Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Crotona International High School
High school 10X524
2474 Crotona Ave.
Bronx
NY 10458

Principal: Shweta Ratra

Dates of Review:
May 24, 2017 - May 25, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Daisy Concepción
The Quality Review Report

The Quality Review is a two-day school visit by an experienced educator. During the review, the reviewer visits classrooms, talks with parents, students, teachers, and school leaders and uses a rubric to evaluate how well the school is organized to support student achievement.

The Quality Review Report provides a rating for all ten indicators of the Quality Review Rubric in three categories: Instructional Core, School Culture, and Systems for Improvement. One indicator is identified as the Area of Celebration to highlight an area in which the school does well to support student learning and achievement. One indicator is identified as the Area of Focus to highlight an area the school should work on to support student learning and achievement. The remaining indicators are identified as Additional Finding. This report presents written findings, impact, and site-specific supporting evidence for six indicators.

Information about the School

Crotona International High School serves students in grade 9 through grade 12. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm.

School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<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 Finding</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 Finding</td>
<td>Developing</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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# School Quality Ratings continued

## School Culture

To what extent does the school...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Focus</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<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>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Systems for Improvement

To what extent does the school...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Celebration</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<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>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.1 Teacher Supports and Supervision</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings

School leaders and teacher peers support the development of all teachers, including the large number new to the profession at the school, with feedback that includes clear expectations for teacher practice. School leaders have a strategic, transparent system for managing professional development.

Impact

The use of frequent cycles of observations, supported by strategic professional development, has led to the strengthening of teachers’ practices and improvement in student work products.

Supporting Evidence

- As a school practice, all teachers receive feedback from both school leaders and their colleagues. A review of an online platform shows that teachers provide feedback to each other on lesson planning and unit development. Teachers question each other’s alignment to the Consortium Standards Rubric (CSR), which is utilized by the International Network for Public Schools, the Common Core Learning Standards, and the school’s own skills outcomes and rubrics, designed to develop horizontal and vertical coherence across the school. Additionally, teachers visit each other to see a practice that has been celebrated by school leaders, such as engagement, which is a school focus. Post-observation, teachers provide one another with feedback through the online platform. School leaders conduct rounds of formative observations, offer formal feedback aligned to the school's instructional areas of focus, engagement and rigor, and provide teachers with feedback and next steps aligned to these areas. As the school has a large percentage of new teachers, there is also mentoring where the mentor and mentee discuss implications for changes in teacher practices based on recommendations from observations. Findings from these frequent cycles of observations also include an analysis of student work and data. As a result of this structure, teachers receive actionable and effective feedback that they have been able to implement to improve their instructional practice.

- Teachers receive effective feedback that is clear, captures teachers' strengths and challenges, and provides clear expectations for teacher practice. It is clear that one first year teacher struggled with lesson planning and management. The teacher received formative feedback with supports and resources. The teacher then used this feedback to develop professional goals aligned to areas of growth and worked with his mentor. This was followed with a formal observation that demonstrated clear growth aligned with the teacher’s professional goals. While the teacher did not change in rating proficiency in the next observation, anecdotal evidence in the report detailed continued improvement. This pattern was observed across other observation reports as well.

- In multiple meetings with staff members, they all shared that there is a strategic and transparent system for managing professional development. This system is aligned to strengthening alignment between the school’s practices and the model for International Schools, developing critical thinkers by increasing rigor and placing a schoolwide focus on literacy skills aligned to the English Language Arts (ELA) Regents exam. A review of the school's professional development plan demonstrated successive cycles of workshops centering on rigor and Webb’s Depth of Knowledge, the use of the International School's rubrics, and literacy. There is observational data that reveal increased effectiveness in planning, and student work products demonstrate alignment to the ELA Regents exam.
Findings

The school is undergoing a high level of change that includes many new staff members and is developing an approach to culture building, discipline, and social-emotional supports for students and adults, including guidance and professional development for staff.

Impact

While the tone of the school is generally respectful, students and adults do not yet consistently treat each other with respect, and student voice is not yet welcomed and valued. While there are structures in place, these supports do not yet consistently align with student needs, and professional development does not yet promote the adoption of effective academic and personal behaviors.

Supporting Evidence

- Students shared impressions of a singular drive and pressure to improve student data to the exclusion of everything else, resulting in a “stressed out school” and the elimination of structures for including student voice. One student shared that while there is still personal college advisement, a college exploration class and the student council, both established by the former principal, had been terminated. Furthermore, students felt that many of their peers were not academically inclined and consistently disrespected teachers, leading to the loss of instructional time and increased frustration by those students who are serious about their work. In addition, students felt that their voices were not welcomed and that they were not valued as part of the school community. The new school leader indicated an urgency to change the school data, and while there is a student representative on the school leadership team and on the school culture team, it was not always possible to include other voices.

- While school structures include case conferencing and kid talk to meet social-emotional issues, students stated that these supports do not consistently meet their needs. Students felt that there was not a common understanding about the profile of an international student. Students stated that many of them had traveled to this country as unaccompanied minors and had left families behind. As a result of the school’s transition, teachers with whom students had bonded had left the building, and they were trying to establish new relationships with the large body of new staff. For some students, this large-scale change had resulted in an awakening of some of the feelings of loss caused by their initial separations from adults in their lives, and there was not always a forum for expressing this. Some students felt new staff members did not understand that many students came with “holes” in their educational backgrounds due to their lives abroad. One 19 year old student stated, that she has been unable to pass the Algebra Regents exam needed to graduate because she never studied math in her country. She stated that while she receives teacher feedback, this provides limited support as this does not provide her with the basic math skills that she is lacking in order to understand math. Consequently, school supports are inconsistently aligned to meet student learning needs.

- While the school culture team spoke with specificity about the school’s instructional focus, this was not the case when speaking about the school’s social-emotional beliefs. After a long period of silence, the team spoke about incentives for chronically absent students and kid talk. When pressed about the social-emotional beliefs, one teacher acknowledged that there are individual beliefs at play, but no shared school belief. While the school culture team stated that they had been trained in Restorative Justice, they also stated that they needed additional training to be able to support all students. Hence, this shows that the school is still developing supports to promote the adoption of effective academic and personal behaviors.
Addition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Teacher teams have ensured that both curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigor for all students and refine maps using school data.

Impact

School leaders have made purposeful decisions, including the adoption of curricula from the International Networks for Public Schools and the use of data, to ensure that all students are engaged in higher-order thinking leading to college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of curricula units and lesson plans demonstrates that all units across grades and content are aligned to the Common Core standards for ELA as well as content standards. A review of school data revealed that 82 percent of the twelfth-grade students are unable to graduate because they have not passed the Regents exam. As a response to this data point, all units across subjects, including the Career and Technical Education classes, are required to embed elements from the ELA Regents exams, such as argumentative writing, into their subjects. Supports, such as accountable talk stems and instructional groupings, ensure that all students are cognitively engaged.

- Academic tasks in mathematics require students to engage in problem solving, reasoning, proofing, and justifying answers. A geometry unit plan shows students analyzing mathematical models that represent systems of data to solve a design problem. Scaffolds in this unit include the use of a compass, calculators, and dynamic geometric software, engaging all students in a deep understanding of the use of the golden ratio of phi. An ELA unit shows students reflecting the instructional shifts through close reading, annotating to analyze, and using evidence from both Martin Luther King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail” and Henry Thoreau’s “Civil Disobedience” to understand how these texts have an impact on today’s society. This unit shows students analyzing text to lift evidence to use to support their claims. Scaffolds in this unit include accountable talk stems, a gallery walk, and note catcher from a Socratic seminar.

- Lesson and unit plans show the inclusion of the instructional shifts, such as vocabulary. Units across grades and content areas include vocabulary and academic language to ensure language acquisition. In a social studies unit, students engage in the shift of writing from sources as students read multiple texts, including primary and secondary sources. A grade eleven unit on algebra and trigonometry shows that students engage in mathematical modeling and construct viable arguments as they distinguish between situations that require understanding modeled linear functions and exponential functions. Units across grades and content areas display a similar style of planning.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings

Across classrooms, the use of varied scaffolds inconsistently provides multiple entry points into the curricula, limiting student participation.

Impact

There is uneven student engagement in appropriately challenging tasks across classrooms, hindering the demonstration of higher-order thinking and leading to uneven levels of student discussion.

Supporting Evidence

- Across all classrooms, students worked on the same activity guide, embedded with a set of scaffolds, regardless of language proficiency or level of content knowledge. While these guides contained scaffolds such as accountable talk stems and picture supports, they provided inconsistent entry points into the curriculum, leading to unevenness in the demonstration of higher-order thinking. In a global studies class, students partnered to complete cause and effect T-charts by sorting slips of papers which could fall into either a cause or an effect, depending on how the phrase was used. Scaffolds were ineffective as students did not have a basic understanding of the words cause and effect or content knowledge. In another class, students discussed the idea of society versus the individual. Students spoke in Spanish, with one student pointing to the text and explaining that Thoreau stated that the only obligation that he had was to himself. As the teacher walked around the room, he stated that students would be scored on the use of English to express their thoughts. When asked why they continued to talk in Spanish, one student stated that he struggled to convey his ideas in English, limiting his ability to demonstrate higher-order thinking as required by the teacher.

- While there was deliberate student grouping across all classrooms, in most classes, students shared that the purpose of this grouping was not always to enhance student collaboration but rather to allow students to translate for each other. In classrooms and in a group meeting, students shared that they translated for less proficient students or supported students who were chronically absent or late and some feel they are losing instructional time. One student stated that part of the difficulty of working in groups was being paired with students who do not speak the same language as they do. They questioned how they could bridge these languages in order to be able to do the work in English. The student further stated “We have to learn English by reading English, which we do not know. How can we complete the work?” The scaffolds, including native and instructional groupings, do not consistently provide entry points into the curricula.

- In a geometry class, students worked on a differentiated, hands-on task applying the golden ratio as a basic geometric principal guiding symmetry and leading to human visual appeal. Students spoke in Spanish and English, explaining mathematical calculations and how the principle of this ratio applied to company logos, patterns in the natural world, and humans’ perceptions of beauty. However, this was not the case across the majority of classrooms, where students struggled with language production, conversing in Spanish or limited English. Many discussions were procedural and surface level, seeking clarity for the task or repeating the instruction. The school population is almost 86 percent Hispanic or Latino, yet the planned entry points do not consistently provide access points into the curriculum or lead to even demonstration of higher-order thinking in student work products or conversations.
Additional Finding

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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</table>

Findings
The school uses a series of rubrics aligned to the International Network for Public Schools curricula to provide students with feedback and uses common assessments including mock Regents exams and the school’s *Graduation Worthy Portfolio Project Checklist* school portfolio to determine student progress across grades and subjects.

Impact
As a result, students receive continuous, actionable feedback, and analysis of this feedback and common assessments is used to adjust instruction and curricula.

Supporting Evidence

- Students in two meetings stated that they were very familiar with rubrics and received ongoing teacher feedback on their work via an electronic platform. This platform allows students to view anecdotal, rubric-aligned feedback, and teacher commentary with a dialogue box on the software that tracks student revisions to ensure that students address the feedback. A review of some online pieces and work on bulletin boards demonstrates that students receive actionable feedback aligned to the English Regents exam literacy skills such as including analysis in responses, or ensuring that they use and explain their evidence when supporting their claims.

- In a classroom using a jigsaw protocol, students wrote different rubric descriptors in their own words. Students shared that rubrics provided them with structure by allowing them to see how they needed to develop their papers. Many students stated that they used the rubric as a checklist. Other students indicated that rubrics gave them clarity in what they needed to do to improve their work. All students felt that the teacher provided them with actionable, rubric-based feedback during classwork and discussions as well as on written projects.

- As a portfolio school, students are required to complete portfolios in all subjects across each grade. Additionally, students are required to pass the Common Core Algebra Regents exam as well as the ELA Regents exam. As 82 percent of the seniors in the school had not passed the ELA Regents exam, the school decided to embed the skills needed to be successful into their portfolio rubrics across content areas and to collect information on this framework to track student progress in literacy. This was seen in a teacher team meeting where teachers looked at student work aligned to part three of the ELA Regents exam to improve student outcomes. Results from the January English Regents exam showed incremental but promising results for the school. Additionally, students have demonstrated progress in their subject-based portfolios, including math.
### Findings

Distributive leadership structures in the school build teacher leadership capacity and support inquiry-based professional collaborations aligned to the school’s goals.

### Impact

Teachers are strengthening their instructional capacity and building leadership skills by having a voice in decisions that affect student learning.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers across the school engage in structured inquiry that includes analyzing student work products and common assessments. In an English department vertical team meeting, teachers looked at work samples that they had collected aligned to tasks on the Regents exam. Teachers noticed that while students were including more analysis in their writing, it was neither robust nor clearly explained. Teachers wondered if there was a need for more targeted scaffolds, a need to incorporate more free writing, or a need to provide students with more explicit modeling using anchor papers from previous exams. In a discussion with teachers, they stated that this type of work strengthened their understanding of how their school curricula and rubrics support college readiness by ensuring that students think critically and learn how to write formal arguments. A review of teacher team notes in other subjects shows that all teachers use a protocol to look at student work and, despite their content, collect work aligned to literacy skills, such as argumentative writing and text analysis, which is the school’s instructional goal.

- Some of the distributive leadership structures are aligned to supporting teachers, such as mentoring for the seven new staff members at the school. Mentor teachers and the school coach support teacher development by providing assistance in lesson planning and in pedagogy through debrief sessions from classroom intervisitations. Additionally, the school leaders have identified a group of lead teachers in each content area called facilitators. The Facilitators’ Committee comprises teacher facilitators along with guidance personnel. This committee sits in on leadership planning meetings, accompanies school leaders in strategic cycles of observations, and reviews data trends for the school. Facilitators then build an agenda that includes the information from the leadership meeting and, together with their content level teams, develop next steps for addressing the leadership’s findings, including developing and facilitating professional development. Additional committees include the Mastery Collaborative Committee, examining student career outcomes aligned to college readiness, the department teams, which use mock and actual Regents exam data to identify areas to improve student progress, and the instructional team, which works on lesson plans and unit development as well as conducts peer observations.

- Teachers also serve on the school culture team, the attendance committee, the de-escalation team, and the guidance team, which supports grade team kid talk meetings by tracking student progress towards graduation and developing intervention plans. These teams ensure that teachers have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.