

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

International High School for Health Sciences

High school Q236

**48-01 90th Street
Queens
NY 11373**

Principal: Carl Finney

**Date of review: May 4, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Juan Mendez**

The School Context

International High School for Health Sciences is a high school with 159 students from grade 9 through grade 10. The school population comprises 6% Black, 63% Hispanic, 8% White, and 20% Asian students. The student body includes 84% English language learners and 2% special education 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 92.9%.

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	Developing
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	Additional Findings	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	Celebration	Proficient

Area of Celebration

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

Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based teams where they strengthen teacher capacity. Distributive leadership structures have been developed where teachers plan and facilitate team meetings.

Impact

The work of teacher teams results in strengthening pedagogical approaches steering improved student progress. Teacher voice is effectively welcomed in team discussions, thus fostering shared leadership while building team capacity.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers meet in weekly and- bi weekly meetings to engage in unit sharing, collect feedback from peers and create interdisciplinary approaches across the curriculum. For example, in an interdisciplinary team meeting, teachers collaboratively created shared academic vocabulary related to research to incorporate into varying tasks.
- Shared leadership is evidenced by each teacher working in a content area team with a team liaison, whom reports findings to leadership. Teachers also belong to committees where they share insights, it allow teachers to play a vital role in decision-making. Examples of committees include, professional development, student support, portfolio, curriculum mapping, coordinating council and student advisory.
- Teacher teams meet to develop school-wide instructional practices, such as project-based learning. Teachers are trained by coaches from the Internationals Network and other affiliate organizations on topics such as language and content integration and project-based learning. Teachers build capacity with both in- school and partner school inter-visitations.
- The school's Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) supports the goals of committee structures, stating, the creation of a local portfolio committee to guide the development of project tasks, and implement the presentation of midyear and end year portfolios. Additionally, the CEP indicates the principal sets clear expectations for teachers planning in content areas with objectives, outcomes and rubrics for each unit.
- Teachers collaborate in an effort to adjust curriculum and increase student achievement. For example, new teachers adopt scaffolds from other disciplines; students write statements and questions based on beginning, intermediate and advanced English Language Learner (ELL) levels so they can incorporate layered curriculum.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Although common assessments to measure student progress are used, the monitoring of student progress through tracking systems is inconsistent. Embedding consistent checks for understanding coupled with high quality feedback is varied across classrooms.

Impact

The school's systems of using assessment results to monitor student progress do not consistently inform instructional adjustments at the team and classroom level to meet the needs of all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Student written assessments on bulletin boards in the classrooms and in the hallways reflect multiple content areas with tasks progressing toward alignment of the Common Core Learning Standards. For example, student written essays lack deep critical thinking, "What is Genocide?" and parabola drawings in mathematics without expanded written explanations.
- Although Do Your Own (DYO) cycles occur, for example in mathematics, data from multiple sources are not collected systematically and utilized consistently to inform curricula and pedagogical modifications. To illustrate progress, Integrated Algebra resulted in divergent scores from two teachers, with teachers then being paired for inter-visitations.
- Classroom checks for understanding were varied across classrooms. For example, in an ESL class, the teacher circulates to provide feedback, yet disseminates an exit ticket lacking rigor, "What do need to work on to be ready for the presentations tomorrow?" In a Molecular Genetics lab, little evidence of teacher or student self-assessment present, with teacher moderating a whole class question and answer session.
- Feedback on student work is not consistent across classrooms. Some teachers provide minimal comments on student work, such as "good intro" or "nice work." In addition, teachers did not engage in classroom tracking of student progress or responses in any classrooms visited.
- All teachers use school-wide grading digital system, Jumprope, and a school-wide grading policy with a focus on content and language outcomes. Evidence of analysis of data collected from assessments is nebulous in connection to modifying instructional approaches.
- Assessment criteria for tasks and assignments are not consistently clear across classrooms. For example, in Anatomy and Physiology, students copy notes on the nervous system and share in small groups, with no criteria established. In Living Environment, students listen to a podcast with questions such as "Who is talking" and "What do you hear?" to guide thinking.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

High expectations are consistently messaged to staff via professional development in trainings and other vehicles of communication. Workshops and ongoing updates keep families apprised of student progress towards college and career readiness.

Impact

Structures that support the school's high expectations create a culture of collaboration and accountability amongst the staff, students and their families, thus providing a path to college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The school builds awareness of diversity and community with visits to the Jewish Heritage Museum, Museum of American Museum of Natural History and The Metropolitan Museum of Art. The school's leader has connected with local Council Member Daniel Dromm to discuss his vision for the school and to ensure strong community ties. Students receive awards from distinguished benefactors such as The Duke of Edinburgh Foundation with awards for academic, service learning and outdoorsmanship.
- Communication methods include newsletters, social media, translated materials in multiple home languages, Parent Teacher Association events and scheduled appointments. One parent exclaims, "The principal is always available and the teachers keep you updated."
- The school supports the progress toward college and career expectations with work based learning opportunities and exposure to university settings. Examples include the Explorers Program and Women of Tomorrow program. Additionally, students visit college campuses, tour research centers such as Columbia University and have begun to access internships with partner organizations.
- High expectations are encouraged through interdisciplinary approaches. For example, in English, art and biology classrooms, students engaged in a cancer unit. Students read *The Fault in Our Stars* in English class, conducted genetic biotechnology activities in science and created a visual arts project. The result of the project is shared at the American Museum of Natural History as a component of the fourth Internationals Network Science Fair, as well as at an installation at the Queens Hospital arts initiative.
- The advisory structure allows students to engage with materials from the National Academy Foundation with teachers implementing the Exploring College, Career and Community Opportunities (ECCO) curriculum.
- The school orchestrates events to promote parent engagement and college readiness. Parents are invited to portfolio nights and academic intervention meetings. One parent shared, "I like the diversity is the school, students learn from each other and the teachers are determined to reach out to parents, there is good sense of security in the school, my child is safe."

Findings

The school is in the process of aligning curricula to Common Core Learning Standards in all subject areas so that a diverse student population may have access to cognitively engaging, rigorous academic tasks.

Impact

Access to engaging, rigorous Common Core aligned tasks is inconsistent across classrooms. Across grades and subject areas, high-level critical thinking is varied.

Supporting Evidence

- Review of curriculum documents across content areas reflect inconsistent culminating tasks reflecting varying levels of cognitive engagement aligned to expectations on summative and formative assessments. The school is working toward improving systems to align curriculum and assessments.
- Curricula maps vary by content areas, indicating the school is evolving toward rigorous tasks in all subjects. For example, a Career and Technical Education (CTE) unit ends with a PowerPoint on five diseases, and a brain study unit ends with a poster on impact on drugs on brain functioning. While, in a global history unit, students are engaged in rich debate on the effects of imperialism with established roles, student choice, research, rubrics, self and group evaluations, visual evidence, tables, charts and evidence cards. However, all content areas do not mirror these practices thus far.
- School leaders are in the process of aligning curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards. Teachers meet to begin the process of designing curriculum to provide entry points at different levels of content proficiency. The school has started with English and argument writing contextualized with evidence as an instructional focus. The school is surfacing language outcomes to share across disciplines while moving toward portfolio-based assessments.
- The school utilizes a curriculum-mapping platform, Rubicon Atlas. Units of study are progressively being added so teachers gain greater clarity and intention while planning and allows for a digital sharing space.
- Lesson plans in some content areas emphasize higher order thinking, but few offer elements of student choice and access for a diverse group of learners. For example, in a global history class, students examined various images to understand the Nazi motivation for carrying out atrocities using graphic organizers and heterogeneous grouping, yet in Living Environment, students use one scenario with little evidence of scaffolding instruction for diverse learners.

Findings

While pedagogy provides some instructional supports, including collaborative structures, the use of strategic entry points and extensions that foster deep reasoning in student work products varies across the school.

Impact

Across classrooms, curricula extension support students exist at varying levels, yet there are missed opportunities for all learners to take ownership and engage in high levels of student thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- In English as a Second Language (ESL) class, students engage in group activity to prepare interview presentations around the essential question, “How much control do we have over our own destinies?” Students use dictionaries in multiple languages to guide writing, yet no exemplar is provided as a model. In Living Environment, students are provided written transcripts as a scaffold for listening to a podcast, yet no language scaffolds are in place.
- In all classrooms visited, the interactive board was used minimally as an engagement tool, rather to display instructional information. For example, in Living Environment, the teacher posts the questions for students to answer, “Who is talking?” “What different information do you hear?”
- In a Living Environment class examining gel electrophoresis, students respond to teacher-centered questions such as, “What is a standard?” “How does knowledge of DNA and proteins help us solve crimes?”
- In most classes visited, elements of collaborative structures for learning were present. In a mathematics class, students worked cooperatively, grouped by levels to xxx In a global history class, students work in groups to examine Holocaust images,
- In some classes, scaffolds are present to support varied student groups. In an Integrated Algebra class, students are grouped by beginner, intermediate and advanced to graph and identify y-intercepts, roots and vertices in a parabola while solving equations based on a story from “Angry Birds.” Strategic scaffolds to support a diverse population are not consistent in all classrooms.