

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Health Opportunities

High School 670

**350 Gerard Avenue
Bronx
NY 10451**

Principal: Julie Mchedlishvili

**Dates of review: March 11 - 12, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Leslie Miller Chislett**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Health Opportunities is a high school with 577 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 36% Black, 59% Hispanic, 1% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 11% English language learners and 19% special education students. Boys account for 33% of the students enrolled and girls account for 67%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 82.6%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school's intense focus on culture-building and social-emotional development ensures students and families feel safe and learners are well known, and results in the adoption of effective academic and personal behaviors. (1.4)
 - The school's system to personalize students' academic advisement, attendance, and social emotional supports, involves multiple structures for communication and coordination between parents, teachers, counselors, mental health professionals, and administrators. This begins with the school's caring environment demonstrated through the administration and faculty's open-door policy that, according to parents, welcomes them to come to school and discuss the needs of their children. Students express the school has a "family environment" that is like a home to them where they know they are supported. To ensure additional support is extended to those who need it, grade-level teacher teams meet monthly to engage in case-conferencing where they identify students struggling academically and devise "Plans for Success" that include in-class strategies and interventions such as after school tutoring or Saturday programs. As necessary, teachers refer students to guidance counselors who arrange additional interventions such as behavioral support in the form of a daily progress report that is signed daily by the counselor, teachers, and parents. To further ensure no student "slips between the cracks", the parent coordinator, cohort administrators, and guidance counselors, meet regularly to discuss needs brought to their attention through conversations with parents and by monitoring Jupiter Grades, an on-line system that stores grades, attendance, and anecdotal information. Additionally, the school's attendance team meets to examine school-wide attendance and develop strategies. This team and other faculty refer students who may be experiencing social or personal distress to the Pupil Personnel Team (PPT) consisting of the parent coordinator, dean, two social workers, four administrators, two guidance counselors, and the school psychologist. After conferring with the student's teachers and parents, the PPT works to secure mental or physical health services from a professional on the team or from one of the school's partners such as the Morris Health Clinic that is on site. Consequently, there has been a reduction in the number of students severely at-risk for failure because of attendance and social and emotional issues.
 - Professional development, family outreach, and student learning experiences coherently target student personal growth. This is exemplified by the eleventh grade teacher inquiry team that recognized while investigating ways to better support students academically, socially, and emotionally, that chronic absenteeism was hindering students from making learning progress. Working with guidance staff, they identified students with high rates of absence as their focus and implemented a "Success Mentoring" program to reverse this pattern. Here, teacher-mentors, matched with students, provide encouragement, tailor supports, and connect with families daily to ensure the learner is not disenfranchised from the school community. Individual student progress is reported to the team, further strategies are devised if needed, and there is on-going evaluation of effectiveness. Professional development provided by the Children's Aid Society, along with a family summit and celebration of students with improved attendance reinforced the success of this initiative. This work has yielded a reduction in suspensions and chronic absenteeism for multiple students. Additional staff, parent, and student learning experiences focusing on personal growth are offered by the school, for example, professional development on emotional intelligence, a college preparation class for ninth and eleventh graders, workshops by

guidance counselors on responsible use of social media and cyber-bullying prevention, and student-run forums on how-to understand transcripts and successfully make progress towards graduation. As a result, students are adopting personal and academic behaviors as evidenced by conversations during student interviews relative to their confidence about their future and meeting school-wide aspirations towards college and career.

- School leadership makes strategic organizational decisions that leverage resources, staff time, partnerships, and learning opportunities, that support school improvement goals and impacts student work. (1.3)
 - In order to sustain the school's unique vision to foster student appreciation for health and wellness the principal optimizes connections with numerous outside organizations, to provide opportunities for all students to explore careers in science, health and other professions through specialized coursework, service, and internships, and to provide creative outlets in arts and sports. Some of these partnerships include Hostos Community College's Liberty Partnerships Program for academic and culture-arts enrichment, College Bound Initiative that places a full-time advisor to work with every student on college placement and financial aid, Urban Word, LEAP On Stage for theater arts and dance, Deloitte LLC for Virtual Enterprise program and TCI College for College Now courses. Through other partnerships, like ENACT!, and Bronx Teen Connections, daily college and career readiness classes for ninth and eleventh graders are now offered. Students complete internships with an array of area agencies and businesses, like the Jewish Home Geriatric Career development program; some of these leading to certifications in the health professions. A grant from the Wellness Council enables the school to organize health-career and wellness events such as a breast cancer walk, health fair, and career day. Technology upgrades including classroom Smart boards and computer hardware have been realized through a borough-based Resolution-A grant. The principal funds opportunities for teachers to attend professional development sponsored by the network and other organizations such as the College Board to build the capacity of teachers in implementing rigorous curricula and effective research-based pedagogy. Accordingly, the entire student body accomplishes 120 hours of community service and internships before graduation and currently 95% of its graduating seniors are accepted to college.
 - Teachers have substantial time to meet in department teams meet daily and in grade-level inquiry teams twice monthly. A staff-wide School-Based Option vote secured Wednesdays as an early release day for students, thus providing longer meeting time for teams or for the entire faculty to meet monthly as a whole. Meeting time is deliberately structured so that teachers focus on meaningful work such as analyzing interim assessments, creating common rubrics, devising action plans to address student needs, and sharing re-teaching practices. This orchestration and investment of time has furthered the school's goals to improve pedagogy in light of the Danielson Framework for Teaching and Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS).
- School leaders and faculty plan curricula aligned to CCLS and content-area standards to build coherence across grades and subjects and provide all learners access to rigorous academic tasks. (1.1)
 - Teachers ensure CCLS curricula alignment during common planning time by creating units, locating resources from Engage New York, creating common assessments, and incorporating scaffolded questions into their lesson plans. Course maps with monthly pacing and unit plans have been developed for social science, math, English language arts, and social studies courses. The maps identify relevant standards, content and skills, instructional goals, formative and summative assessments, and resources.

Some of the unit plans, such as those in English language arts (ELA), were written using a backwards design approach and include a rationale for the targeted depth of knowledge level, enduring understandings, essential questions, instructional strategies, and academic vocabulary along with a detailed final performance assessment task with possible modifications for students with disabilities and English language learners. In ninth grade math, New York State CC Algebra modules are being adopted. Here, and in other math courses, the CC mathematical practices that require students to reason abstractly and quantitatively or construct viable arguments among other ways of thinking are incorporated into the plans. This work has intentionally furthered the school's emphasis on giving all students access to curricula that promotes college and career readiness.

- Curriculum and tasks are refined using data from departmental interim assessments, the administration of past Regents exams as “mock Regents”, Performance Series Computer Adaptive Assessments, and student writing samples, so that learner needs including those of students with disabilities (SWD) and English language learners (ELL) can be addressed. Through teachers’ “analysis and action plan for interim assessments”, ELA and social studies teachers identified certain deficit patterns such as poor comprehension of texts, difficulty establishing a controlling idea or thesis for written essays, lacking academic vocabulary, and analyzing an issue or supporting a claim with reasoned evidence from text and outside information. In ELA these findings led to revisions in unit and lesson plans to include body paragraph templates, sentence starters to guide written analysis, and more frequent writing assessments. Global studies teachers discovered from interim assessments that during certain units understanding of larger concepts like nationalism needed to be reinforced. As the result of the interim assessments in Integrated Algebra, a common rubric was adopted and teachers decided a greater emphasis on procedural fluency and accuracy with simple calculations was needed in keeping with the CC shifts. In this way unit and lesson planning incorporate strategies to cognitively engaged diverse learners. The impact has been that students’ work is improving in relation to the priorities of the State and CC standards as measured by analysis of interim assessment tasks.
- The principal and assistant principals have a system to provide effective and actionable feedback to teachers and support them in their development, which elevates school-wide instructional practices and promotes professional reflection and growth. (4.1)
 - To support the development of teachers in accomplishing the expectations of the Danielson Framework for Teaching, the principal and assistant principals facilitated professional learning to build understanding of research-based instruction over a period of several years, along with support from a network Talent Coach. Grade and content area team meetings and weekly faculty conferences focused on analyzing critical attributes and practice examples for each competency. As part of the professional growth system, teachers selected specific strategies to improve in their practice and wrote goals derived from the Danielson competencies. The administrative team has created a common calendar to organize the schedule of required pre-observation conferences, formal, and frequent informal observations, and end-of-year conferences. The formal observation and informal observations are followed-up with written feedback that incorporates low-inference evidence, strengths, and next steps for teacher growth such as devising ways to get students to explain their thinking or support them in being more productive during group work. As the principal, assistant principals and teachers explained these practices are yielding professional growth, improved reflection, and the emergence of strategies like effective questioning which is aligned to school goals.

- School leaders analyze data from teacher observations and other sources to effectively design and facilitate professional development. For example, examination of observation data and disciplinary incidents recorded in the Online Occurrence Reporting System (OORS) revealed the need for professional growth in strategies that maintain an effective classroom environment. The principal and assistant principal provided focused feedback to teachers in this area and monitored trends in evaluative ratings. Using the Advance teacher observation platform, the administration summarizes trends across classrooms including instructional strengths, growth patterns, and teacher development needs and then determines what resources and next steps for learning should be incorporated into a differentiated professional development plan. This system of data use equips the principal and assistant principal to also make informed decisions about teacher assignments, retention, tenure, mentoring, and use of teacher leaders in professional development. As a result, there has been an increase in the number of teachers rated “effective” in strategies related to classroom environment and the percentage of escalated classroom disciplinary incidents decreased according to school’s OORS reports.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen the consistency of instructional strategies across classrooms to create entry points so the diversity of learners are engaged in higher level thinking reflected in discourse and work products. (1.2)
 - According to the principal classroom teaching is guided by the school’s belief that students learn best when they are “active participants in learning, accountable for their work, and participate in conversations about the work they are doing”. In accordance with this, teachers are working to use strategies to create, positive, routine-oriented classroom environments where students are engaged through questioning and discussions in CC-aligned tasks. In most of classes observed, students were required to analyze texts such as historical documents, film, paintings, or literary works to identify themes and events and consider a point of view. Sometimes in these situations students were required to support a position with evidence from the text. For example, in an eleventh grade self-contained English class, the teacher prompted students occasionally to back-up what they were saying about the character’s motives with what they read. In an advanced placement class, where students prepared for a Hamiltonian-Jefferson debate, the teacher prompted certain students to recall former discussions or draw on notes and readings to formulate arguments. In a global history class, students answered questions that directly asked them to explain if quotes revealed support for or against use of the atomic bomb to end World War II. Similarly, in several ELA classes, although using Socratic seminar style discussion, students expressing their points of view infrequently referenced text to support their answers. In addition, questioning often volleyed between students and teacher only, leaving a majority of students in some classes as not contributing to the discussions. Consequently, as teachers questioning techniques do not typically require students to support their thinking with evidence-based reasoning, nor involve all students, understanding of texts and high levels of thinking and participation were inconsistently demonstrated in discussions and work.
 - In an Algebra 2 class, students chose different solution paths for solving quadratic equations and then students demonstrated while explaining the accuracy of this procedure. In other classes, teachers grouped students and gave them a different text to collaboratively analyze. While word walls, illustrations, and the use of technology and media helped teachers vary how content was presented, most students in the majority of classrooms completed the same assignments in a uniform fashion.

Currently a full range of teaching strategies that create varied entry points are not being implemented, thus impeding high levels of thinking by all learners.

- Expand assessment practices to include consistent and varied use of on-going checks for understanding and self-assessment so that all students take active ownership of their learning and demonstrate increased mastery. (2.2)
 - Teacher teams have created interim assessments and common rubrics that are used alongside the school's grading policy to provide feedback to students on written assignments and projects enabling learners to understand where they need to improve. Department teams use assessments to determine student progress towards lesson, unit, or course goals, organize this information through Jupiter Grades, and use it to adjust instruction as needed. Additionally, although inquiry teams investigate how individual English language learners and students with disabilities are progressing, they do not yet create a detailed picture of standard-specific mastery for student sub-groups. In addition, the current repertoire of strategies for checking students' understanding within a lesson is limited across classrooms. While teachers circulate at certain points during a lesson to listen to students' discussion and call on some students, an array of ways to check in on students' understanding was not typically observed and student self-assessment was infrequently observed. As a result, students' self-reflection and insight into where they can improve their own learning is limited and teachers do not sufficiently adjust instruction so that all students' demonstrate increased mastery.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Health Opportunities	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