

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**Women's Academy of Excellence
High school X282**

**456 WHITE PLAINS ROAD
BRONX
NY 10473**

Principal: ARNETTE CROCKER

Dates of review: December 12, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Elyse Doti

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Women's Academy of Excellence is a High school with 323 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 43% Black, 48% Hispanic, 3% White, 3% Asian students and 1% other students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 0% of the students enrolled and girls account for 100%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 88.5%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school leaders along with the dean and teachers have worked hard to create a safe space conducive to learning where students appreciate the support they receive for their personal and academic development. (1.4)
 - The vast majority of students are interested and engaged in their learning and understand the larger purpose of being college ready. This is evident through the 9th grade advisory in which small groups of students meet with teachers to discuss the transition to high school and college readiness expectations. Students develop relationships with adults in the building who they feel comfortable going to with issues or concerns and who are responsible for making phone calls when students are absent, clearly indicating that it is an unacceptable practice. Students expressed that the Dean is someone that "everyone has a relationship with" and that teachers are extremely caring and genuinely have their best interests at heart. As a result students stay in school and are able to focus on their studies leading to an 86.4% graduation rate last year.
- Across the entire school community, high expectations are communicated in order to push students for post secondary success. (3.4)
 - Two full time guidance counselors work with local colleges to support students in the college admissions process. The parent coordinator, PTA and Title I Parent Coordinator provide opportunities for parents to understand how to best support their children and prepare them for post secondary success. For example, the Title I parent coordinator sends out a regular newsletter with community service updates, notes from previous parent meetings, and topics for future meetings, including ways to support study skills, homework and substance abuse awareness. As a result the school's college enrollment rate is 15% higher than schools in their peer index and the city average.
 - Guidance counselors are starting to train student ambassadors in the use of the iTrack system, a paper tracker to monitor progress towards graduation requirements. Course syllabi provide academic expectations for courses and in some classes also serve as a contract between the students and the teachers, documenting that both parties understand what it will take to be successful in the course. As a result Regents pass rates in English, math and science are above the peer index and well above the city average.
- The school's systems and partnerships with outside organizations support students' personal growth in order to stay on the path for post secondary opportunities. (4.4)
 - The school provides a college seminar class and two full time guidance counselors who work to provide information and support for students as they investigate their options and work through the college admissions process. As a result of the school-wide emphasis on finding and staying on the path for post-secondary success, 86.4% of last's years seniors graduated.
 - Organizations such as Mercy and Lehman assist students during College Seminar with the college application process. Other organizations such as FFAWN-(The Mary J. Blige and Steve Stoute Foundation for the Advancement of Women Now), National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and

Soft-sheen-Carson provide scholarships and experiences that connect students to real world learning opportunities. For example, through FFAWN, students attended monthly 3E Workshops focused on empowerment through education and encouragement. Students were provided space for open discussions about their own personal histories and were able to create network supports for their lives. Experts at the session were available to provide advice and solutions to immediately apply to student's lives. As a result, students were able to focus more on their academic achievements in school and pursue college and careers.

- The principal recently made strategic resource based decisions to support the school's instructional goals of using literacy across the curriculum in order to increase Regents pass rates. (1.3)
 - The school leader made a strategic decision to change school support organizations in order to provide teachers with more content specific support. The school is also self funding their Global inquiry team in order to promote future success on the Global Regents exam. By examining results of June's Regents, they noticed that the vast majority of students who failed the exam did so because they did not attempt one or both of the essays. As a result the inquiry team is developing strategies to support essay writing in history classes.
 - School leaders continue to work on developing a schedule that includes more time for teacher collaborations and fewer changes in student programs after the start of the year. This year teachers have time to work in teams once a week during the school day as well as attend in house professional development Monday afternoons in order to increase student performance.
- The school provides opportunities for an open exchange of information with families regarding students' progress towards school expectations and participation in school events. (2.4)
 - The school uses Teacher Ease, an on line computer program that tracks students assignments and grades, to support timely communication with families and students, regarding assignment completion and grades. Academic alerts are sent out every three weeks to help parents partner with the school to support their children's progress. Parent conferences take place the Monday after each marking period to further communicate student needs with parents. The Title I parent group offers babysitting to help increase parent participation at meetings. As a result the two parents I met with felt informed about their child's progress and had ample opportunities to communicate places for improvement at parent association and school leadership team meetings.

What the school needs to improve

- Create a system to ensure that school wide goals include interim benchmarks and measurable outcomes for all plans so that progress can be measured, readjustments made and success evaluated. (5.3)
 - School wide goals do not have clear benchmarks to track and monitor student progress. School leaders review scholarship data; however they do not have clear goals and targets to help define progress. Consequently they are not

able to adequately track progress or make informed mid-year adjustments to improve student outcomes.

- Teacher teams articulated general goals for their work this year. The grade level team is working to increase outcomes for the students in the lowest third. Departments are working to increase Regents pass rates. However, there are no clear goals articulated for sub-groups of students at the team or teacher level to measure progress toward success. As a result teacher teams are unable to fully understand or articulate how they are moving targeted groups of students towards academic gains and don't have an established trajectory for their work together.
- Expand the development of coherent curricula that pushes critical thinking aligned to the school's chosen key standards and integrates the Common Core Learning Standards to increase career and college readiness for all students. (1.1)
 - While the school maintains a college preparedness tone and culture, classroom tasks are not consistently aligned to college readiness standards to best prepare students for academic success. Tasks in classes provide inconsistent opportunities for students to engage in higher order thinking. For example, in one upper level English class students were asked to write a friendly letter to a character in the book they are reading. In a 10th grade math class however; students were pushed to think more deeply when asked, to write a letter to an incoming 9th grader convincing them of the relevance of learning construction to everyday life. The integration of the Common Core Learning Standards is at the earliest levels of awareness with most teachers just becoming familiar with the standards and not yet integrating them in into the curriculum. Students including those with IEP's are not consistently being cognitively engaged or challenged across all grades and subject areas and therefore are not being adequately prepared to handle college level work post graduation.
- Improve the consistency of differentiated instruction so that lesson planning reflects purposeful groupings, students are challenged, tasks accommodate learning needs and questioning pushes thinking in order to maximize student learning. (1.2)
 - The principal articulated teaching practices such as group work, oral presentations, and the use of the workshop model as practices that exist school wide. Across classrooms however, these strategies were not consistently present and it is unclear how teaching practices are aligned to a particular belief system about how students learn best. For example, some teachers use the learning styles survey to understand different learning styles in their classrooms while others use summative data available in ARIS. However, across classrooms teaching strategies, questioning and routines inconsistently offer differentiated learning opportunities to support all students at their entry levels. As a result targeted learning experiences based on individual needs are limited and are not aligned to a philosophy of how students learn best.
- Increase access and usage of data to ensure that teams and teachers know their individual students' needs and strengths on an on-going basis in order to support targeted instruction for sub-groups and make necessary team and classroom level adjustments. (2.2)
 - Teacher teams use student work from periodic assessments to identify student's strengths and needs. Periodic assessments however, range from

homework tasks, class work and quizzes to essays and projects. Without a clear definition and understanding of the qualities that constitute a periodic assessment and the use of formative data from city wide Periodic assessments it is difficult to ensure a common understanding and alignment to the school's key chosen standards.

- Teams of teachers analyze scholarship data and student work to discuss strategies to meet the needs of individual students. Grade teams look specifically at students in the lowest third. However, they do not use the data to identify trends in the strengths and needs within this subgroup or any other student subgroup. As a result there are missed opportunities to target specific data gaps within grades and departments and address them strategically as a team to improve targeted student performance.
- Better align feedback from classroom observations to professional development opportunities and school wide goals and clearly articulate the priorities of the school and the expectations for teacher practice in order to elevate instructional practices. (4.1)
 - Teachers received feedback from classroom visits through notes in their mailbox. While feedback is aligned at times to the Danielson framework, teachers new to the school expressed that they felt lost and meetings to support their transition to the school were often canceled. The Learning Environment Survey (LES) results indicate that teachers did not get helpful feedback about their teaching and expectations around classroom practice was unclear. Consequently, teachers were frustrated and unclear about how to improve their practice as the professional development they received did not purposefully align to their needs or school wide focus.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Women's Academy of Excellence	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	
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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