



Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Flushing High School

High School Q460

**35-01 Union Street
Queens
NY 11354**

Principal: Enric Kendall

**Date of review: May 14, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Joshua Good**

The School Context

Flushing High School is a high school with 2,123 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 26% Black, 50% Hispanic, 3% White, and 20% Asian students. The student body includes 21% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 57% of the students enrolled and girls account for 43%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 83.1%.

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	Focus	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	Additional Findings	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	Developing
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	Developing

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

School leaders are beginning to ensure that teachers across grade levels engage in professional collaborations. A distributive leadership structure is emerging and leadership capacity is being intentionally built through teacher teams.

Impact

The emerging use of an inquiry approach is beginning to result in improved instructional practices. Teachers are beginning to have leadership opportunities and voice in key school-wide instructional decisions.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders have developed a student and teacher program that specifically allows for teams of teachers to meet weekly to collaboratively engage in inquiry work. The school is primarily divided into department teams which meet twice per week to plan department wide curricula and assessments and engage in inquiry work focused on looking at student work. Though teams meet regularly across the departments, formal agendas and minutes are not consistently utilized to inform the work towards goals and pedagogical and curricular next steps and adjustments are unclear. Further, the majority of teams do not have an overall system for tracking the progress of the targeted students whom they share.
- The ninth grade team meets twice per week. Based on the “Writing is Thinking through Strategic Inquiry” (WITsi) model, the grade 9 teacher team has a structure for implementing strategic inquiry that is anchored in the close analysis of student work. The WITsi approach combines Judith Hochman’s “Writing Revolution” strategies with a structured inquiry process. In the team meetings, teachers assess student work, using inquiry protocols to identify precise student skill deficiencies and plan instructional interventions. Examples of this were evident in a grade 9 English class where students were given tasks using the Hochman strategy, “Because, But, So” as the writing prompts and a class for English language learners where the teacher modeled the use of a combination of the Hochman strategies and “Sentence Expansions”, to support students in crafting sentences to demonstrate their understanding of the underlying skills and logic.
- Some team leaders receive intensive support through the school’s partnership with the School Renewal Initiative (SRI). These leaders, primarily on the ninth grade team, attend all day trainings with the SRI coaches on a bi-weekly basis, to build their knowledge of the inquiry process. For example, the SRI coaches provide ongoing support to the leaders in developing meeting agendas and to strengthen their ability to facilitate effective teacher team activities. In one of the team meetings observed, the leader facilitated the meeting via an agenda that included a “Looking At Student Work” (LASW) protocol and resulted in a shared learning process across the team.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

While teaching practices are beginning to reflect an articulated set of beliefs about student learning, across classrooms, teachers are not consistently asking high level questions that result in cognitive engagement of students, nor requiring sustained student-to-student interaction during lessons.

Impact

The pattern of discussion across classrooms exists primarily between the students and teachers. Students' verbal and written responses to tasks do not consistently demonstrate deep thinking and conceptual understanding of learning tasks and objectives across content areas and grades.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leaders shared the belief that students learn best when lessons are student centered and students are actively engaged in the learning process through participation in pairs and small groups, “turn and talks,” and reading for meaning by annotating and highlighting texts. Instruction in some classrooms visited illustrated these practices. For example, in an algebra class the teacher directed students to use academic vocabulary in a “turn and talk” about the process they used to find a solution to a math problem. Similarly, in a class of English language learners the students worked in groups, annotating a poem and identifying textual evidence to answer the given writing task.
- Though the school leaders noted that teachers use Webb’s “Depth of Knowledge” constructs to inform the design of strong and effective questions and tasks, across the classes visited, questioning was generally low level and resulted in student responses characterized by one word answers directed back to the teacher. In an English class a teacher asked questions such as, “What did the mother do?” and “Who do you think the woman is?” In a math class a teacher asked, “Three paces represent what?” and “Which line do we intercept?” In a social studies class some questions were, “What was he hungry for?” and, “What else should we look for?” Additionally in most classes, lessons did not offer multiple entry points to support all learners; students were provided with limited access to learning, typified by a uniform worksheet or a text based artifact.
- Across the ninth grade, some teachers implement writing strategies that generate student work products that demonstrate student learning and understanding. This was most clearly evidenced in the student work products reviewed by members of the ninth grade team observed during the Quality Review. However, across classrooms students’ work products did not demonstrate high levels of thinking by students. For example in one class, the student work product for an entire class period was solely students “checking” boxes on a one to four scale, to rate how well another student was doing in a presentation. In another class, a majority of students were unable to articulate what they had learned that day and had no demonstrable work products.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

The school community has begun the process of creating and adapting Common Core aligned curricula across the content areas. Teachers are inconsistently providing access to rigorous curricula and tasks for a diversity of learners.

Impact

The school has a long term plan to align curricula to the Common Core Standards grade by grade. Curricula tasks, however, are not yet consistently rigorous or scaffolded in ways that allow all students to access learning activities.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leaders stated that last year the school began aligning the curriculum to the Common Core. Additionally the school leaders decided to begin implementation of EngageNY math and English curricula across the school. School leaders purchased the curricula housing platform, Atlas Rubicon, to create an efficient structure for curricula sharing. However, the social studies curriculum inconsistently incorporates rigorous tasks. The school leader further noted that the science curricula is being developed and isn't yet satisfactorily rigorous.
- Some units of curricula reflect rigorous tasks that are appropriately aligned to the Common Core Standards. For example, math lesson plans showed use of EngageNY curricula for instruction in geometry and algebra. However, lesson plans for instruction in English showed little evidence of the selected Common Core aligned curricula, EngageNY. In the English units there was evidence of a protocol which the English language arts team used to vet the unit plans; the protocol did not illustrate a focus on modifying units or tasks for students with disabilities. Additionally, the lesson plan for a social studies class visited did not reflect Common Core aligned curricula with rigorous tasks; students were completing low level tasks from the 2006 Regents assessment.
- The practice of adapting EngageNY units and modules for specific student needs is emerging in the ninth grade; however, modification of units is happening inconsistently and informally in the other grades. For example, plans for math classes showed the same task for all students, with little evidence of support for struggling learners. There were few visible modifications and access points for English language learners and students with disabilities. To further develop Common Core aligned curricula, the school will partner with SRI coaches in the summer of 2015, to adapt the EngageNY curricula by embedding Hochman's "Writing Revolution" strategies into the modules for grade 9.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

The school is in the beginning stages of creating efficient structures for using ongoing assessment data to consistently modify curriculum and pedagogy across content areas. Teachers are inconsistently using ongoing checks for understanding across grades and subjects.

Impact

There are few structures to ensure that students are engaging in the thinking required for the next layer of the lesson. Students are not consistently provided with strategic interventions based on reliable qualitative and quantitative data that identifies their strengths and learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leaders explained that formal assessments consist of common assessments designed by teachers and mock Regents exams. The school leaders stated that the data from these assessments, along with the regular Regents exam data, are gathered for collaborative analysis with the teacher teams; however specific patterns and trends with regard to student skill gaps are not clearly identified. As an example, in the social studies team minutes, trends noted were, “Chinese students wrote everything in Chinese,” and “Only top students wrote essays.” Further, the next steps did not explicitly identify the pedagogical or curricular modifications necessary. Instead, next steps were noted as general statements such as “using graphic organizers to help students with the writing”.
- In the ninth grade, the WITsi team works closely with the SRI coaches to implement common assessments and tasks across the curricula. As an example, in February, the teachers of ninth grade students implemented a common writing assessment. The resulting student work was analyzed using the LASW protocol to uncover specific skills where the students needed further growth. After identifying use of conjunctions as a skill deficiency, teachers infused explicit writing strategies with accompanying tasks into follow up lessons to build student proficiency in the identified skill area and then re-assessed the students. These practices of ongoing assessment and regular, intentional adjustments to instruction were not noted across teams and content areas.
- While the school leaders spoke to the expectation that all teachers use informal assessments such as exit slips, writing activities, questions, and accountable talk protocols, as part of ongoing checks for understanding, across the classrooms visited, teachers inconsistently used these strategies to gauge students’ understanding and ensure learning for all students. In a science class, students were not able to articulate what they had learned and there was no assessment to measure student mastery of the objective. Additionally, in the majority of the classes observed, the teachers questioning practices resulted in only a few students being given the opportunity to answer questions and make their thinking visible.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

School leaders are working with all staff to develop a school wide understanding of what a clear, consistent, culture of high expectations looks like for all staff and students. Teachers are inconsistently communicating and supporting high expectations for all students.

Impact

The school leaders are beginning to design and implement policies intended to improve staff and student learning; however a culture of high expectations that accelerates staff and student achievement is not yet evident across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders, through the observation and feedback process, are beginning to convey high expectations to some teachers. As an example, in an observation report, a teacher of English language learners was informed that he was expected to include more speaking tasks based in the content and aligned to the Common Core speaking and listening standards. Further, in this observation, by acknowledging that the teacher had implemented a recommendation from a previous observation, the administrator demonstrated the expectation that teachers are to follow up on next steps recommended by administrators. Similarly, in an English class a school leader conveyed a high expectation to the teacher when he wrote, “Assess student progress at various stages of the writing and revision process and alter your grouping strategies to target your support of students.”
- School leaders noted they expect teachers to model rigorous reading and writing tasks and teach students to justify claims and address counter claims. To that end, school leaders organized professional development around using textual evidence to support argument and increasing academic vocabulary. However, although the school leaders, with the talent coach, collaborate to norm their understanding of the Danielson Framework for Teaching and to ensure that ratings and expectations for teacher practice are calibrated, in some instances, high expectations and ratings are not communicated clearly and with accuracy. For instance, an observation report for one teacher communicated a next step that said, “I am looking forward to observing the exit ticket exercise at the end of the period that I surely missed due to the short nature of my visit.” Additionally, the extent to which teachers benefit from and are held accountable for meeting expectations that are precise and unique to each was unclear; observation reports contained identical language and recommendations across multiple observations of different teachers.
- In the ninth grade, teachers are using the Hochman “Writing Revolution” framework to generate high expectations via explicit tasks involving conjunctions and subordinate clauses. Teachers carefully analyze the resulting student work product and provide feedback that illustrates high expectations for students. However across grades, expectations for student work were not consistently high. In six of twelve classes visited, the majority of students were not held accountable to produce the work given. Students interviewed reported that they are also not consistently provided with guidance and feedback. During the interview, most students agreed with a peer who stated, “Only some of the teachers use the PupilPath grading system; others never upload anything”.