Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Information Technology High School

High School 502

21-16 44TH ROAD
QUEENS
NY,11101

Principal: JOSEPH REED

Dates of review: Nov 19 - 20, 2013
Lead Reviewer: Charles Simic

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Information Technology High School is a high school with 920 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 17% Black, 58% Hispanic, 10% White, and 15% Asian students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 71% of the students enrolled and girls account for 29%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 91.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school leadership facilitates the use of curricula that are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and content standards to offer a range of learning experiences that provide rigor to all students. (1.1)

  - A review of the school's curricula planning documents has revealed a coherent commitment to specific instructional shifts. For example, CCLS Reading Standard One, which asks that students cite specific textual evidence to support analysis, was clearly evident in all English language arts, Living Environment and US History lesson plans. The design of the learning activities were aligned to the standard, necessitating that students back up their claims with evidence from their reading of both fiction and nonfiction text. Such intentional alignment of CCLS instructional shifts results in all students having access to rigorous activities that promote college and career readiness.

  - Planning documents evidenced a clear intention to have all students cognitively engaged in curricular tasks. A Living Environment lesson plan showed how special education students would read a one page biology article formatted into two columns; one column for the article and the other column for a vocabulary section with definitions. General education students were to read a two page article on the same topic. In an Algebra 2 lesson plan, English language learners were to be provided with a sentence frame to help them interpret and read complex fractions aloud and highlight common terms, while more advanced math students were to work independently, applying the same skill to more challenging fractions on paper. Across subject areas and grades, curricular documents contained rigorous tasks that were accessible to all learners.

- The school community is commitment to elevating school-wide instructional practices that promote professional collaboration and growth in teacher practice. (4.1)

  - School leaders support teacher development through frequent lesson observations and feedback that is focused around key instructional practices. Administration uses the "Advance" computer program to store observation notes and observe instructional trends for each teacher. This process allows administration and lead teachers to identify key patterns and design professional development that addresses targeted instructional outcomes for each teacher. Additional support is offered through workshops provided by teacher team leaders, consultants, and mentor teachers, for newer staff to further develop instructional practice. The result is a system, which monitors teacher development while providing a varied system of support.

  - Teachers create professional growth plans during the beginning of the school year that are reviewed mid-year and again at the end of the year in order to measure changes in their instructional practice as evidenced by observation report data that references the Danielson Framework for Teaching. This work provides school leaders with the information needed to make strategic decisions regarding teacher assignments, tenure and retention. Furthermore, it yields a transparent system for designing and implementing yearlong professional development. For example, teachers take turns presenting instructional strategies during faculty meetings to their peers. The topics of these presentations are created based on data collected from professional

growth plans and observations. Such practices ensure alignment between teacher observation data and the development of strategic professional development.

- Teachers benefit from participating in teacher lead inquiry teams that foster reflection as well as provide opportunities for sharing effective instructional techniques. (4.2)

    - Peer support is provided to teachers through an inquiry process utilizing "instructional rounds" that are focused on instructional improvements that promote the attainment of school goals and the implementation of the CCLS. Instructional lead teachers ensure that the work done during these rounds is focused on improving: discussion and questioning in the classroom, increasing student engagement, the use of assessment techniques and the use of strategies that are aligned to the CCLS instructional shifts. Teachers are provided times to meet weekly for this purpose with additional supports as needed from coaches and administration. Observation data and corresponding student work is collected throughout the year, providing teachers and administration with a picture of the aforementioned areas of pedagogical practice and a method measuring the instructional impact of these strategies. Teachers indicate that they welcome the classroom visits, and feedback from peers offered during the team meetings where suggestions for improvement were used to change their instructional practice. One teacher affirmed that teacher teams are a "way to see evidence of how the instructional techniques we are sharing and using are having an effect on student products." As a result of this work teachers are engaged in activities that improve instruction and student learning.

    - The school has developed a system of mutual accountability in an effort to create a powerful school-wide supported approach toward pedagogical improvements. An instructional cabinet comprised of administrators and lead teachers meets weekly to review observational data and teacher team meeting notes to develop professional development and strategies for teacher mentors to use with peers to further support teacher growth. Furthermore, during school leadership team (SLT) meetings parents, staff, and students are asked to provide feedback and monitor progress as the school develops its instructional practice and student outcomes. Consequently, school structures are in place that build leadership capacity and provide a venue for teachers to have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that pedagogical improvement is thoughtfully connected to student work and outcomes resulting in a clear link between teacher and student performance that is supported by the entire school community. (3.1)

    - School-level goals are focused on improving instructional practice. Data collected from peer observations is used to track teacher improvement using a system to measure growth that is informed by Danielson's Framework for Teaching. However, these efforts do not currently connect to accelerated student learning. Using cycles of peer observations, teachers generate a score organized by Danielson sub-domains. These cycles are recorded and compared to generate what changes are present from one cycle to the next. While comparisons show that teachers are improving some areas of instruction, student achievement connected to these changes is not measured for growth. For example, teachers generate instructional goals that connect to the sub-

domains of the Danielson Framework for Teaching and peer observations are used to measure progress but the impact changes are having on student progress toward scholarship, graduation or college and career readiness is not measured. Thus, student progress is not connected to school level pedagogical goals in a coherent way. As a result, efforts to accelerate student learning are inconsistently being developed at the school.

  - Teachers participate in instructional rounds as a means to inform and share best practices informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching. However, impact on teacher practice is inconsistent. Teachers meet to review teaching artifacts such as lesson plans and student work and use videos of lessons to inform discussion around teacher practice but these actions occur only at the surface level of analysis. Specific data gathering and in-depth analysis to improve learning for all students including subgroups is not yet present. During a department meeting teachers watched a video of a colleague teaching. During the discussion teachers shared things that they noticed the teacher do. Student work and data were not used during the meeting. One colleague pointed out that after watching the video, he thought the content vocabulary was 'throwing the teacher off' suggesting that more time was needed to teach students how to use vocabulary when they are asked to cite evidence. The lack of use of student work and data during the school's instructional rounds process hinders the progress that teachers are making as they work together to improve instruction.

- Improve teacher practice so that all lessons are challenging and extend student thinking to maximize learning for all students leading to increased student engagement, higher order thinking and student outcomes. (1.2)

  - In some classrooms visited, teachers created "Ask, Add, Argue" question stems, posters and/or flashcards to create supports for students as they develop their ability to thoughtfully define and defend an intellectual position. In other classrooms additional supports for special education students, English language learners and former English language learners were not present. Furthermore, most teachers fail to push student thinking and missed out on providing multiple entry points for students with varied needs by asking all students to complete identical tasks with identical materials. The inconsistent use of scaffolds leads to fewer supports for all the students in the classroom resulting in limited student engagement.

  - High levels of thinking and active engagement for all students are present in few classrooms. In some classrooms students asked each other questions and responded to each other's thinking. However in other classrooms, students were engaged in memory/recall activities requiring cognitive engagement at lower levels of understanding such as defining vocabulary or completing rudimentary worksheets. As a result, across classrooms, student work products and discussions reflect uneven levels of student thinking, participation, and ownership.

- Develop high quality assessments that provide a clear picture of student needs and integrate ongoing checks for understanding during lessons to adjust instructional practices for increased student outcomes. (2.2)

  - Teachers have developed common assessments by course code. Some of these include mid-semester and end-of-semester examinations. While some of these assessments provide opportunities for feedback to teachers and students on progress, school leaders and teacher teams inconsistently analyze results in light of established goals for individual students, and

relevant sub-groups. While end-of-lesson assessments are a common classroom practice, the questions asked on these “exit slips” are general and nonspecific to the skills and content taught during the lesson. For example, “What is the most important thing that you learned today?” The analysis of common assessments, and the method of how classroom assessment are designed, limits the ability to make effective instructional adjustments to support special education students, English language learners, former English language learners and other identified struggling students.

- Rubrics are used for the majority of assignments by teachers and by students to assess their work and the work of their peers. However, feedback provided using these rubrics was often generic and nonspecific with teachers making checkmarks or writing “good job” or “fantastic” as feedback to students on work products. Actionable next steps that are required to improving work products were missing. Because these practices are not yet fully utilized, students are not always aware of how to improve their work products.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Information Technology High School	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score		X		
Instructional Core				
To what extent does the school regularly…	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				
To what extent does the school …	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				
To what extent does the school …	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