

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Multicultural High School

K583

**999 Jamaica Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11208**

Principal: Alexandra Hernandez

Dates of review: May 8-9, 2013

**Lead Reviewer: Ronald Feinstein
With Melissa Ciel, Student Voice Collaborative**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Multicultural High School is a high school with 408 students from grade 9 through 12. The school population comprises 100% Hispanic students. The student body includes 95% English language learners and 0% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 85.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Students experience a broad, engaging and rigorous standards-based curriculum in which the Common Core units of study are purposefully embedded along with evidence of the instructional shifts. (1.1)
 - School-wide curriculum focuses on key standards including finding evidence to support argument in all content areas and reading comprehension necessary to solve word problems requiring more than one step, strategies especially necessary to meet the challenges for the school's population of 95% emergent bilingual learners. Common Core Standards and key school standards are integrated into curriculum maps and lesson and unit plans which outline resources from the Common Core Library. For example, in a geometry unit students must explain why their proofs are true. In an English Language Arts (ELA) unit eleventh grade students wrote on "The Use of Social Media in the 11th Grade of Multicultural High School". Reports included sophisticated computer graphs to illustrate their analyzed and collected data and included chapters on the various social networks used by students, the amount of time spent and the advantages and disadvantages of using social media such as the probability of getting hacked, having electronics stolen, getting a bad reputation and "other". These examples among others contribute to the school's doubling of the percentage of advanced and proficient performance on the New York State English as a second language assessment test for English language learners (NYSESLAT). The school's use of Webb's Depth of Knowledge and a thinking skills framework built on Bloom's Taxonomy which includes attention to language acquisition, sentence starters and a selection of resources from teachers is evident in the school's lesson planning template and ensures that tasks are accessible for these emergent bilingual students. Rigor is further identified by the school as the ability to engage students in subject specific knowledge, skills, and understandings through the construction of engaging tasks based on student ability. These considerations are directly reflected in the school's success in having 89% of seniors applying to college, 10 students graduating this year with Advanced Regents Diplomas and current seniors having accumulated over 70% of credits for graduation by January. The school is well aware of the information teachers need to plan and refine tasks for a newcomer population consequently teachers closely conference with students and use baseline data, Acuity and mock Regents item analysis to ensure texts used are appropriate for each student. In addition, the school uses Achieve 3000, Rosetta Stone, Wilson, Rigor, Aventa, Spelling City and Castle Learning to ensure teachers have the heightened awareness of student reading proficiencies to form appropriate groups based on language skill and to further ensure engagement. The school creates relevant experiences for the range of its students; from newcomers who have never attended school before to the student taking AP Biology, Trigonometry and enrolled in Advance College Now. Hence, curricula are accessible and rigorous for all learners and ensure closing the achievement gap.
- High levels of student engagement throughout classrooms reflect a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn that is informed by a common teaching framework. (1.2)
 - The school's instructional team created a guide and lesson planning template that teachers collaboratively agreed to implement school-wide. The template embodies the school's mission and beliefs "to cultivate in each of our learners of English the intellectual and cultural skills required for well-informed and innovative participation in our world". The planning template has the following components for teachers and

students: specific learning targets and a 'Do Now', identifying key vocabulary with a mini-lesson highlighting new words, guided student practice followed by opportunities for the application and reinforcement of new information, then collaborative group work to share understandings, a whole class sharing of learning with peers and an exit that recaps the lesson and a homework assignment provide additional practice. An additional component of the template calls attention to the steps each student needs to take to meet the "criteria for success". This chunking of material ensures students understand the sequencing of learning and encourages perseverance and helps teachers better ascertain if the task is well-aligned to what students need to know and be able to do for mastery. The focus on assessment, engagement and environment necessary for language acquisition are tenets the school adopted from Santa Cruz Continuum and that the school has used to segue into an alignment to the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

- Scaffolds and strategies to engage emergent English language learners are the consistent hallmark across all classrooms at Multicultural High School. For example, in one class students were responding to Francisco Jimenez' *The Circuit*. In their writing they were asked to suggest solutions to the challenges Panchito might face if he were a student at Multicultural. The students had to discuss the situation in pairs and present their solutions to the class. One student wrote, "I would be his friend because I have experienced what it is like myself and I know how it feels to be alone..." In another classroom, students wrote about outsiders in our society. Some students wrote about how "mentally challenged people are considered outsiders" and others chose to write about immigrants or women. The task asked to evaluate how society treats outsiders, and also posed this question: "Should society be more tolerant of them?" Students had to stake a claim, read and cite three sources and create a first draft and then review comments from the teacher before submitting a final draft. A graphic organizer was available for students who chose to use it. Essays are scored on the Advanced Placement Language and Composition Grading Rubric for a synthesis essay which is a continuum of 0-9 points which is described as an essay that "meets the criteria for 8, and in addition are especially sophisticated in their argument and synthesis of sources, or impressive in their control of language. In another classroom, students had to synthesize information from several texts about famous individuals such as Mark Zuckerberg to get an understanding of why people are successful and then write an expository text. After reading three articles students were asked, "What qualities did you find to be most prevalent when synthesizing the information from your readings?" Students agreed that working hard, having ambition and perseverance were some of the similarities among successful people. One student said, "Successful people have ambition to fulfill their goals" and another added "...knowing how to use your intelligence, you can reach your goals and targets". Through these challenging tasks students are able to demonstrate higher order thinking skills in discussion and student work.
- The school has an effective system for monitoring teacher practices that captures strengths and challenges in great detail while providing actionable feedback to teachers that promotes improved pedagogical capacity. (4.1)
 - Classroom visits focus on assessment, engagement, environment and English language acquisition. These tenets are aligned to the Danielson framework and incorporated into a cycle of classroom observations that include pre-and post-conference observations and question template. For example, teachers respond to a series of eight questions including prompts such as "To which part of the curriculum does this lesson relate? and "How and when will you know whether the students have learned what you intend?" In the beginning of the school year, teachers meet with the

principal and set goals aligned to student past performance and discuss areas for teacher growth. For example, one teacher expressed the need to better understand the shifts in practice required by the Common Core, and subsequent visits to his classroom, after supports were in place showed evidence of growth in this area as well as the need for school-wide professional development in this area. The principal makes low-inference notes and annotates questions and comments directly on the common lesson planning template and then provides a narrative with next steps for the teacher. For example, one teacher who needed additional support was strongly encouraged to pay close attention to the school's rules and regulations for students, include more visuals and engagement of students with SMART board technology, ask questions first before calling on students, pay attention to wait time and ask at least one or two critical thinking questions as a springboard to developing higher levels of critical thinking. In the post-observation, the teacher and principal looked at student work produced in the lesson and the teacher agreed to provide a rubric used and agreed to ramp up classroom management and ensure all students are engaged. Another teacher was asked to bring a lesson plan and any related materials or resources to the pre-conference for collaborative review. This classroom also has the varied levels of English described earlier in this report. At the post-conference, the teacher and principal reviewed student work produced and both agreed that the questioning needs to be restructured to meet the needs of many of the students, since they seemed to misinterpret and misunderstand the task. The principal further suggested that when using images to support instruction "give students a specific strategy to analyze the image", and "be specific" and she provided some examples. The strong focus on the well-aligned school tenets to the Danielson rubric and specific feedback with next steps support well both new and experienced teachers. Likewise, the close tracking of professional goals set early in the year enhances teacher development school-wide.

- The school exhibits a substantial sense of community and shared responsibility which further motivate students' academic and personal growth. (1.4)
 - The school's three-pronged approach to culture building and providing social-emotional support includes an on-site school-based organization, a robust guidance component and, of course, teachers and parents. A partnership with Cypress Hills Local Development supports the college application process with college trips and campus-wide College Knowledge Days and a dedicated in-house college counselor from the Success Center organizes workshops for students and parents. The guidance counselor pushes into classrooms to support special populations with attendance and grades and outlines the road map to college. Twenty-two students participate in College Now in ELA and math supported by LaGuardia Community College and all students have passed their coursework. Twenty-five students are also enrolled in Advanced Placement Spanish; ten currently are eligible for the Advanced Regents Diploma and take Advanced Placement (AP) classes at a campus school. There are plans for AP English available in 2013-14. In fact, this school outperforms its peer schools by 44.2% on the College and Career Readiness Course Index. Likewise, at this time last year only 9% of students were guaranteed to graduate, now 17% will graduate this year. Students flourish in this school that has reduced principal and superintendent suspensions by over 50%. A nurse-practitioner in the school is often the primary health care provider for many of the students; and she is able to provide referrals for further care where necessary. A psychologist and a social worker round out the personalization supports that impact student success. The Student Empowerment Committee (SEC) was established this year to increase opportunities for student voice. Monthly Town Hall meetings by grade level ensued as well as the election of student representatives. At one SEC meeting, students surveyed themselves on the following questions: "Would you rather be: liked or respected?";

“Would you rather be the best of a losing team, or the worst of a winning team?” and “Would you rather have the ability to see the future or change the past?” A school administered survey shows that students agree that the level of support they receive for social and academic growth has increased specifically in the categories of Engagement and Safety and Respect.

What the school needs to improve

- Deepen assessment literacy of harvested data by teacher teams to make more explicit the link between teacher practice and improved student learning. (4.2)
 - Teacher teams meet several times a week to engage in collaborations that include the integration of CCLS and achievement towards school goals. For example, the instructional leads focus on the “criteria for success” component of the common lesson planning template which is aligned to the school’s instructional goals for language acquisition and vocabulary development. They noticed that targeting vocabulary has been successful and decided to make this a school-wide area for improvement using strategies like word-study and a key vocabulary element in each lesson plan. However, since the practices for all teams are not yet consistent these discoveries do not yet strengthen the school-wide practices intended and therefore limit the instructional coherence desired and progress for all learners. Teams collaboratively score student work produced from the Common Core library and inquiry work, while new to many teachers, has resulted in revisions to curriculum units and Common Core alignment in student work that is evident in essays, alternative media projects and the wide use of technology to demonstrate learning. However, these efforts are not yet systemic which limits the shared improvements in teacher practice and mastery of goals for groups of students they share.
- Enhance the information provided on student outcomes from assessments to further support instructional decisions at the team and classroom level. 2.2
 - The school uses Regents data, mock Regents, Acuity, and NYSESLAT to formulate goals for the year aligned to students’ needs. Teachers also use common assessments, five in English as a Second Language, three in both ELA and Native Language. Assessments range from essays, free response and summatives. Acuity Predictive assessments provide baseline data across classrooms and these have uncovered widespread use of false cognates and problems with inferencing. In math, assessment data yields general misconceptions related primarily to graphing and solving multi-step problems. Teachers create common assessments and a common grading policy ensures coherence across the school. Predictive data a month before the Regents in every class contributes to the school’s ability to make effective adjustments to instruction which has particular impact on high performing students. For example, critical lens essay this year had far fewer students leaving any questions blank. Teachers focus on the strategies students can articulate a clear understanding of what the tasks are asking students to perform, and these are echoed in the “criteria for success” in the planning template. The teachers create an item analysis and then modify lessons and curriculum from that vantage point. The English Language Arts Team leads this work, norming student work and assessments and creating templates for school-wide application. However, the lack of depth of this work by other teams and individual teachers precludes teachers from making necessary daily adjustments which results in some student’s learning needs not being met in order to demonstrate increased mastery.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Multicultural High School	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score			X				
Instructional Core							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula, including the arts, physical and health education, 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 that is informed by a research-based, common teaching framework and is aligned to curricula, engaging and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?			X				
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels?			X				
School Culture							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X			
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve them?			X				
Systems for Improvement							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet students' learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			X				
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X				
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching with a research-based, common teaching framework 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				
5.1 Evaluate the quality of school- level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?			X				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed