

# Quality Review Report 2013-2014

**Crotona International High School**

**10X524**

**2474 CROTONA AVENUE  
BRONX  
NY10458**

**Principal: Jesseca Long**

**Dates of review: Dec 11 - 12, 2013  
Lead Reviewer: Mimi Fortunato**

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

### **Information about the school**

Crotona International High School is a High school with 254 students from grade 9 through grade 11. The school population comprises 10% Black, 86% Hispanic, 2% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 87% English language learners and 2% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 87.9%.

### **Overall Evaluation**

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The instructional team plans appropriate scaffolds to support all students' development of higher-order skills to ensure academic tasks are embedded in the curriculum and unit maps are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards. (1.1)
  - Teacher teams in each discipline area use an Understanding by Design approach to develop curricula maps and unit plans based on core competencies and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), the principles of the Internationals Network of Public Schools, and the Consortium Rubric. Unit plans identify CCLS aligned rigorous learning goals, big ideas/key understandings, essential questions, activities, performance tasks, and assessments and rubrics that emphasize high expectations and establish criteria for proficient, highly proficient, and not yet proficient student performance for the school's population, 58% of whom are English language learners. For example, a bridge grade 9/10 Global Studies introductory unit planned for students to gain historical analysis skills through an investigation of different historical primary and secondary source documents by choosing evidence that might support different perspectives related to the same historical event, and to identify geographic features and explain how geography has affected cultures in a positive or negative way. A grade 10 integrated algebra unit identified key enduring understandings such as "Functional relationships can be represented symbolically and graphically", and "Values can be predicted using a function". It also planned for high level essential questions such as "How do we model linear, quadratic and exponential functions with an equation, table, and graph?", and "What stories model quadratic, exponential and piecewise linear functions?", with students expected to describe the function modeled in each line, draw and write a story of a piecewise linear function, and to model quadratic functions using equations and tables. These activities and tasks provide evidence of teachers' planning to engage students in meaningful work and productive struggle.
  - Educators plan for learners to participate in CCLS aligned academic tasks through the adaptation of instructional materials and the development of scaffolds and multiple entry points that are built into lesson development. Curricula maps, unit plans, and lessons include planning for language scaffolds and a vocabulary focus to support the school's large population of English language learners. Resources, texts, and supporting literature selected for study take into account varying levels of language proficiency, and teachers regularly adapt the sequence of topics or length of units to address gaps in content knowledge for students new to the country. A grade 11 United States history lesson that focused on examining the Declaration of Independence included plans for an opening activity where students were to work in groups to match the key concepts of "right to revolt", "natural rights", "social contract", and "popular sovereignty", to four short sections of the Declaration for Independence. They were then to move to "expert groups" that would contain one student from each of the first groups, and be expected to support their argument using textual evidence. The lesson planned for the use of multiple translated versions (Spanish, French, modern English) of the Declaration of Independence as well as a timeline of events that led to the creation of the document. A bridge grade 10/11 English language arts lesson plan described a plan for an activity where students would be expected to identify examples of direct and indirect characterization in Act 1, scene 1 of August Wilson's play, "The Piano Lesson", and to complete a graphic organizer identifying textual evidence of direct and indirect characterization. These scaffolds and

adaptations provide evidence of planning for learners to participation in high-level tasks.

- The principal uses data from observations based on the Danielson Framework and the Internationals Network for Public Schools' principles to provide feedback and plan targeted professional development to improve teachers' practice. (4.1)
  - School instructional leaders work with network coaches to provide individualized support to all teachers through frequent informal classroom visits and the analysis of lesson plans and student work products. Timely targeted written feedback via email and one-on-one meetings provide teachers with recommendations for improvement in curriculum and lesson planning aligned to the Internationals Network for Public Schools' principles and the Consortium rubric. School leaders and network coaches review planned tasks, task specific rubrics, and also analyze student work products to identify effective teaching strategies, thus allowing feedback to further inform and support teachers' growth in instructional practice.
  - The school leader and network coaches engage in ongoing differentiated analysis of instructional practice aligned with the Danielson Framework for Teaching, in which new teachers are paired with experienced teachers and coaches, and groups of teachers collaborate on developing shared content and grade level team goals. This collaborative approach includes informal and formal observations, as well as a transparent school-wide analysis of trends and patterns in instructional practice that leads to the development and revision of individual teacher and teacher team instructional goals, and mid- and end-of-year teacher reflection regarding individual and teacher team progress towards those goals. These protocols provide a shared focus of improved teacher practice in questioning techniques, checking for understanding, and in developing student-centered lessons. The reciprocal communication process provides teachers with multiple opportunities to engage in structured shared reflection on their practice and to participate in targeted collaborations and professional development designed to improve teacher practice.
- Teachers engage in inquiry-based professional collaboration that promotes shared leadership and the refinement of pedagogy, leading to improvements in adult and student learning. (4.2)
  - The school leader provides weekly opportunities for teachers to work in collaborative grade level and content area teams. Embedded protocols for looking at student work and norms for discussion among team members ensure that teams engage in inquiry work aligned to CCLS, Citywide instructional shifts, and the principles of the Internationals Network of Public Schools. For example, a vertical grade 9 through 11 social studies team meeting agenda focused on the learning challenges students present in argumentative writing tasks, and the development of next steps in instructional practice to support student growth in effective argumentative writing. A horizontal grade 9 to grade 10 team meeting that included teachers across content areas focused on how to engage students in discussions where they explain and justify their reasoning, with the team selecting the use of a graphic organizer as an instructional strategy to be implemented by teachers to strengthen student engagement in high-level class discussions. These ongoing professional collaborations support the improvement of instructional practice.
  - Teachers and staff members meet as partners, in content, grade level, and student support teams on a regular basis and members of the instructional team participate in structured professional collaborations and professional development activities that culminate in the implementation of shifts in instructional and program planning. For

example, as the school is in the process of applying for approval as a Career and Technical Education program, teachers and career and technical support personnel meet in ongoing portfolio and roundtable discussions to develop the application that will be submitted. They review digital student portfolios, identify necessary adjustments in process and expectations, and develop strategies that teachers can utilize to build their capacity to support student skills in creating student portfolios. The implementation of a Restorative Practices Justice program engages members of the student support team (guidance counselor, social worker, dean, parent coordinator, and teacher/advisors), in ongoing planning and implementation, with members of the team planning a college and career readiness curriculum that is facilitated by advisors during grade 11 advisories. These practices provide opportunities for teachers to assume leadership roles in curriculum planning and development.

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

- Further develop teaching strategies so that the CCLS aligned lessons are suitably presented to students, resulting in the diverse learners demonstrating critical thinking and high levels of participation. (1.2)
  - Although teachers plan lessons with outcomes that are aligned with CCLS and tasks that require students to think critically and demonstrate their high-level thinking, teaching strategies and practices in implementing lessons with appropriate supports to ensure that students demonstrate mastery of these tasks was inconsistent across classrooms. In a Global Studies class, the opening task of a “do now” asked students to “think about where they were in their project, and list the ways that the teacher might assist”. The lesson plan stated that “early finishers” would help struggling students or critique their own presentation preparation, and the exit ticket stated that students who were not ready to present had to write an explanation with evidence as to why they were not ready to present. An English lesson on Ursula LeGuin’s “The Wife’s Story” asked students to complete an identical task as a “do now”, and to complete an “exit slip” at the close of the lesson where students were expected to respond to the prompt, “What is “The Wife’s Story” really about?” As a result of the inconsistency across classrooms in providing access to a high level of rigor in assignments, student work products demonstrate uneven levels of mastery, limiting student progress towards CCLS standards.
  - The instructional team plans for student choice in task assignments and a range of texts to support students’ English language acquisition and comprehension. Students are provided with translated texts as well as graphic organizers and text decoding procedure. However, assigned heterogeneous grouping resulted in advanced students assuming the role of translator for their group partners, limiting the opportunity for them to engage in meaningful learning extensions. Students with limited understanding of the content or language produced work products that demonstrated low cognitive understanding of the task, with those students either copying content from the internet for a Global Studies class project on ancient civilizations, or responding to written prompts in simple sentences copied from a classmate’s work in an English class. The pattern of teacher- to-student interaction in full class discussions across classrooms was call and response, with limited students in each class engaged during full class discussions, with teachers calling on the few students who raised their hands. This inconsistent use of teaching strategies that provide for high levels of student participation in well-matched tasks limits the opportunity for all learners to demonstrate their original thinking in class discussions and to produce meaningful work products.

- Improve teacher practice in the consistent use and analysis of formative and summative assessment data to inform effective and timely instructional adjustments that meet all students' learning needs. (2.2)
  - The instructional team has developed course curricula maps and common assessments and rubrics across content areas. However, teacher grade and content level teams focus on specific instructional strategies and adjustments to particular lessons but do not yet expand their work to include a targeted analysis of progress towards established instructional goals for groups of students. For example, in the grade level team meeting observed, teachers were engaged in a discussion regarding the use of a graphic organizer across content areas, and a social studies team meeting focused on the use of a writing frame to support student skill development in argumentative writing. Although these collaborations build teacher skill in using discrete instructional strategies during lessons, the process of analyzing student work products and assessment data to track the progress of individual or groups of students towards identified goals is not consistently specific, limiting targeted school-wide adjustments to curricula that address results from common assessments to address the overarching needs of students.
  - Teachers create task specific rubrics that provide students with clear expectations as to the established criteria for demonstration of mastery, and the school leader and teachers articulate an instructional focus of ongoing checks for understanding. In a language and literacy class for beginning English language learners, the teacher was observed conferencing with students and providing students with immediate feedback and support to target learning challenges. However, the practice of using formative assessment data during instruction and adjusting the lesson in response to data gathered during the delivery of a lesson was observed in only one out of ten lessons. This uneven practice of using checks for understanding to adjust lessons "in-the-moment" hinders teachers' capacity to support all students' learning needs.
- Refine the planning and communication process for the development of data-driven school-level goals in order to build coherence in driving school improvements efforts. (3.1)
  - The principal has developed four school-level goals that have been submitted as part of the school's Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) and include improvement in teacher effectiveness, aligning curricula to CCLS, applying for approval as a Career and Technical Education Program, and improving school culture through the implementation of a Restorative Justice program. However, these goals are not written as measurable goals, are not tracked for progress, and are not directly aligned to team and individual teacher goals, hindering effective school wide efforts to improve student outcomes.
  - School leaders have developed school improvement goals and action plans through an analysis of student work products and school assessment data, and have included these goals and action plans in the school's CEP. However, few members of the school community are engaged in the decision-making process of the development of those overarching instructional goals and action plans. Parents and students interviewed were unaware of the school's instructional goals, and although the teachers interviewed were able to articulate the school's instructional focus of checking for understanding, they were not clear regarding the overarching instructional goals that are included in the CEP, and were not aware of the process for the development of those goals. This lack of clarity around school wide instructional goals hinders community engagement in accelerating the school improvement process.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Crotona International 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
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