



**Department of  
Education**

*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

**Quality Review  
Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning  
2013-2014**

# **Quality Review Report 2013-2014**

**Flushing High School**

**High School 460**

**35-01 Union Street  
Flushing  
NY 11354**

**Principal: James Brown**

**Dates of review: March 11 - 13 2014**

**Lead Reviewer: Juan Mendez**

## **Part 1: The school context**

### **Information about the school**

Flushing High School is a secondary school with 2456 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 26% Black, 50% Hispanic, 3% White, 20% Asian, and 1% other students. The student body includes 21% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 57% of the students enrolled and girls account for 43%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 84.0%.

### **Overall Evaluation**

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- School leaders and members of the instructional cabinet have created a goal-oriented learning community that is focused on teacher practice and student outcomes with deliberate strategies supported by the school community. (3.1)
  - School leaders focus on teacher practice and school goals in order to strengthen a vision for school improvement. The principal monitors progress toward school goals by actively communicating with the entire school community. Teachers note that the “The principal is actively restructuring systems, such as common planning time, to evaluate current progress.” In creating a focused and goal-oriented community the principal pushes an instructional vision aligned to one of its 2012-2013 School Comprehensive Educational Plan goals which states that, “All content area teachers will design, implement, and assess two Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS)... in units as measured by classroom observations and common planning time teacher-analysis of student work.” To accomplish this, teachers tailor curricula for a diverse population and meet daily in common planning periods to review student work, share best practices, and analyze student achievement data. For the 2013-2014 school year, this goal was modified to target movement of the school’s lowest third population. In a year over year analysis, the school has increased its passing rate on the January Geometry Regents by 9.3%.
  - The principal prioritizes goal setting and action planning with a focus on teacher practice with an emphasis on accountability and transparency that permeates the school as streams of communication flow to all constituents enabling all constituents to be involved in the school improvement planning process. Most recently, results from English language arts (ELA) Performance Assessments prompted school leadership to establish goals for English language learners (ELLs). One writing goal that states that English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers will, “Produce evidence of student drafts aligned with CCLS ELA writing standard 1, emphasizing awareness of producing a proper counter claim and supplying evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience’s knowledge level and concerns” a vision that is supported by teacher teams.. One teacher mentioned, “Students need help in writing arguments that are not confusing. We’re doing this in all subjects.” Overall, student-writing portfolios in ESL classes showcase an increase in writing and the use of both general and domain specific vocabulary.
- Teachers benefit from participating in professional collaborations that foster reflection as well as provide options for researching effective instructional techniques that focus on improved student achievement. (4.2)
  - School leaders have structured dedicated teacher time so teams meet on a daily basis to address student progress allowing teachers to collaborate and grow professionally. Professional collaborations occur three times

per week and bring together school leadership and emergent teacher leaders to discuss bi-monthly professional development sessions and progress in regard to common planning time with teacher teams. Effective instructional strategies, such as exploring effective classroom discipline and implementation of performance tasks serve as foci for conversations around student cognition. This results in rich opportunities for addressing instructional goals and emphasizing staff's efforts around effective practices and understanding pedagogy. Furthermore, two professional development days per month allow teachers to deepen their understanding of instructional shifts, such as teachers of math who note ongoing effort to deal with shift 6, dual intensity. During designated team meetings, much work focuses on the use of the Danielson Framework to focus on improving teacher practice to impact student achievement. Consequently, component ratings of chemistry teachers show dramatic increases in adapting to the demands of competencies aligned to the framework and as a result, the goal to increase the passing percentage on the June 2013 Chemistry Regents Examination has been met with an increase of 11%, from 22% to 33%.

- The principal has established systems for school self-evaluation and modification of practice with a clear focus on improving student learning resulting in greater curricular coherence. (5.1)
  - Progress monitoring checkpoints are instrumental in allowing teachers opportunities for reflection and feedback on newly developed curriculum. The school's curricular, pedagogical, and assessment systems are replete with structures that make school-level decisions vital to the triangulation and implementation of the instructional core. Common Core teams create, adjust, and review rubrics to ensure alignment with revamped curricula. Decisions to implement newly forged rubrics are further addressed with the principal's instructional cabinet. Additionally, teams comprised of school leaders use planned checkpoints to address school culture and emergent trends, such as recent year-over-year declines in attendance. The principal comments that, "School leaders are assigned specific areas related to safety and social emotional learning, such as attendance, and youth development" and that the teams have become much relied upon think tanks that generate ideas to shape a more positive learning experience for all students. This allows time for the collection of data that reflects the school environment, such as cutting and student behavior. As a result, the school has moved towards adopting a progressive disciplinary method and principal suspensions have been reduced by 14% when compared to the 2012-2013 school year.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Increase the alignment of curricula across grades and subject areas to key Common Core Learning Standards and refine units in order to increase coherence and advance students' postsecondary readiness. (1.1)
  - School leaders have driven the development of curricula across grade levels through the curriculum mapping process. The principal comments "Teachers in all subject areas have generated units of study that have aligned performance tasks that require students to write and demonstrate

their attainment of the Common Core standards in literacy or mathematics.” While curriculum maps and units reflect argumentation as an ongoing emphasis in both English language arts and social studies classes, curricular coherence between these two subjects is emerging and the use of an interdisciplinary approach around embedding instructional shifts is inconsistent. Consequently, pass rates of students Regents is declining, as evidenced by a 21.4% decrease year-to-year in the number of students passing the January 2014 Regents Examination.

- Teachers have developed academic tasks that make use of varying levels of complex texts and require student understanding of counter-claims. Students spoke of projects that require argumentative writing on the use of social media. One student said, “The teacher provides the structure and we write the essays and then do peer editing.” While teachers strive for cognitive engagement in planned peer-to-peer interaction, higher order thinking skills are inconsistently embedded in academic tasks. For instance, errors aligned to Common Core language standard 1, (conventions of standard English), were not addressed in written work. Moreover, teacher directions to students were recited, thus limiting access for English Language Learners (ELLs) or students with disabilities. As a result, the school is ranked in the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile as compared to citywide data in regard to the percentage of English Language Learners who graduate.
- Extend the practice of deepening instruction so lessons reflect purposeful groups, tasks accommodate different learning styles, and questioning promotes higher order thinking. (1.2)
  - Teaching practices reflect the notion that students should be engaged in cooperative learning where they share work and support each other. Strategies derived from the Sheltered Instructional Observational Protocol (SIOP) Model by Pearson have been implemented over the past two years. One teacher states, “I support strategies that encourage students to listen and provide feedback.” However, student-grouping approaches through the SIOP model were often random and frequently disconnected from the course of study. For example, our snapshot of this model revealed that teachers rarely employed a gradual release of responsibility and instead overly prompt students with teacher-directed, low-level questions. After modeling for the class, a math teacher provided the directive, “Ask your partner why this is the correct answer.” Whereas many of the school’s instructional practices are suitable to most students, differentiated tasks are infrequently utilized, impacting student outcomes as evidenced in a decline in the Progress Report from a D to an F.
  - Teachers strive to provide multiple entry points into the curricula to engage all learners. This was seen in several math classrooms where the use of both technology and textbooks established a sequential approach to learning. However, uneven approaches in most of the humanities classrooms evidenced teacher-generated questions that had prescribed responses and limited extensions into deeper content knowledge. Students often took the liberty to shout out responses to questions, thus preventing hand-raising routines or wait-time from being firmly established. Teacher-centered classrooms precluded embedding the use of scaffolding, and students were infrequently given opportunities

to apply what they learn or engage in well-directed discussions or produce high levels of work. Due to the limited amount of supports to engage all learners, the percentage of students with disabilities graduating has decreased by 3%.

- Refine the use of grading policies aligned to common assessments and gauge student progress through frequent formative assessments to maximize student learning. (2.2)
  - School leaders guide teachers in the process of checking for student growth on common assessments such as the New York City English Language Arts Performance Assessment, Scholastic's Achieve 3000, and Regents examinations. However, aside from the aforementioned, most subjects do not institute common assessments. The principal comments that, "Teachers are beginning to use exit slips and evaluate student work products which leads to more timely assessments of student learning." However, currently most teachers align student grades to test results such as Regents examination, thus leading to unclear culminating feedback for students relative to their ongoing achievement and progress. Currently, teachers use formative assessments to gauge student understanding and while the school has focused its professional development on the use of rubrics to establish criteria for more refined formative assessments, this practice is still emerging. . However, checks for understanding are largely inconsistent across classrooms. Additionally, constancy in the use of student self-assessment varies. As a result, the range of a number of different assessments are not yet including appropriately to yield a more distinctive impact on informing instruction based on student needs.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Flushing High School	UD	D	P	WD			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>		X					
<b>Instructional Core</b>							
<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					
<b>School Culture</b>							
<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					
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>							
<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				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>