

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Humanities and Arts Magnet School

29Q498

**207-01 116th Avenue
Cambria Heights
NY 11411**

Principal: Rosemarie O'Mard

Dates of review: January 6-7, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Juan Mendez

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Humanities and The Arts Magnet High school is a high school with 510 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 81% Black, 12% Hispanic, 2% White, and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 40% of the students enrolled and girls account for 60%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 86.6%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders and staff collaboratively make purposeful decisions to align key standards to curricula and ensure rigorous tasks that cognitively engage all students, preparing them for college and careers. (1.1)
 - School leaders guide teachers in the adaptation of English language arts and mathematics modules released on EngageNY website to support the implementation of Common Core curricula. This allows teachers to adjust their present curriculum in a manner that builds coherence while setting clear instructional expectations aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and instructional shifts. Much of the school's mathematics content is rich with performance tasks that emanate from Ann Shannon and Associates in conjunction with the Common Core Lab Pilot program. Mathematical fluency is targeted in the curriculum through ongoing tasks that allow students to grapple with the intrinsic complexities of mathematics. For instance, a set of mathematical performance tasks call for students to demonstrate fluency in the use of the Pythagorean Theorem to measure properties of isosceles trapezoids, and extension exercises require student to write explanations of vital mathematical concepts. The interdisciplinary humanities curriculum is replete with connections to the Arts. Teachers in art and English classes guide students in the process of discerning information through primary and secondary sources to demonstrate evidence-based understanding through various texts. For example, informational literacy is perpetuated in art classes where readings and the study of artistic renderings allow students to create substantial works of art. The principal notes that the school's curricular reform stems from "enhanced collaboration between the arts and core content teachers." The school's progression from a "D" to a "B" on its College and Career Readiness score on the 2012-2013 New York City Progress Report demonstrates that a large proportion of students are meeting English and mathematics standards.
 - A focus on improving the English language arts (ELA) curriculum is enacted upon through the enrichment of academic tasks that are deliberately modified to allow for vertical and horizontal curricular alignment. A school-wide literacy initiative has prompted core content teachers to meet bi-weekly with Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) teachers to discuss and memorialize strategies aligned to a literacy initiative that promulgates vocabulary and nonfiction across subject areas. Strategies around the use of the Frayer model for the teaching of academic vocabulary are emphasized. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) measures are utilized to more effectively accommodate a population comprised of 17% of students who have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). Rich and relevant images as well as modified text-sizes used during lessons allow for multiple entry points that support greater student engagement. Additionally, teachers also use Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) to make content comprehensible to English language learners (ELLs). This approach allows teachers to set content objectives while reviewing the linguistic functions in the lesson students will need in order to effectively participate. Overall, the 2011-2012 New York State Report Card reveals that this school has produced a greater percentage of students scoring at levels 3-4 than the New York State 2008

cohort average in secondary English language arts after four years of instruction. Thus, student essay writing has advanced to the extent that the passing percentage on the English Language Arts exam is greater than that of any other subject area.

- The principal's strategic use of the school's resources is aligned to its instructional goals, ensuring quality instruction and improvements in students' academic performance to close the achievement gap. (1.3)
 - The principal leverages targeted support from the Children First Network (CFN) to build teacher capacity aligned to the school's goal to improve mathematics instruction. Over the past two years, the CFN math coach led the school to partner with the *Gates Foundation* in conjunction with the *New York City Common Core Lab*. This partnership inspired the collaborative reformulation of best teaching practices aligned to Common Core standards. Mathematics teachers interested in curriculum writing received per session to participate in professional development that entailed the modification of curriculum to ensure that adequate scaffolds and supports are provided for all students. "Our CFN math coach consistently brings us cutting edge Common Core curriculum for immediate implementation," notes one math teacher. One effect of this program is heightened cognition across mathematics classrooms. This impact can be seen in substantial student work products in mathematics, such as the meticulous graphing of values for (x) and (y) that satisfy a given equation. Much of this work was captured on a website titled [Mathematics Assessment Project](#). As a result, the 2011-2012 New York State Report Card indicates that total cohort results in secondary-level mathematics after four years of instruction for students scoring at levels 3-4 have improved by 3% over the past year.
 - The principal strategically hires staff to close the achievement gap and address a growing number of English language learners (ELLs). The recent procurement of an English as a second language (ESL) teacher has enabled school leadership to build upon a plan that targets the school's lowest third population. More specifically, the school's 2012-2013 Comprehensive Education Plan states the goal, "To increase the percent of students in the school's lowest third in the cohort 2014 earning 10+ credits." To accomplish this objective, the principal was able to reduce class size, primarily among ESL course sections. ESL students are now programmed to receive more personalized attention. This inevitably has contributed to a 6.7% increase in the percentage of lowest third students in their third year who earned 10 or more credits.
- The principal and staff work as a unified team to create a calm, respectful and orderly environment for learning to take place. (1.4)
 - The principal collaborates with the assistant principal for security to promote a safe environment and to target increased communication among all constituents as a means to maintain school safety. The assistant principal's participation in student government allows him to adequately gauge student concerns. Some of these concerns revolve around safety in the hallways and classrooms. Student government forums have also voiced issues around student discipline and respect. The school effectively addresses all these issues through structured guidance interventions that hone in on bullying and the development of a welcome learning environment that celebrates its

students. The guidance department leads workshops on both bullying prevention and “Respect for All” in order to build an environment of tolerance for all cultures. The school has frequent award ceremonies that accentuate a welcoming environment. Widely attended school plays and musical performances embody this type of celebration in the productivity of the student body. The Children First Network Safety Director conducts ongoing professional development to deans and administrative staff in support of protocols to follow during morning scanning and when emergency situations arise. Additionally, parent workshops and communications provided in multiple languages have addressed recent supports that ensure greater school safety. One parent remarked, “I can see a change in my child and in the school.” Parents are convinced that their children are safe at the school as indicated from a 10% increase in the overall survey category that addresses child safety. This effort to foster safety has led to a decrease in the number of principal suspensions, which has gone from 30 in the first quarter to 11 in the second.

- Teachers benefit from an observation process that is grounded in the Danielson framework and allows for the implementation of effective instructional techniques for professional growth and student improvements. (4.1)
 - Frequent observations provide ongoing opportunities to assist teachers through concrete and actionable feedback. Detailed administrative support is highlighted in vivid observation reports. These reports allow school leaders to use qualitative data to determine viable resources that perpetuate improved practice. Identified resources include ARIS Learn, where pre-recorded teacher videos showcase key competencies from the Danielson framework to support specific identified areas of teacher needs, such as higher-order questioning. The use of video to support teacher growth has served as a means of large-scale development for the school. For instance, many teachers from the school attended a Cluster-wide professional development on Chancellor’s Conference Day that emphasized the use of video to yield improvements in questioning and discussion techniques. All workshops offered during this professional development were differentiated based on needs expressed by network schools. English teachers from Humanities and the Arts High School engaged in a workshop led by the Children First Network 201 literacy coach who shared teaching videos recorded at several network schools. One teacher commented that, “These videos, more than anything, allow teachers to pick up on the nuances of the teaching profession.” The assistant principal for instruction serves as a catalyst for school change as she not only strives to answer all teachers’ questions around instruction, but also leads the majority of in-house teacher training. The principal comments that “She attends all PD offered by the network and turn-keys the information to our staff.” Teacher ratings have improved in the second cycle of observations and the school has seen a 2.1% increase in the percentage of students earning 10 or more credits in their second year.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop a school-wide instructional approach that engages all learners, including advanced learners, English language learners and students with disabilities so that students have opportunities to show high levels of thinking. (1.2)

- School staff repeatedly echoes the sentiment that students learn best when there are high expectations. However, the vast majority of classroom lessons were dominated by teachers and homework was typically unassigned. For example, most mathematics classes featured teachers solving problems on the chalkboard while students passively observed. English classes were limited to the rudimentary study of characters from literary works. In some cases, this led students through a single path of inquiry whereby sentence starters were completed to evince student understanding. Social studies classes were blanketed by limited interaction between and among students. Moreover, rudimentary worksheets were relied upon in the majority of classrooms. While Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) baseline data reveals deficiencies in 9th grade development of counter-arguments, most teachers are not engaging students in critical work that addresses this concern. The school rests at the bottom 5th percentile citywide in accordance with responses to the Learning Environment Survey section that asks students to determine the extent by which their teachers inspire them to learn. This uninspired approach is especially apparent in history classes where students earn an average score of 52 on the United States History Regents Exam.
- Ensure that formative assessment practices are used to help inform teacher practice, promote student reflection and demonstrate authentic student learning. (2.2)
 - Teachers use formative assessment in conjunction with rubrics to provide pointed feedback to students regarding their ongoing progress. However, much of this feedback is limited exclusively to infrequent essay assignments. For example, social studies teachers rely on rubrics to detail student deficiencies when persuasive essays are assigned that emulate those on social studies Regents examinations. Interviewed students attest to the fact that teachers provide them with feedback. However, students also point out that aside from English teachers, most teachers assign no more than three essays per year. A 13% decrease in the passing percentage of the Global History and Geography Regents examination is a testament to the uneven use of assessments to inform teacher practice.
 - School leaders encourage teachers to use ongoing checks for understanding to monitor student progress. While most teachers sought to establish lesson closure through a brief summary of the aim question, evidence of adjustments based on student needs was not all-apparent. For example, one mathematics teacher insisted that she has met her objective “when all students complete the worksheet.” Furthermore, only one of all the teachers observed provided an opportunity for self-reflection during any of the observed lessons. This commonplace avoidance of student self-reflection across classrooms inhibits students from constructing authentic meaning from their academic experiences. In addition, there has been a 4.2 decrease in the school’s graduation rate.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Humanities and Arts Magnet 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