and subgroups across all content areas and grades. Thus, the lack of setting student-learning goals connected to all curricula hinders the school in effectively tracking content and language progress of relevant groups of students.
- Strengthen the school's systems and structures for evaluating the effectiveness of standards based curriculum and instruction in response to student learning and the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). (5.1)
 - New this year, the lesson plan template allows for consistency in planning across the school. The administration reviews lessons during the observation process and provides feedback. Furthermore, the administration organizes and maintains the ongoing development of curriculum in binders including maps, units of study, and lesson plan compilations. Additionally, lessons compiled for the Common Core Learning Standards tasks in English language arts and samples of resulting student work are organized. The English team stated that unit plans and curriculum maps were works in progress. The administration has provided staff with professional development on unit planning and curriculum mapping, aware that this is an area on which the school needs to continue working. While the school has undertaken a uniform planning template and has a system for the collection of units and curriculum maps, it is unclear how the school evaluates the effectiveness of its curriculum. Consequently, missing out on having an articulated system for reviewing and evaluating curriculum limits the school in determining if what is being taught is suitably aligned to the standards and implementing necessary revisions and adjustments to the curricular and instructional practices.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Multicultural 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	
1..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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