

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**Community Health Academy of the Heights
Middle-High School 346**

**512 W 182nd ST
MANHATTAN
NY 10033**

Principal: Mark House

Dates of review: May 21 - 22, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Yvette Donald

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Community Health Academy of the Heights is a middle-high school with 471 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 7% Black, 92% Hispanic, and 1% other students. The student body includes 29% English language learners and 20% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 91.4%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Administration and staff collaboratively create a safe and respectful environment that is conducive for learning. (1.4)
 - Students are organized into homeroom classes where they form relationships with teachers who are responsible for reviewing overall academic progress and working with administration to identify supports for those students in need of intervention. Additionally, administration and staff know and have developed relationships with each student and his/her parent. According to parents and students, this enables administration and staff to identify and intervene to support students in addressing academic and personal needs.
 - Teachers and deans are present in the halls during the change of class, and deans are actively and consistently mobile while class is in session, thus promoting timely department and reduced hallway infractions. Teachers greet students at the door and quickly assess their demeanor in an effort to troubleshoot challenges before they escalate and negatively impact classroom instruction. In spite of the familiarity between the school community and parent, each visitor is required to show identification and state their purpose for visiting the school before entering the building. These procedures and practices ensure that students arrive to class on time, and minimize out-of and in-class disruptions. Consequently, there is over a 5% decrease incidents in the halls, students arrive to class on time and are emotionally prepared to engage in learning experiences.
- Synergistic partnerships and thoughtful services provide students and families with social and emotional supports that promote personal growth for students and adults. (4.4)
 - The school's partnership with its founding organization, the Community League of the Heights (CLOTH) ensures that students and families are provided with necessary personal and emotional supports. The Mentoring Connection provides female students with role models and academic experiences thus empowering them to visualize and develop a plan to be successful community members. The after-school programs available to all students, target at-risk ninth graders in need of social emotional counseling in order to reduce academic failures and socially inappropriate behaviors. Columbia-Presbyterian Health Clinic offers primary care services to students and families, thereby reducing the number days students are absent because of health related issues. Professional development related to the vision and mission of the school is increasing teachers' ability to support the theme and beliefs on which the school is founded. Thus there are increases in outcomes for students as evidenced by increased students' monthly attendance, and increases in teacher retention.
- The school is developing a practice of using a research-based framework to improve teacher practices in order to raise student outcomes. (4.1)
 - Administration conducts formal and informal observations and provides teachers feedback on observed practices. Baseline and subsequent informal observations of a mainly new teaching staff focuses on student behavior and is beginning to incorporate feedback on student academic outcomes. Feedback identifies strengths, areas for growth, and next steps. This provides teachers with a general understanding of what is expected of them in order to elevate practice that can increase student outcomes.

- The principal's use of student and teacher time supports the school's goals and is focused on improving outcomes for teachers and students. (1.3)
 - In support of the school's focus on strengthening writing within key discipline areas, such as social studies, and to elevate teachers' ability to use student work to inform their practice, the principal has increased opportunities for teachers to meet in structured professional collaborations. In turn, as a result of a school-based options vote, all teachers meet at least twice a week in grade level and discipline teams. The increased frequency of these meetings has provided teachers more time to analyze student work in order to inform curricular and instructional decisions. The current social studies curriculum now reflects an explicit and targeted approach on how to analyze text to determine point and counter points in developing arguments. Connectedly, teacher assignments across the school are organized into clusters, where a cross discipline group of staff meet to plan and organize academic and social-emotional supports for a cohort of students. As a result, teachers are sharing instructional practices across various disciplines and students are showing growing levels of engagement, as evidenced by increase in the volume of student writing samples over the course of the semester.
- Families praise the frequent communication they receive from administration and staff on school-based activities and the strengths and weaknesses of their children enabling them to provide support at home. (2.4)
 - Parents are informed of school activities during monthly meetings and via notices sent home. Information on the progress on their children's performance from teachers and staff is shared through frequent phone calls and meetings with the guidance counselor and social worker. Parents have access to the school's online tool, Skedula, which keeps them abreast of their children's performance status. In addition, teachers meet with parents and families informally to discuss students' academic and personal needs. And, the principal's open door policy creates a comforting stream of information regarding expectations for students. Thus parents have baseline information on the strengths and weaknesses of their children, and partner with the school to celebrate their children's successes by addressing deficit areas at home.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that the curricula reflects key standards and provide a wide range of rigorous learning experiences across classrooms in order to accelerate growth for targeted groups of students. (1.1)
 - The school staff has begun the journey of developing units of study in core content areas with an emphasis on building writing skills and developing academic vocabulary. This writing emphasis is evident across subject areas and there is an emerging practice of assuring the writing process is a routine component of instruction. In addition, teachers are beginning the work of understanding the teaching and learning demands of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). However, teachers and administration have not yet determined the key standards that will coherently drive learning within, across the grades, and for content areas. In addition, existing curricula does not reflect accommodations and research-based strategies to address the needs of English language learners (ELL's) and students with disabilities. This limited attention in planning varied activities and experiences for these key groups of students, including those who are high performing, based on the analysis of data, prevents all students from engaging in activities that are cognitively challenging and

developmentally appropriate, thus limiting the acceleration of learning for all students.

- Build consistency into teacher practice to ensure that strategies and routines align to the school's beliefs about how students learn best and results in expanded student thinking. (1.2)
 - Teachers use a variety of questions and activities to deliver content during lessons. Some teachers are developing the practice of using data to inform key instructional decisions, such as class groupings. However, observations and conversations with teachers indicate there is a misalignment between the use of past summative student information such as State exam results, and student groupings, as outdated information is often used as baseline data to inform work groups. In addition, questions and activity prompts do not consistently build on the knowledge of what students know and can do. Furthermore, the practice of student peer-to-peer discussion is inconsistent across classrooms. Thus there are varied levels of student engagement and participation, as learning opportunities inconsistently meet learners at their ability levels or sufficiently promote student-to-student discussions, limiting higher levels of thinking.
- Ensure that teachers consistently and coherently use summative and formative data to inform instructional decisions and make necessary revisions in order to meet the learning needs of all students. (2.2)
 - Teachers use a variety of assessment tools such as a teacher-made tests, projects, and rubrics, giving them information on student performance during the unit of study. These results are not analyzed so that there is a clear understanding of what individual or groups of students know and the challenges that remain which prevent success in meeting the expectations of their courses. Therefore, teachers have a limited knowledge of the true impact of their instructional practices on student learning and are unable to effectively plan and implement future instruction based on identified academic needs; thus preventing targeted instruction in order accelerate learning for all students.
- Develop short-term goals for both the school and teacher teams, and a process to adequately measure and monitoring progress, to make relevant mid-course corrections towards meeting long-term goals. (5.3)
 - The school has articulated long-term goals that align with the Chancellor's instructional initiatives. However, administration and teachers do not have interim goals for each articulated long-term school and student goal. As a result, the school is unable to determine yearlong progress toward attaining end-of-year goals in order to make midpoint adjustments, when necessary.
- Ensure that teams of teachers set data-informed measurable goals for key sub-groups that are progress-monitored so that changes to classroom practices result in accelerated learning for all learners. (3.2)
 - Classroom teachers set informal goals for all students that are reflected in the implementation of the curriculum. While this sets expectations for overall classroom instruction to address the learning needs of the class as a whole, goals to ensure the acceleration of progress for the unique needs of key subgroups, specifically students with disabilities and ELLs, and academic goals, at the team and classroom levels, have not yet been set. Consequently, very few teachers implement targeted strategies to address the learning needs of these key subgroups of students, thus preventing students from capitalizing on learning opportunities and limiting students' progress.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Community Health Academy of the Heights	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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