Quality Review Report

2014-2015

North Queens Community High School
High School Q792
141-25 77th Road
Flushing
NY 11367

Principal: Winston McCarthy

Date of review: December 5, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Beverly Ffolkes-Bryant, Ed.D
The School Context

North Queens Community High School is a transfer high school with 203 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 35% Black, 35% Hispanic, 15% White, and 15% Asian students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 45% of the students enrolled and girls account for 55%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 65.5%.

School Quality Criteria

### Instructional Core

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school…</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school…</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school…</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings
The achievement and success of students is a central focus of the whole-school community. To ensure this, the school maintains a supportive learning environment that conveys high expectations to students and parents.

Impact
School leaders have developed a culture of collaboration and inclusiveness among all stakeholders, thereby fostering high expectations for all and promoting college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence
- The school provides parents and students with bi-monthly progress reports used to create short- and long-term goals. Students own their learning plans and monitor them via online data systems as well as through discussions at teacher-student conferences. Students state that they feel empowered and in control of their own learning. The school provides multiple opportunities for students and families to engage in college and career planning through visiting colleges and college fairs, a school-based career fair, and having college alums return to share their experiences, resulting in increased college applications and college persistence. To date, the school has provided students with more than 10 college visits. The school’s Learning-to-Work paid internship program provides students with authentic, on-site job experience and mentorship opportunities. The school also provides students with the skills to complete job applications, practice interview protocols, and manage their time. These practices promote rigor and ensures students graduate and become college and career ready.

- All stakeholders consistently convey high expectations through the policies and practices that drive high results from students. The school has a collaboration with the St. Christopher-Ottlie Family of Services to provide counseling services. Each student is assigned to an advocate counselor who carries caseloads of 25-30 students. An Advocate Counselor acts as each student’s advocate and primary support person to help them overcome obstacles to academic success and who knows the student and family well. As students move towards graduation, they are reassigned to a Future Focus counselor who helps them work to complete requirements and also create a plan for after graduation that includes either college or post-secondary training. Students as well as parents state that these counselors are a motivating factor that results in students achieving high grades and good attendance, as evidenced by the school-wide data that includes increased student attendance, credit accumulation, and Regents passing rate over students’ experiences in previous schools.

- Parents are appreciative of opportunities to engage in shared decision-making with the principal, resulting in fundraising activities, trips to several cultural institutions, camping trips, colleges and participation in college summits. Many shared that the reason for choosing this high school was the school’s commitment to all students being college and career ready upon graduation. They also appreciate the personal support structures that the school offers. As a result, there is a consistent message to parents on expectations and their role in assisting students to advance.
Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 2.2 Assessment | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings
Teachers utilize various assessments, rubrics and a grading policy aligned to the school’s curricula to track student progress and learning outcomes. The school continues to implement systems to produce accurate data and effectively track progress for all students to inform instructional adjustments.

Impact
The school’s assessment practices allow teachers to generate feedback about students’ progress towards goals which promote adjustments to curricula and instruction to meet the learning needs of students. However, the adjustments have not yet resulted in all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities demonstrating increased mastery of targeted skills in all content areas and grades.

Supporting Evidence
- The school’s new Outcomes Mastery grading policy is aligned to Bloom’s Taxonomy levels. The school has renamed each level of the system as follows: Emerging, Developing, Capable, Proficient and Advanced/Mastery. Inquiry teams use a wide range of summative and formative assessments aligned to this grading policy, with various rubrics to track trends and to get a clear understanding of what is a meaningful strategy for future lesson planning.

- The principal created a school-wide conferencing sheet that teachers use when conferring with students. This sheet is uploaded into a shared online spreadsheet that is shared school-wide so that all teachers share feedback on students’ strengths and learning needs and can look for trends. The conferencing sheet, along with rubrics also serves as tools for providing feedback to students on their performance. In addition, documents such as annotated student work products and task rubrics with specific feedback aligned to the school’s grading policy indicate that teachers provide students with actionable feedback on their work.

- Teachers utilize the school designed Formative Assessment Sheet (FAS) to analyze student work products, collect data on student progress and identify persistent skill gaps. The data is used to modify the next day’s lesson to address the skill gaps observed, such as citing evidence to support claims. However, although the data gathered is used to modify lessons to address skill gaps observed, there was minimal evidence showing the acceleration of learning by all students across subjects and grades as a result of these practices.
Additional Findings

Quality Indicator: 1.1 Curriculum
Rating: Proficient

Findings
All curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. Higher-order skills are consistently emphasized for all learners across grades and content areas.

Impact
The school’s curricular decisions build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all learners across grades and content areas, and academic tasks push student thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- A significant portion of students enter the school with multiple failures in math, leading the school to focus significant resources on helping students meet the expectations of the Common Core, with a special focus on math standards. Over the past few years, two of the three math teachers have received support through the Gates Foundation initiative called the Math Design Collaborative (MDC). Through the MDC, teachers developed Formative Assessment Lessons (FALs), aligned to the Common Core, which is informed by pre- and post-assessment tasks. In addition, teachers work with a math coach twice a month on improving teaching practice in order to support students in developing deeper conceptual understanding and improving students’ problem solving abilities through targeted development of math habits of mind. This work has led to students developing higher order thinking skills and acceleration in their progress towards attaining learning targets, including greater and more relevant elaboration and accuracy of both written and verbal responses. Additionally, increasing numbers of students are choosing the correct approaches to solving problems, justifying their choices, as well as developing alternative and appropriate methods for solving the same problems.

- The school is involved in the Transfer School Common Core Institute, which has been organized for transfer schools by the Office of Post-Secondary Readiness. As a pilot school for implementing the Common Core, teacher teams across the school are creating curricula emphasizing key strands that align with student needs. For example, over the past three years, math teachers have worked collaboratively with a math coach and teachers from another transfer school to shift to the Common Core and refine the algebra curriculum to emphasize deeper conceptual understanding, application of appropriate problem solving approaches, and improving procedural skill and fluency. This alignment, together with using the higher levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy and appropriate scaffolds to address student needs, has resulted in greater development of higher order thinking skills and accelerated progress toward reaching learning targets.

- Teachers plan and engage in workshop model practices and there is a school-wide focus on improving the number of open-ended and critical thinking questions planned, allowing for an increase in opportunities for student-centered thinking. Teachers utilize the Outcomes Master Grading Policy, which is vetted against the tri-state rubric and Bloom’s Taxonomy, to align the Common Core across all content areas in the school. In addition, the principal has sent teachers to professional development workshops on exemplary planning models and created a book study using the Understanding by Design unit planning workbook to coincide with the school’s unit plans. This enables students to participate in challenging work that elevates their critical thinking skills, leading to increased student performance.
Quality Indicator: 1.2 Pedagogy  
Rating: Proficient

Findings
Pedagogy at the school provides consistent instructional supports, including questioning and discussion techniques.

Impact
Students demonstrate high levels of engagement in well-matched lessons, good behavior and enthusiasm that foster deep reasoning in student work products across the school.

Supporting Evidence
- The school’s creation of a 58-minute class period allows for teachers to fully implement their lessons through the process of a modified workshop model. It allows for teaching of the central concept during a mini-lesson, followed by reinforcement and an assignment, including time for students to deepen their learning during the practice and application portion of the lesson through student dialogue and flexible groupings. Teachers’ analysis of data from learning style surveys, conferencing, graphic organizers, a productive persistence rubric, and other types of formative assessments allows for well-matched group assignments, resulting in students receiving instruction that includes multiple entry points and supports to reinforce the concepts taught.

- In the eight classes observed, all students were engaged in their lessons, and six of the eight classes utilized higher-level thinking skills, which leads to an environment conducive to school-wide achievement.

- The school’s shared belief is that learning is possible for all students. The principal believes that despite the many obstacles that students may have faced in the past that caused them to fall behind, they will thrive academically if the school uses an approach that holds students to high expectations while simultaneously providing support. This ensures that all students have the tools to engage in the curriculum and produce work products demonstrating content and skills mastery in a manner that is appropriate for individual students.
Quality Indicator: 4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development

Rating: Well Developed

Findings
The vast majority of teachers collaborate to examine student work, plan together and visit each other’s classrooms to share ideas and best practices. Leadership structures provide a means for teachers to have input on key decisions about curricula and teaching practices.

Impact
The work of teacher teams has resulted in teachers being inspired to improve student outcomes, improved pedagogy and student progress on assessments. The shared leadership structures and inquiry work build a reflective collaborative community that grows leadership capacity as well as focusing on improving student learning.

Supporting Evidence
- Every teacher has a role on the inquiry team; there is a teacher leader who facilitates the meeting and is responsible to make sure that the agenda, minutes, the collaborative analysis worksheet, relevant articles and student work are uploaded onto a shared online platform. Each team also has a presenter, recorder, and researcher. This shared leadership has led to the staff establishing a school-wide structure of identifying, targeting and assessing students to increase learning outcomes. The school has organized all teachers into two types of teams. One team is a Measures of Student Learning inquiry interdisciplinary team that meets twice weekly to analyze student work, identify student learning goals, and brainstorm strategies for improvement in students’ argumentative writing and citing of textual evidence. The second team is a content-driven department team that also meets twice weekly to work on revising and implementing Common Core curriculum, using the protocols of the Japanese Lesson study. Each team member has a role as they collaboratively analyze student data and work products. This has resulted in the development of coherent rubrics and shared practices. In addition, the school has been selected as a Progressive Redesign Opportunity School for Excellence (PROSE) school, and identified an internal teacher as a PROSE master teacher who provides coaching and inter-visitation opportunities. Every department has a lead teacher as well. This embedded distributive leadership structure impacts key decisions that affects student learning.

- Teacher teams constantly analyze college assessment data and team meetings involve discussions on trends and needed adjustments. At the math department meeting, teachers were discussing the FAL, which is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, state math standards and informed by pre- and post-assessment tasks. Teachers were debriefing the Transformation Lesson Plan, which was a pre-assessment FAL for a refraction lessons. Afterwards, teacher discussed different ways to improve and re-teach the lesson. Teachers remarked that using the FAL has caused them to be more reflective and that meeting regularly improves their teaching by enabling them to look at the resulting data and identify trends.

- In addition to the department and grade teams, the math department, through the MDC, is participating in a Japanese lesson study. Japanese lesson study, as described in Stigler and Hiebert’s The Teaching Gap, is considered the highest form of inquiry because teachers are taking a case study approach in evaluating the effectiveness of teaching strategies and lesson planning with the goal of developing skills for students.