

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Flushing International High School
High School 263

144-80 BARCLAY AVENUE
QUEENS
NY 11355

Principal: Lara Evangelista

Dates of review: May 30 - 31, 2012
Lead Reviewer: Juan Mendez

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Flushing International High School is a high school with 417 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 1% Black, 42% Hispanic, 2% White, 53% Asian students, and 3% other students. The student body includes 89% English language learners and 1% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 92.6%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school promotes a safe and nurturing environment that is favorable to academic and personal growth. (1.4)
 - o The school's all-encompassing desire to create an academic bastion for students and staff is evident in its inclusive culture, replete with collaborative programs meant to support all facets of learning. The multi-squad program utilizes multicultural student leaders who organize school events on such matters as immigration rights and nonviolence in order to foster widespread acceptance and understanding. Moreover, newly revamped report cards have led to more effective communication among students and staff on issues from discipline to academics. Students now create goals based on these reports to enliven their involvement so they can positively contribute to the school culture. An increase in the amount of students who claim, "I feel safe at my school" on the 2011-12 Learning Environment Survey validates the encouraging aspects of the school's environment.
 - o An advisory system makes use of one teacher who meets with students twice per week to encourage healthy and productive collaboration. Social workers and guidance counselors meet with instructional teams on a weekly basis to provide students with counseling on a whole host of student concerns. Additionally, a surplus of student clubs offers social-emotional fulfillment for student participants. One student expressed gratitude for all the attention he receives. "In this school, teachers know you." The effect of this effort to personalize the school's environment has increased student morale and boosted the attendance rate to 94%.
- The school integrates multiple supports to address the individual growth of students and to direct students on the pathway to college. (4.4)
 - o The school schedules time for professional development relative to social aspects of student development. The Respect for All student support committee, chaired by the school's social worker, is instrumental in sustaining a courteous culture. This committee meets regularly with teacher and student teams to share strategies to boost confidence and collaboration. One parent states, "They build self-esteem here." School committees positively impact the school culture by organizing advocacy groups, such as the Dream Team that orchestrates school-wide events with the goal of developing sensitivity toward the plight of undocumented immigrants who seek citizenship.
 - o Parents appreciate the school's incentive to keep them updated on the college advisement process. For instance, the school provides parents with information on college visitation and financial aid. Students spoke of beginning to compile a career college binder as early as the ninth grade. This endeavor to keep students and parents updated with the lengthy college preparatory process has led to an increase in the college enrollment rate.
- School leaders and faculty align curricula to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and make purposeful decisions so that a diverse group of learners are engaged and college ready. (1.1)

- o Teachers work in their disciplines to develop tasks aligned to the Common Core standards and Citywide instructional expectations and implement activities that emphasize argumentation and math modeling. The school's Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) goal to provide "instruction and curriculum that aligns with the CCLS focus standards" reaffirms the school's intention to impart skills that advance postsecondary readiness. As a result, the school's college readiness index continues to rise.
- o Teachers engage students in project-based work that is both rigorous and thought provoking. In a math class, we observed students who were assigned sophisticated roles that garnered individual accountability in solving algebraic equations. In an English language arts (ELA) class, students presented and supported their points of view with textual-evidence. Teachers interviewed claim that many of their high-level questioning techniques and tasks are inspired from Dr. Norman Webb's Depth of Knowledge matrix. This has yielded a 14% increase in the passing percentage on the January ELA Regents for cohort N.
- Teachers use strategically differentiated practices to reach students of all ability levels so that the presentation of challenging curricula can be accessed through a variety of entry points. (1.2)
 - o The fundamental notion of cooperative learning is ever-present at this school as evidenced in a history class where a teacher delivered demanding project based assignments to groups of students who utilized technological resources to find innovative solutions. Solutions that students sought required the analysis of claims made by historical figures, and students set out to support or refute these claims with vivid examples from United States history. This kind of approach not only honed in on key aspects of the Common Core standards but also helped to produce a 5% increase in the number of students who passed all social studies Regents' exams.
 - o Teachers employ rigid classroom routines that are beneficial to all learners and especially advantageous for the large percentage of English language learners at this school. Teachers assign complex tasks to groups, and students who were designated as group leaders translate the tasks into their native language and clarify assignments for other students. This structure produced noticeable content support and levels of engagement. Furthermore, additional entry points are established through the use of visual media, where groups of students created video footage to produce real public service announcements to be submitted to the Catholic Charities Legal Aid. This type of experiential learning yields transferable skills that are applicable in all subject areas and beneficial for numerous prospective career choices.
- The use of teacher and student time is structured to support school-wide goals and the academic needs of all students, thus allowing opportunities to support improvements in learning. (1.3)
 - o The school utilizes an abundance of resources to provide targeted assistance for ELLs to pass State Regents' exams. These resources include Smart Boards, which are placed in the majority of classrooms, as well as one computer for every two students. Students commented on their use of technology for PowerPoint presentations and discussed the creative use of "voice threads," student work products that incorporate the art of podcasting into online forums. This extensive use of technology has yielded additional student work products that stem from computer based learning.

- o Teacher teams meet once per week as a result of a school approved School Based Option that allowed school leaders to adjust scheduling and designate Wednesday afternoons as the official team meeting time. This time has been used to address school-wide goals involving the refinement of curricula. As a result, a horizontally and vertically aligned curriculum is now augmented with curriculum maps and more rigorous tasks for all courses taught.
- School leaders have established effective systems for monitoring and evaluating classroom teaching with a clear focus on informing professional reflection and growth, resulting in greater coherence in instructional practice. (4.1)
 - o School leaders have spearheaded a campaign that guides teachers in the use of classroom rubrics to improve teacher effectiveness and build organizational and instructional coherence. This effort to sustain teachers' development is reflected in the school's CEP goal that states, "By June 2012, 75% of teachers will have advanced at least one level in one strand of the Internationals Network for Public Schools Classroom Rubrics." The INPS classroom rubrics allow administrators to engage teachers in clear protocols with multiple opportunities for reflection and improved performance. The principal established that the result was "minor changes in practice."
 - o School leaders create frequent opportunities to consult with teachers on the challenges they face in the classroom. The use of observations had led the administration to conclude that teacher-centered instruction is being overused by some new teachers at the school. One administrator commented that teachers new to the school used a lot of "teacher-talk." Professional development and informal and formal conferences helped to shift pedagogy by conveying concrete expectations contained in INPS rubrics, thus contributing to greater experimentation with pedagogy that is more student-centered.

What the school needs to improve

- Consistently use data to set goals for both individual students and subgroups to guide in the improvement of teaching practices across all grades and subjects. (3.2)
 - o While subgroup data is provided for teams, teachers set goals that are vaguely differentiated and primarily for their own classrooms. The focus of team discussions centers on instructional deficiencies, yet team goals have not significantly impacted the mastery levels of targeted subgroups. Although the school is working to tailor a degree of goal setting to the creation of scaffolds to accelerate learning and strategies to increase credit accumulation for individuals and relevant groups, the credit accumulation rate remains relatively static.
- Formalize assessment systems in order to enhance the coherence of sharing critical information with students and parents regarding school policies and practices. (5.2)
 - o The school has developed a new report card and is adjusting its system for assessing students. However, this school's newly redesigned system of using formative assessment strategies is in its early stages and school leaders are still looking for ways to increase coherence on the portfolio policy, which is widely practiced in the school. Additionally, the school has added a focus on departmental data while maintaining focus on interdisciplinary teams, and new structures meant to organize this data are in the process of being formalized. As a result, the school has not yet fully acquainted students and parents with its new systems for organizing and sharing selective data.

- Further develop ongoing assessments that are aligned to the curriculum in order to adjust instructional decisions at the classroom level. (2.2)
 - o In several classes we visited, teachers did not effectively incorporate checks for understanding. Although the school has adapted formative assessment rubrics from the Performance Standards Consortium, student learning is inconsistently measured during classroom activities. Furthermore, the school has customized its own rubrics and formative assessments, which allows for student self-assessment. However, students are not always provided with next steps regarding their individual needs, thus impacting the correlation between pass rates on classroom exams and mastery on State assessments.
- Recalibrate professional development to provide opportunities for leadership growth that transforms classroom practices and improves learning outcomes. (4.3)
 - o Plans for professional development are discussed through a coordinating council, and are aligned with school goals. One professional development approach tied to the school's instructional goals involved the use of rubrics. However, the administration commented that, "Disciplines were struggling with rubrics around tasks." This prompted more extensive professional development that focused on analyzing student work through the use of multiple rubrics. Additionally, supplemental learning opportunities for faculty are provided in the form of outside professional development workshops that enhance teacher's ability to engage English language learners. Nevertheless, building of adult capacity and leveraging instructional change through ongoing workshops has not yet resulted in improved learning outcomes on the majority of State assessments.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Flushing International	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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