



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

**Multicultural
High School K583**

**99 Jamaica Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11208**

Principal: Alexandra Hernandez

**Date of review: December 19, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Renee Peart-Zachary**

The School Context

Multicultural is a high school with 240 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 99% Hispanic and 1% White students. The student body includes 93% English language learner students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 77.0%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
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	Additional Findings	Proficient
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	Additional Findings	Developing
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	Focus	Developing
School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	Celebration	Proficient
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	Additional Findings	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

**3.4 High
Expectations**

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

School leaders communicate high instructional and professional expectations and have a system of holding staff accountable. Teachers have a unified set of expectations for learners and offer guidance and supports.

Impact

As a result of the systems of accountability, staff is fully aware of school-wide expectations and provides students with academic intervention supports that improve student progress and prepare learners for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders shared there is an instructional focus on assessment practices and they inform teachers of school-wide assessment expectations through professional development sessions, post-observation conferences that provide verbal feedback aligned to Danielson Framework for Teaching, and written feedback from teacher observations.
- Lesson plan guides, professional development on Common Core Learning Standards, administrative written feedback on unit plan adjustments, and the staff handbook apprise teachers of school-wide instructional expectations.
- Teachers meet with students monthly to review grades recorded in Skedula, the online grading system. Students reported that teachers are available during and after-school to provide them with support on their academic struggles. Additionally, students shared they meet with guidance counselors three times per year to review progress towards the next grade, credit accumulation, and graduation requirements.
- The principal reported that after a parent registers his/her child, school leaders and guidance counselors immediately meet with students and parents to complete a student journey that captures a step-by-step academic process on how move to the next grade level. A review of the student journey, and parent and student sign-in sheets revealed that learners meet with school staff to discuss steps toward graduation.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Teachers use assessments and rubrics and provide limited feedback to students. Furthermore, teachers' assessment practices that provide checks for understanding and student self-assessment skills are inconsistent across classrooms.

Impact

Consequently, the school's assessment practices result in teachers not completely capturing all learners' common misunderstandings and students are not fully aware of their next learning steps to increase mastery of all content standards.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has an assessment plan, teachers administer assessments to determine if students mastered the concepts taught, and administrators provide feedback to teachers about assessments such as how assessments align to Regents questions. However, across classrooms visited, a review of assessments in student portfolios revealed teachers did not consistently provide actionable feedback with next learning steps. On several student work products and assessments reviewed, teachers gave feedback such as "nice job" and "great work". This type of feedback does not provide learners with actionable next steps to improve their work.
- Students reported that English teachers give them rubrics to help them determine what is needed to get a high score, provide verbal and written feedback to support them in their next learning steps and offer exemplar writing samples. However, students shared that these types of feedback and supports are not always given to them in all subject areas such as math and science.
- Across classrooms observed, teachers circulate around the classroom, observe students, and provide verbal feedback to some as a check for understanding. The practice of annotating students' strengths and areas for improvement and adjusting the lesson based on notes recorded was not observed consistently across classes.
- In classes visited, students supported each other with content translation by providing verbal feedback to peers. However, students were not provided with any peer assessment checklists, rubrics to self-assess their work, and/or strategies to enhance peer-to-peer feedback. Additionally, across classrooms, teachers did not record or adjust lessons based on student-to-student interactions.
- In a United States History class, the teacher circulated around the classroom and noticed students grabbing with vocabulary terms. The teacher conducted a midpoint check and reviewed the vocabulary words 'desptico' and 'mandamus' with the entire class. This or similar types of midpoint checks for understanding and adjusting the lesson were observed in two out of seven classrooms visited.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

Across grades and subjects, curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. The school's curricula are refined to support all learners, including English language learners.

Impact

The school's purposeful curricular choices have resulted in students having access to tasks that are cognitively engaging and promote college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- Lesson plans across subjects and grades revealed that teachers use the school-wide lesson plan template that included standards, language objective, do now, vocabulary, mini-lesson, criteria for success, group activity, group share out, exit slips, and differentiated materials. For example, a tenth grade English lesson plan included all components of the lesson plan template as well as focus questions, question prompts, and material resources such as graphic organizers to support English Language Learners. Additionally, the lesson supported college and career readiness by requiring students to support a claim and counterclaim by analyzing text, supporting the author's tone, and evaluating the relationship between characters from the essay "A Genetics of Justice" by Julia Alvarez.
- A review of the curricula across content areas revealed that all units of study include Common Core Learning Standards, the instructional shift of academic vocabulary, essential questions, content, skills, and assessments. Across classrooms visited, teachers implemented the Common Core aligned curricula and included the instructional shifts of academic vocabulary. For example, in a Chemistry class, to support students' understanding of the content, the teacher reviewed key vocabulary words such as electron configuration, atoms, electro-negativity, and valence electrons.
- A review of teacher team agendas and minutes revealed that teacher teams meet during structured weekly department meetings to review student work products and adjust the units of study. English teachers reported how they reviewed student work products and adjusted a unit of study by including graphic organizers and adding vocabulary to support all learners, including English language learners.

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the lessons and student discussions reflected uneven levels of student thinking.

Impact

Consequently, all learners, including English language learners are not copiously demonstrating higher-order thinking skills and producing meaningful work products.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders shared that teachers strengthen students' native language and content knowledge skills by exposing learners to text in Spanish and English. While teachers spoke to students in their native language and in English, the plethora of resources to support multiple entry points into the curricula was limited to Spanish dictionaries and graphic organizers. In one out of seven classes, the teacher provided students with text in their native language. In two out of seven classes, the teachers included graphic organizers. In one out of seven classes visited, the students used a Spanish dictionary. The use of providing English language learners with various resources to support all learning styles was inconsistent across classroom visited.
- In a twelfth grade Advance Placement English class, students read a rigorous text entitled "Women's Right are Human Rights" by Hilary Rodham Clinton. In flexible groups, students were asked to analyze and discuss the usage of rhetoric strategies with their peers. Students discussed and completed a text-based evidence graphic organizer. However, this pedagogical practice of promoting high levels of thoughtful student discussion is not yet an embedded practice across grades and subjects.
- School leaders reported that teachers use Hess Cognitive Rigor Matrix and Webb's Depth of Knowledge to determine the level of questions and the rigor of tasks. While the language objectives written in lesson plans included Depth of Knowledge level three and four strategies, the execution of the lesson plan with high-level questions is inconsistent across classrooms. For example, in a twelfth grade Economics class, the teacher-directed lesson was limited to Depth of Knowledge level one questions on the topic of supply and demand and learners had minimal opportunities for high-level discussions.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	---	----------------	-------------------

Findings

Teachers engage in professional collaborations that disseminate the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards, bolster instructional capacity, and promote teacher leadership.

Impact

As a result of the teacher team meetings, teachers have input into instructional decisions and opportunities to share best practices that strengthens pedagogy and student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher leaders as well as teachers reported that their voice is valued in making instructional school-wide decisions. For example, English teachers stated that they reviewed English Regents results and student work products and concluded that students needed additional support with specific reading strategies. The teachers shared their ideas with school leaders and now there is a school-wide focus on main idea and summarizing across grades and subjects.
- During an English department team meeting observed, teachers reviewed groups of students' writing from English and English as a Second Language classes and used the Critical Lens Scoring Rubric to assess students' writing. The teachers used a Wow, Wonders, and Whoas Protocol for their team discussions. The teachers discussed student writing work products, shared best practices, and developed next steps to implement in forthcoming lessons, such as reviewing strategies to support students with interpreting quotes to improve their writing.
- Department teacher leaders reported that they meet twice per month with school leaders and have ongoing informal discussions with each other where they share ideas, best practices, and student concerns. Department leaders shared ideas such as how to improve the Success for Criteria Plan, which is an outline for students to help them understand the necessary steps needed to complete the task, by adding more details to the plan. Teachers, across departments, shared that the professional collaborations on the Success for Criteria Plan have assisted them in supporting students to improve their organizational skills.