

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

High School for Excellence and Innovation

M423

**650 Academy Street
Manhattan
NY 10034**

Principal: Tyona Washington

Dates of review: May 14 - 15, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Ronald Feinstein

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The High School for Excellence and Innovation is a high school with 134 students from grade 9 through grade 11. The school population comprises 24% Black, 75% Hispanic, 0% White, and 0% Asian students. The student body includes 22% English language learners and 34.5% special education students. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 81.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school is safe and inviting, students are actively engaged in learning and appreciate the strong support they receive for both personal and academic development. (1.4)
 - The school has a full-time program coordinator with East Side House which shares the school's vision to engage students and families in creating economic and civic opportunities, and to assist in making sure college is within reach of motivated students. Students check in daily with an advisory and dedicate one full period weekly to this effort. Monthly professional development assists staff in providing guided discipline so that they work from students' strengths. The school's philosophy is based on youth development and tenets from Educators for Social Responsibility. For most of the students, this school provides the very first academic environment in which they experienced success. Students feel "united, equal and strong". They feel the school is "non-judgmental" and that contributes to their success and access for a "second chance". The school uses a complete range of data including scholarship and attendance surveys to target students' strengths and develop planned supports. During "Kid Talk", teachers, administrators, the school-based partnership coordinator led by the guidance counselor address academic and social emotional needs twice a month. A Primary Person identified for every student in the school ensures the coordination of youth-development efforts and academic success. Students are highly engaged in learning and indicate the help and caring they receive from advisors who they trust and see as advocates to help them become self-reliant. An additional partnership with United Way focuses on attendance and drop-out intervention. A number of older students have been accelerated and will graduate within three years. Student government meets weekly with the principal and plans social events as well as leading monthly Town Hall meetings. Students have successfully lobbied for a baseball team; they secured a faculty advisor to coach and the team has met with great success on the field. As a result of all this work, students report appreciating the strong support they receive and that they have been given an opportunity to pick-up and be successful. As they said, they "feel like a family".
- The school has effective and extensive internal and external networks of specialized supports that ensure the personal, social, physical and emotional needs of students and families are met. (4.4)
 - The school has very well integrated guidance and advisement supports that include the "Kid Talk structure where each student is assigned a Primary Person . Constant check-ins with teacher-advisor and teacher participation in Kid Talk ensures that all staff are on the same page and speak in the same language. Well coordinated efforts with the school-based Program Coordinator from East Side House (ESH) works to maintain each students path to post-secondary readiness by equipping students with a variety of avenues to this goal. The seamless integration

of supports guarantees a risk-free, nurturing environment and results in students who have gained the ability to advocate for themselves. School staff is provided professional development by ESH social workers and on-site case advisor. An advisory curriculum is also provided through ESH which includes stress management and Success Highways, Overcoming Obstacles and additional components for college readiness. East Side House continues supporting students even after they have entered college. At the beginning of the year, ESH develops long- and short-term goals based on data and works with each student on an individual level. Using week to week analyses, a system of efforts-to-outcome (ETO) is used to monitor day-to-day progress. Advisors, the guidance counselor and the program coordinator greet each student daily and any student absent receives an immediate phone call at first bell. Chronic absentees receive a home visit. Advisors react to situations in the immediate moments when there is an issue, which results in few incident reports. ESH facilitates the peer mediation process based on guidelines from Educators for Social Responsibility which results in students returning to the classroom as soon as possible.

- School leaders align curriculum to key state standards and integrate Common Core State Standards (CCSS) tasks that promote cognitive engagement and post-secondary readiness for the diversity of learners. (1.1)
 - Reading and writing standards focus on comprehension identified through summative and real time interim data. In math, patterns and modeling enfold the habits of mind students need in order to close the achievement gap. In addition, a concepts-based math program and the directed use of Khan Academy develop automaticity and assist in the implementation of CCSS tasks, promoting post secondary readiness for all students.
 - Open-ended questions and higher order thinking skills based on Depth of Knowledge are evident in curriculum maps focused on essential questions and enduring understandings. Implementation of student tasks across classrooms demonstrates opportunities for inquiry and Socratic discussions, enabling all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, multiple entry points to demonstrate acquisition of knowledge.
- Teacher development is driven by a research-based framework and ensures that teachers meet professional expectations and goals collaboratively developed by teachers, the principal and assistant principal. (4.1)
 - Informal and formal feedback from a research-based framework for teacher development is part of a unified data collection effort posted on Google Docs. Notes from pre-conferences and debriefs after lessons aligned to a rubric are used to inform next steps. The school frames these data in “glow and grow” comments. Low inference observations are strategically used to norm school-wide best practice and further support teachers’ growth, especially for the large numbers of teachers new to the school and the profession.
 - Teachers receive feedback that aligns instructional expectations right from the planning phase to ensure that lessons are challenging, include strategies to engage students and utilize high level questions in order for

students to develop critical thinking skills. The feedback teachers receive from administrators helps them to develop action plans through self-reflection and collaboratively set professional goals.

- The school gathers and analyzes a wide range of relevant data that is used to identify trends and strengths in student learning and inform strategic changes to increase student achievement. (2.1)
 - Benchmark data captures students' strengths and challenges in each content strand. This data is collected every three weeks in all courses along with data that identifies patterns of achievement to track progress and adjust school-wide practices. For example, benchmark data used by the social studies data team along with scholarship reports targeted Level 1 and 2 students and successfully accelerated them to Level 3 and 4. A close look at United States History Regents coursework analyzed the document-based questions that specifically involve inferring and identified those students who were not performing proficiently. The team created items that matched the content strands assessed by the State, made them more rigorous and added more of them into the school's benchmark assessments that mirror the State's summative assessments. As a result, the school is better able to track how students are progressing.
- Teaching practices include consistently differentiated instruction and students demonstrate high levels of engagement, as evidenced by participation in provocative classroom discussions. (1.2)
 - Across classrooms evidence of the workshop model and the credo of "I do, we do, they do" lead to highly interactive student involvement in Socratic discussion and are reflective of the school's belief that students learn best when there are various entry points and consistent teacher checks for understanding. Questioning and routines require students to think deeply regardless of students' skill level, which results in practice that consistently immerses students knowledgeably in deep, rich and provocative discussions. School practices are embedded in the Framework for Effective Instruction from Understanding by Design. Bloom's Taxonomy Coaches dedicate time each Tuesday to address student challenges in literacy through effective use of Achieve 3000 and Read 180 while pushing in to classrooms. Content, process and product differentiation are evident and there is a variety of reading materials including visuals, auditory, taped readings and additional student specific differentiation with consistent attention to text complexity. The school's concerted efforts to develop high level questioning and classroom routines have also focused on predicting and determining importance. The teaching strategies to develop these skills are embedded in research-based activities that engage students at the highest levels and result in thoughtful discussion and evidence based argument writing samples as seen during classroom visits and a review of student work.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure the school's long range plan includes strategic organizational decisions across all aspects of the growing school and result in improved instruction and are evidenced by meaningful student work products. (1.3)

- The integration of Read 180 and Achieve 3000 into smaller classes along with the creation of CTT classrooms, especially in literacy and push in support for English language learners, has resulted in increasing the reading and writing skills of these students. The school has dedicated resources to embed the use of SmartBoards in every room and through Foundations, a community based organization, laptops and broadband are provided for every student. “Dig It” facilitates the use of this technology, including access to the credit bearing AVENTA, which enables many students to complete high school in three years. Teachers meet in common planning twice a week and two additional hours per week are dedicated to professional development. Staff provide Saturday classes, vacation academies as well as after school and tutoring at lunchtime. Despite these combined efforts and the willingness of staff to hold themselves accountable for student success, the inexperience of many of the staff has not yet resulted in consistent improvements in instruction, which hinder the school’s potential to attain its instructional goals.
- Refine and ensure that teams of teachers and individuals make systematic use of assessment data to strengthens collaboratively developed assessment practices and create a complete picture of student progress. (2.2)
 - Rubrics created by each department and aligned to the school’s detailed curriculum maps and teacher understand how to monitor all students’ progress. Summative data is supplemented with diagnostics from the American Counseling Association and the Gates-MacGinite reading assessment, which identifies strengths and needs of all students by grade and subject and supports the linking of assessment to classroom instruction. Teachers began this work with the deconstruction of the CCSS which were then aligned with school rubrics and teacher adapted and designed tasks from the Common Core Library. However, these worthwhile practices are new to most of the staff are therefore not yet fully realized, which hinders teachers’ abilities to track progress, use consistent checks for understanding, meet students’ learning needs and surface awareness of next steps for both teachers and students.
- Strengthen teachers’ feedback to students so that it consistently includes guiding comments and clear measures of performance so that students understand the high expectations and their next learning steps. (3.4)
 - Parents receive a school report card three times a year and frequent communications from the highly effective parent coordinator along with regular emails and phone calls from advisors and teachers. Almost all parents attend the monthly Parent Teacher meetings along with all the teachers. Parents report feeling grateful for the school’s efforts and feel their children’s self-esteem is valued and sustained by the culture of the school. Teachers provide workshops for parents that are content specific. These are also held on Saturdays further ensuring that parents know how to prepare students for their next level. Rigorous tasks aligned to the Common Core prepare students for the demands of college and career. East Side House provides an on-site program coordinator for college and career readiness and, along with advisories, the guidance counselor and the Primary Person assigned to each student, consistently convey comprehensive high expectations. While these efforts have been

effective for many students who have not had previous success in their academic lives, some students still struggle with attendance and performance. As the school grows, current systems are not effectively growing with the increasing population of parents and students, thus limiting the school's capacity to ensure all students achieve the school's high expectations.

- Expand professional development opportunities for teachers to discuss their practice, making sure there is a dedicated focus on the link between teacher practice and student work so that student achievement improves. (4.3)
 - The school provides professional learning opportunities so teachers can best prepare students to interact with text and reach high levels of critical thinking. Strategies include simulated preparation for Regents exams and innovative programs for credit recovery. The administration looked closely at how professional development aligned with the learning progressions and matched that with beliefs about how students learn best. Feedback from mentor teachers on implemented lessons including tasks from the Common Core units of study assures alignment to the school's instructional goals. However, the demands and expectations for teachers content knowledge and the pedagogical shifts implicit in the Common Core State Standards have not yet been considered and, therefore, adult learning needs are not currently being met, limiting their effectiveness as teachers.
 - Professional development opportunities for faculty include Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) science workshops as well as professional learning for teachers of English as a second language and special education. All teachers have been engaged in units of study aligned to the CCSS. The school ensures that learning from off-site workshops is turn-keyed back at the school with a take-it-back component. At Tuesday staff meetings teachers who attended workshops are provided time to inform their peers, making the link to classroom practice and student work. Teachers are also provided professional development in the socio-emotional components that are so vital for this population of students. Teachers of English language learners develop common plans with other staff and these lesson plans are emailed to staff to ensure evidence of Universal Design for Learning. While these efforts have harvested some success, intervisitations are not yet a component of this process and the study of teacher and student work has not yet yielded intended improvements in the classrooms, limiting possible improvement in teaching and learning.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: M423 High School for Excellence and Innovation	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