

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

High School for Medical Professions

High School 18K633

**1600 Rockaway Parkway
Brooklyn
NY, 11236**

Principal: Joseph Scarmato

**Dates of review: Apr 16-17, 2013
Lead Reviewer: Veronica Yurcik**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

High School for Medical Professions is a high school with 458 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 84.0% Black, 12.0% Hispanic, 2.0% Asian, and 2% other students. The student body includes 2.0% English language learners and 11.0% special education students. Boys account for 22.0% of the students enrolled and girls account for 78.0%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 91.4%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Purposeful curriculum development work ensures meaningful learning experiences within a standards aligned curricula enabling students to meet graduation standards and develop college and career readiness skills. (1.1)
 - Teachers speak seriously about their responsibility in developing school curricula, noting that the school's immersion in professional development supports their efforts. Well-focused on having their students achieve graduation and post-secondary success, teachers interact effectively with coaches, supervisors and each other to evaluate assessments, study standards and make choices to meet the needs of the student body. The school recognized that while its students enjoyed projects and public speaking, writing tasks were challenging. Therefore, the principal mandated reading and writing as focal points across content areas in all grades. Teachers renewed focus on both content instruction and organization after an analysis of Regents examinations revealed that students struggle with using evidence to support a position. Supporting Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) literacy shifts, the school increased use of informational texts across all curriculum areas and re-tooled academic tasks to require use of textual evidence from sources to inform or make an argument. In math, teachers are making purposeful curricular changes to develop fluency and integrate performance tasks to enable application of skills. As a result, curriculum maps are truly the "living and breathing" documents the principal describes, and reflect thoughtful work in standards-alignment, identification of explicit objectives, essential questions and assessments. Furthermore, this work has supported the development of six performance tasks with at least two of those tasks embedded within a CCLS aligned unit in every department surpassing Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE). These tasks support efforts to close the achievement gap and increase college and career readiness by developing academic and personal behaviors such as persistence, engagement and collaboration. The graduation rate for Black and Hispanic males placed the school in the 87th percentile citywide and 70.9% of the graduation cohort achieved the English College Readiness Standard.
 - Supporting this year's emphasis on writing arguments to support claims, collaborating with others to build ideas and persuade, and developing skills to organize and present evidence, teachers focus on the integration of reading, writing, speaking and listening in every lesson. Required detailed lesson plans include an objective that complements the unit's essential question as well as detailed descriptions of what students should know, do, and be able to reflect on upon completing the lesson, strengthening the connection between rigorous curricula intention and academic task. This lesson plan format, coupled with the school's common curricula goals, lays out explicit objectives that all students including English language learners (ELL) and students with disabilities (SWD) are expected to achieve informing the work of both grade and department teams. For example, an English teacher planned a highly engaging lesson requiring students to create modernized versions of *Hamlet*, in order to demonstrate understanding of plot, and to critique each others' work. Living environment lessons include articles regarding ethical issues,

such as the use of stem cells or genetically engineered foods, for which students must prepare written evidence to support their positions orally. Thus, there is a constancy of purpose and direction that results in coherent access to rigorous tasks across the school.

- Strategic administrative decisions foster meaningful learning experiences that support the school's long term goals for student performance. (1.3)
 - Understanding that real world experience is a necessary component in fulfilling the school's mission of preparing students for health and pharmaceutical careers, the school has committed itself to the task of establishing long-term relationships with hospitals and nursing homes across Brooklyn. Thus, all students complete yearly minimum service of 50 hours at one of twenty service sites, maintain service-logs, and prepare presentations on their learning. A partnership with the non-profit Federation of Italian-American Organization provides critical funding for after-school activities in academics, arts, and sports. In addition, the school has collaborated with Urban Arts Partnership to re-tool and invigorate its approach to advisory programs through integration of arts. For example, addressing the essential question of how artists can promote awareness, simulate sensitivity and be an agent of change within their communities, students studied the dance "Opus Jazz," a work that reflects how young people have a sense of belonging to their community. In addition to rehearsing dance techniques and evaluating each others' performance moves, students are required to evaluate information from a variety of sources, use pertinent vocabulary, collaborate, and write individual essays to demonstrate understanding. The school budgets weekly visits from Aussie literacy and math coaches and uses department lead teachers to supplement this professional learning on other days. Staff includes community assistants so that fastidious attention to attendance follow-up and parent outreach is accomplished. Thus, intentional partnerships and strategic staffing maximize limited resources to support long-term goals for all students to achieve performance standards, develop career skills, and graduate, as evidenced in last year's 94% graduation rate placing the school in the 93rd percentile in its peer group.
 - Intentional scheduling of numerous team meetings demonstrates the value that the school holds for collaborative practice. Teachers participate in a weekly double period grade team meeting in addition to meeting with their department for an additional four scheduled meetings per week. Established protocols for looking at student work provide a platform for investigation and decision-making and inform interventions for all students, including students with disabilities (SWD) and English language learners (ELL). Cross-discipline team meetings enable common purpose, reinforcement, and meaningful connections between classrooms. Teachers explain that they think that their projects "have been stronger than ever before" as a result on their collaborative work on creating lessons requiring evidence-based responses. Team focus on the Danielson rubric domains of designing coherent instruction and questioning has led to teachers pre-planning lesson questions together and using backwards design to support thoughtfully crafted unit essential questions. As a result of this sustained work there is common purpose and coherence that fosters engagement of students in rigorous tasks. One example of coherent effort is the recent adoption and wide-spread use of a school-built collaborative discussion rubric that students report has led to better listening skills, and more

opportunities to talk in class which they state has made their learning more interesting and fun.

- An intensive focus on student welfare cultivates a positive school culture and inclusive community, shaping a safe and respectful learning environment that promotes the academic and personal growth of students and staff. (1.4)
 - The school's theory of action for culture-building emphasizes the importance of strong interpersonal relationships between students and staff within a professional environment. Professionalism on the part of staff and students is expected and valued. Consequently, students are well-focused on their studies, as are their teachers on their own professional learning and advancement of their students. As one teacher described, staff members share a "strong collaborative commitment to students". Teacher volunteerism in working with students beyond the regular class schedule testifies to this commitment. Students are well aware of the commitment demonstrated by supervisors, teachers and other staff. They describe how staff members greet them positively in the halls, know them and speak to them with respect. Students particularly appreciate how teachers and administration listen to their concerns, honor student council representatives, hear their requests, and allow them to revise work to improve grades. Student input has led to the development of advanced placement (AP) courses and shaped course development for after school activities. In addition, a new policy of inviting a student to the weekly individual education plan (IEP) team meetings provides opportunities for students to have greater input into decisions affecting their own academic program and supports. One student described how you come into the school for an education but leave as a professional and more mature person. Across the board, students expressed that the school never gives up on you. As a result, students trust adults and enjoy learning within a safe school characterized by respectful interactions.
 - Numerous structures such as the daily cabinet check-in, the daily attendance team meeting, the weekly IEP team meeting, teacher submission of parent contact phone and email logs to supervisors, community assistant daily outreach, and almost daily teacher team meetings ensure well coordinated efforts in monitoring and providing for students' academic and social-emotional needs. In addition, the school implements "Operation Angel" for students in danger of failing, carefully matching students to adults who develop action plans with those students and keep students under a watchful eye and in constant communication. Thus, students are known well by staff and know that they are not alone in their struggles, want to be in school, and achieve success. Attendance for this year has averaged 93% and credit accumulation over the past three years places the school between 90 -100% in both peer and city percent of range on the Progress Report.
- The principal's explicit and unwavering expectations create a culture of mutual accountability among all constituencies in service of students to ensure their academic and personal success. (3.4)
 - The school's professional development plan lays out a set of non-negotiable expectations for pedagogy, display of student work, teacher team work, and communication with parents. Furthermore, supervisor and teacher meetings to review goals and assessments reinforce pedagogical expectations. The school's teacher absence rate this year is 50% below city-wide averages

attesting to teachers' understanding of expectations and commitment to students. Consistent messaging through email, phone and mail as well as online access to Teacher Ease ensures that messages regarding achievement and expectations get through to parents. One parent explained how her son, knowing that she checks his progress on Teacher Ease, now regularly logs on and invites her to review his achievement data with him. When questioned regarding expectations, students were effusive in their responses. A student explained that the school "expects a lot from you" describing how the school focuses on project-based learning, tying in medical topics to reflect their community service learning. Students state that opportunities for research, group work, essay writing, and resume preparation are important college readiness skills. One student noted "They really bug you about participation," noting how grades are given for involvement in all classes. Other students elaborated that community service prepares them for college by helping them prioritize and organize their time, be punctual, dress professionally, as well as to develop maturity by helping them learn to monitor their reactions and verbal communication and improve their social interactions. Furthermore, the school has a staff member dedicated fully to college and career readiness enabling on-going communication and outreach. As a result, students and parents partner with the school, understand and accept the school's rigorous policies such as automatic detention for being late or out of uniform, appreciate immediate outreach regarding school absence or and/or student academic or personal concerns, and respond to opportunities for after-school learning opportunities, embracing the school's belief system that failure is not an option.

- Frequent cycles of observation support professional goals and improved pedagogy that result in students' successful academic achievement. (4.1)
 - Records indicate that all teachers have received numerous observations thus far this school year with additional visitations and support for new teachers. Frequent snapshot visits result in one page written feedback sheets framed to reflect Danielson rubric domains. In addition, lead teachers have led walkthroughs to evaluate implementation of performance based tasks. Formal observation reports review instructional expectations, provide detailed low inference data and specific recommendations with an emphasis on the school's focus on questioning as well as follow up on specific pedagogical goals set with teachers. All teachers write professional goals which are reviewed at the beginning, middle and end of the year with supervisors. As a result, teachers are committed to their professional learning and demonstrate on-going improvement of their pedagogy.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine analysis of assessments to strengthen feedback to students to inform next steps more strongly and advance academic outcomes. (2.2)
 - While the school provides actionable feedback consistently and has many strong assessment systems such as a uniform school-wide grading policy, common assessments, rubrics, exit tickets, and supervisor and teacher post-assessment meetings, the depth and specificity of information shared with students varies. Feedback suggestions placed on sticky notes are not matched to the rigor of the rubric criteria. The lack of specific analysis diminishes teacher focus on the exact and meaningful adjustments needed for meaningful evaluation and plotting of next teaching and learning steps.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: High School for Medical Professions		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