

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**Academy for College Preparation and Career Exploration:
A College Board School**

Secondary School K382

**911 FLATBUSH AVENUE
BROOKLYN
NY 11226**

Principal: Doris Unger

Dates of review: February 13-14, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Karen Watts

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Academy for College Preparation and Career Exploration: A College Board School is a Secondary School with 576 students from grade 6 through grade 9. The school population comprises 89% Black, 7% Hispanic, 2% White, 1% Asian students and 1% other students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 92.9%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school maintains a respectful environment and promotes students' social-emotional growth to improve academic outcomes. (1.4)
 - Both the Brooklyn District Attorney's office that provides workshops for students and staff to prevent cyber bullying, and the services of a safety consultant from the New York City Department of Education's Office of Youth Development, ensure a safe environment on the campus. Additionally, guidance counselors provide anger management, Respect for All, and gang awareness workshops, thus promoting a safe environment.
 - The school's effective attendance team, composed of the guidance counselors and parent coordinator, continuously contact parents of students who are absent or late to ensure that students are in school. These practices contribute to over a 90% attendance rate and a secure learning environment that promotes students comfort in school and improvements in their learning outcomes.
- School leaders and faculty provide students and families with timely feedback of students' academic progress. (2.4)
 - Families are active participants on the school leadership team, (SLT), and contribute to school-based decisions. As a College Board preparatory school, the school is once again offering advanced placement courses in direct response to requests from the parents. Parents are also very instrumental in maintaining a uniform policy in the school and work with the principal to make decisions around technology resources for students and teachers. Additionally, the school freely shares information with families yearlong, starting with back-to-school night early in the school year, apprising students and parents of curriculum expectations, and the uniform grading policy. Information sharing continues through progress reports sent to parents at mid-points of each of the six marking periods, the ensuing report cards, parent/teacher conferences twice per year, additional mailings, and student specific information as needed. The school's issuing of cell phones to key staff members, including the parent coordinator, guidance counselors and assistant principals, furthers efforts around open parent-school communication and eases scheduling of conferences with parents. Very effective roundtables, where the student's teachers and guidance counselor meet with the student and parent, communicate information on a student's performance and progress. Lastly, the school uses the College Board Schoology program, an electronic grade book that provides feedback to parents and students about exams, homework assignments, and projects. The timely feedback has helped parents to assist their children and the school in supporting academic improvement, resulting in a B grade on student progress on the middle school's 2011 Progress Report.
- The school's many partners ensure that the students' social, emotional and academic needs are met leading to improvements in scholarship and postsecondary readiness. (4.4)
 - The College Board partners with the school to provide equity and access for all students to advanced placement (AP) courses and to college, and the use of College Board products and services provides students with many pathways to college. The pre-AP strategies found in the Springboard curriculum provide the

foundation for college level work. The College Board also provides professional development to teachers to help in curriculum delivery. Brooklyn College provides College Now courses and the Brooklyn College Community Partners provide an after-school talent search program. Community based organizations (CBO's) provide SAT preparation courses, tutoring after school, one-on-one counseling, and access to medical care. Middle school students are enrolled in advisories once per week, and high school students who are enrolled in the Achievement Now Academy have advisories after school. These opportunities provide students with access to services that address their needs in a timely manner. Guidance counselors and the college counselor hold financial aid sessions for parents and students to complete their applications for financial aid, and 'College Night' allows students to meet with admission representatives from various schools. The school's dedicated college and career center enables students to explore college options and supports their formal application process to college. Parents of all seniors and juniors meet individually with the guidance counselor to review the academic schedules of their children to ensure that they are enrolled in the right classes, are being supported to be successful, and are on track to graduate college-ready.

- School leaders engage in deep data analysis of both summative and periodic data to ensure that trends are identified and students' needs addressed. (2.1)
 - School leaders analyze data from a wide range of sources including accountability reports such as the Progress Reports and the State school report cards, the ARIS graduation tracker, Regents' exams and scholarship reports, Acuity periodic assessments, and the Preliminary Scholastic Achievement Test potential reports, to develop a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This practice provides timely feedback on the school's initiatives and programs so that changes are made without delay to address identified needs, as when students with disabilities were identified as lagging behind, they were programmed for additional assistance in the ANA. English language learners, (ELL's), are supported by an English as a second language (ESL) teacher, who with vast experience in differentiation of instruction supports students' learning needs.
- The principal's clear vision for the school leads to goals and action plans that are accelerating student learning. (3.1)
 - The school's active School leadership team (SLT) works well with the principal in setting goals and creating action plans around a vision of maintaining the integrity of the school as a College Board college preparatory school. The school in implementing many plans to improve academics is moving to a common core based curriculum. It has created a college and career center that focuses on addressing the needs of its students in the lowest third, students with disabilities and ELL's. Additionally, there, is an increase in credit accumulation, the passing rates on Regents' exams, the number of students who master subjects with grades of 85% or better, and in the use of technology in teaching and learning, along with focusing on enhancement of communication. This has resulted in students in the middle school's lowest third achieving success in math at the 77% Citywide percentile.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine the alignment of the curriculum to incorporate the Common Core State standards to accelerate student performance. (1.1)
 - The school uses the College Board Springboard as the curriculum for English language arts, AMAPS curriculum for math courses, and citywide scope and sequence for social studies and science courses. The school is surfacing the gaps if any between these curricula and the expectations of the Common Core Standards to identify key foci. This has resulted in a lag in the school's efforts to close the achievement gap for student subgroups and improve post secondary readiness. The school is in the bottom 35% Citywide with regard to graduating ELL's, students with disabilities, overage students, Black/Hispanics male students, and students in the lowest third. The college readiness index for this school is in the bottom third of schools Citywide.
 - Academic tasks consist mostly of work sheets with low-level recall and information questions. Discussions during mini-lessons occur between teachers and students and not among students using accountable talk prompts, and the use of inference to engage students was evident in only one class. These practices result in less rigorous academic tasks and hinder the development of higher critical thinking skills to accelerate student learning.
- Ensure that lessons are reflective of a set of beliefs and provide multiple entry points into the curricula that promote student learning. (1.2)
 - The school embraces the use of the workshop model, and the use of flexible groups, technology, accountable talk prompts, word walls, and Teachers' College, (TC) reading and writing workshops. However, classroom observations reveal that only some lessons are reflective of these beliefs limiting students' academic performance. Of the eight classrooms observed, the use of the workshop model and technology were evident in only two classes, the agendas and word walls were visible in only four classes, homework review and accountable talk were evident in only one class, and the TC reading and writing workshops were not observed in any classrooms. Therefore, the school's attempt to follow uniform teaching protocols to improve student learning is not consistent or well matched to students' needs.
 - In a math class, students were given worksheets and choices of the questions to answer, but they did not start working in their groups until facilitated by the teacher. In an English class, the teacher modeled inference using think-aloud strategies as she read and provided points of entry for her students by asking them in the do-now assignment to write about one thing they were adept at, and in the homework assignment to choose an object to write about. In an ESL class, the teacher engaged students in an activity that addressed their different learning modalities from audio-visual to visual to verbal and written. Although efforts at differentiation are evident, students still struggle to start assignments during their independent work time resulting in disengagement and off-task behaviors that limit student learning.
- Improve the use of the school's resources to better meet the identified needs of the students for consistent improvements in academic outcomes. (1.3)

- o The school has hired mentors to work with new teachers, coaches to work with content-area teachers, and paraprofessionals to provide support for students in the classroom. Additionally, many new teachers bring the expertise of technology to the school. However, although resources are provided to support teachers and students, not all students are engaged in challenging academic tasks, resulting in uneven levels of student work products and student outcomes. ELA proficiency increased slightly and math proficiency increased by 18 points in the middle school, but the 4-year graduation rate fell by 25% in the high school.
- o The school has successfully included daily common planning time for middle school teachers and for high school teachers. This time is used for inquiry work, curriculum development, and for individual tutoring of students. However, although this structure has the potential to improve instruction and the quality of academic tasks in which students are engaged, it is still in the developmental stage as teachers are on a continuum regarding the quality of the tasks provided. Some teachers provide fill-in worksheets; others offer a choice of worksheets or a worksheet of assignments where students are given choices of assignments. This discrepancy in practice is limiting its effectiveness in improving student outcomes.
- Adjust instructional strategies and tasks at the team level using assessment data from the classroom level to better meet students' needs and improve learning. (2.2)
 - o Teachers of the same courses use the same curriculum and administer the same unit exams. Item analyses are conducted and the results are used to re-teach, individually or with groups of students, the concepts with which students had difficulty. However, the results of these unit exams are not being used to modify the tasks, instructional strategies, and or unit plans to better address students' needs in the class and improve their academic performance.
- Increase teacher effectiveness through the use of frequent feedback to teachers that promotes growth and reflection leading to improved student academic outcomes. (4.1)
 - o Written observation reports and snapshots show that teachers are receiving feedback and next steps regarding their use of the workshop model and agendas, development and posting of weekly pacing calendars, the incorporation of technology, the use of the blackboard configuration, effective planning and student groupings. However, feedback occurs at the rate of only one written observation per semester per teacher, thus missing out on timely opportunities to improve teacher practice and minimizing its impact on students' academic performance.
 - o Currently, effective feedback to teachers, although based on the Danielson rubric, centers around the tools for planning such as weekly pacing calendars, agendas, and the classroom environment including references to classroom management and the arrangement of the classroom. Feedback has not yet addressed all domains and components in line with Citywide expectations around the use of a minimum of six components of this research based framework, thus limiting the effectiveness of the feedback and the improvement of teacher practice to further students' academic learning.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Academy for College Preparation and Career Exploration: A College Board School	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score		X		
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?		X		
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?		X		
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?		X		
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X	
Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			X	
2.2 Align assessments to curriculum, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?		X		
2.3 Use grading policies and tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends to inform instruction and curriculum?			X	
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students' progress toward school and class expectations?			X	
Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X	
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?		X		
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			X	
3.4 Communicate high expectations to staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?		X		

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?		X		
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?		X		
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?		X		
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, guidance/advisement support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?			X	

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?		X		
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X	
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?			X	
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?		X		

Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed