

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Multicultural High School

High School 583

**999 Jamaica Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11208**

Principal: Alexandra Hernandez

Dates of review: April 10 - 11, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Karen Watts

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Multicultural High School is a high school with 322 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 0% Black, 100% Hispanic, 0% White and 0% Asian students. The student body includes 93% English language learners and 2% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 75.5%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders and teachers ensure curricula alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) emphasizes rigorous habits to promote college and career readiness for all students. (1.1)
 - The school's curricula follows the State's scopes and sequences in the content areas and is aligned to the CCLS in English language arts (ELA), English as a second language (ESL), and native language arts (NLA) to support the school's transitional bilingual program for the school's English language learners (ELL) population. Teachers also access EngageNY for English language arts and math Common Core curriculum bundles, and use the curriculum guides from the Office of English Language Learners (OELL) for NLA. In addition, CUNY's *Translanguaging* curriculum is used to support its English language learners and the *SIFE Bridges* curriculum for Students with Interrupted Education (SIFE). In this curriculum, academic tasks require students to pre-write using their first language as a resource, allow students to select one language to publish their writing, and integrate content area reading to discuss challenging passages and content vocabulary with the accessibility of using their home language. In addition, teachers collaborate to develop curricula maps, unit plans, and lessons that incorporate scaffolds such as graphic organizers, dictionaries, and sample texts in a second language to further increase curricula access for all learners. For example, a task in geometry asked students to decide if dilation is a similarity and to support their decision with evidence. Similarly, an Advanced Placement (AP) English task required students to defend or refute the statement that, "To expose bilingual students to both languages at school is an important way of helping students keep and maintain their languages," and synthesize ideas from at least three primary and secondary sources in order to substantiate their positions. In addition, students are required to use multilingual reading materials including multilingual books or translations of books and articles to conduct research projects to further attain CCLS mastery. For example, a project in chemistry asked students to plan and conduct an investigation and gather evidence to compare the structure of substances at the bulk scale, and infer the strength of electrical forces between particles. Teachers also review and revise units of study and lesson plans based on information from student work, thus further meeting students' diverse learning needs. As a result, the students are cognitively engaged in rigorous CCLS aligned academic tasks that allow all learners to develop higher order skills that promote college and career readiness.
- The principal makes strategic decisions about the school's resources and structures staff time to improve students' achievement and the school's instructional goals. (1.3)
 - The principal partners with CUNY's programs for emergent bilinguals to support teachers with curriculum and professional development (PD) to educate students with interrupted education (SIFE) and English language learners. The principal has allocated per-session funding for teachers who work in the campus-wide afterschool program called MESH representing math, English, science and history that is run by the Campus' Community Based Organization (CBO). For example, the school strategically schedule students in an afterschool program to receive Academic Interventions Services (AIS), additional support for the Regents exams, and academic guidance for meeting graduation requirements; thus supporting the school's

goal of increasing the 4-year graduation rate. Students are also able to interact with their non-ELL peers on campus, hence resulting in improved English language acquisition, which also supports students in preparing for the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and provisions social workers to address students' social-emotional needs. The school leadership also allocated funds for four laptop carts and a computer lab to support effective implementation of Achieve3000, and support students' literacy development and skills. Moreover, the school uses the trimester model to afford students more opportunities to meet the requirements for graduation. Also, the school-wide daily schedule is developed around the 6th period when all of the students are at lunch, and teachers have the opportunity to attend professional development or conduct outreach to parents. In addition, the administration works with Kingsborough Community College's offices of Admissions and Student Affairs to enroll juniors and seniors in order to provide targeted support in their preparation for college and career opportunities. The school also provides internship opportunities for students including college knowledge day which allows them to interact with professionals from various industries. Furthermore, the Student Success Center that is run by the Campus' CBO, Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation, offers additional opportunities for students to participate in field trips, college tours, and career days. The principal is also keen on hiring teachers licensed with the bilingual extension, or who are able to easily acquire the extension through programs with the Department of Education's OELL office. These practices support the school's instructional goals and provide opportunities for teachers to make timely adjustments to academic tasks to increase students' engagement and improve the students' academic results as evidenced in 10% more students passing the ELA Regents examination in January 2014 than in January 2013 and 23% more passing the ELA Regents examination in June 2014 than in June 2013.

- The school administration fosters a culture of learning that supports academic and social-emotional growth of the students and adults. (1.4)
 - Students interact with the school's guidance counselors for child-youth services and social-emotional support through counseling that includes guidance intervention conferences, and with parents as necessary. In addition, support staffs follow up with individual students regarding their attendance, behavior, and academic performance. For example, the Student Success Center provides workshops for students and families on high school graduation requirements, applying to college, financial aid and on selecting the right college. Additionally, various school initiatives afford supplementary academic intervention and guidance support for students who are in academic risk, thus ensuring that students' individual academic needs are met. Moreover, at the end of every marking period for each trimester, the school conducts a celebration of academic achievement to which students and parents participate. In addition, the attendance team works closely with teachers to ensure that outreach is made to all families and that students are attending school daily. Moreover, the school organizes extracurricular activities such as music instruction to promote social and academic growth by leveraging students' interests. The guidance counselors and social workers provide ongoing social-emotional interventions, track students' growth, and identify next steps for student and family interventions. The school has after-school programs that offer students and their families a variety of supports including legal services. Moreover, students feel well known and supported by numerous staff members who personalize supports to positively impact their needs. For instance, teachers, administrators, guidance counselors and deans are viewed by students as people they can go to for help. As a result, the various collaborations built in the school's structures support the students'

academic and social development as evidenced by a 10% increase in the number of students graduating high school in four years this school year.

- School leaders and staff set high expectations for attendance, learning and professional behavior that are clearly shared with parents and students, thus creating a culture of accountability. (3.4)
 - The school is committed to supporting students in achieving high educational standards by fostering students' ability to become literate in two languages, problem solvers, and critical thinkers. In addition, school leadership uses the Danielson Framework to communicate high expectations for teachers' practice that supports the development of students' higher order skills for success in college and careers. The school ensures that students are provided with opportunities to engage in AP courses in English, Spanish, and geography and college level courses to increase academic expectations. Leadership communicates to students that "they should access the support of their teachers to ensure their success in these rigorous courses so that they will be prepared for success in college." The administration and staff members know the students well and are able to conduct "on the spot" conversations about overall academic progress and performance toward meeting school wide expectations. In addition, attendance, social emotional learning, guidance, and medical factors are considered when identifying causes for students' areas of need. The school is equally judicious about reaching out to families through phone calls, letters, and email to strengthen school's expectations and goals. Furthermore, teacher teams and staff frequently share student achievement and behavioral data with students and their families so that they can be aware of the students' progress and performance in high school. Since the school is in trimesters with two marking periods each, students receive feedback in progress reports and report cards every three weeks. This detailed feedback to students is followed by guidance and advisement supports. Additionally, the school has created a parent hand book to share expectations about attendance, graduation, and college application expectations. Information is also shared at frequent student assemblies, various parent meetings, and at award ceremonies. These practices abet a culture of learning embraced with the necessary academic and guidance supports, thus resulting in improved academic outcomes for all students.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen instructional practices so that they consistently provide multiple-entry points and engagement to increase student's thinking and participation. (1.2)
 - The principal and teachers believe that the students can learn both the English language and the content they are studying simultaneously which is a belief adopted from the international schools and to that end, all lessons incorporate content and language objectives. All lessons include mini-lessons, group work and writing with a focus on using evidence to support claims in discussions and in writing. There is also consistency in vocabulary development, homework assignments, and using texts from various sources and in both languages to ensure that the students are improving their skills of making meaning of a variety of complex texts. However, although teachers included higher order questions in their lesson plans, during classroom visits, some teachers used low level recall questions. For example, in a math class, the teacher asked, "What is the volume of a cone with a radius of five feet and a height of nine feet?" Similarly, in a science class, the teacher asked, "What is Energy?" In other classrooms visited, teachers asked rapid-fire questions with individual students answering in one-word responses, thus not affording

students time to engage in rigorous discussion and thinking. As a result, this inconsistent practice is limiting opportunities for some students to think and respond critically.

- Enhance assessment practices so that teachers' can make adjustments to instruction as lessons progress and students' can conduct self and peer-assessments to become more self-directed learners. (2.2)
 - Departmental assessments are common across subject areas and are administered during every marking period to inform academic interventions to further prepare students for Regents' exams and track progress towards mastery of the CCLS. There is also a school wide grading policy aligned to the school's curricular and instructional expectations and the principal is developing an assessment guide for teachers. Teachers who teach the same grade and subject area give common assessments and use the results to give feedback to students on their progress towards standards. In addition, teachers also engage in revising unit and lessons and incorporate the adjustments in their instructional practice to meet students' learning needs. Teachers use formative assessments primarily at the end of the mini-lessons to create supportive groupings of students based on students' needs and at the end of lessons where exit slips are employed. Some classrooms show evidence of intermediate checks in the form of questions posed to specific students to check content understanding, while other classrooms only involved surface level questions that hinder teachers' ability to make immediate or timely adjustments to the lessons, therefore missing out on immediate attention to students' learning needs.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

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 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards?			X				
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the 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 supports 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 those expectations?			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 student 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 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection?			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