

# Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**The Academy of the Arts**

**Elementary school X335**

**888 Rev. J.A. Polite Ave.**

**Bronx**

**NY 10459**

**Principal: Erik Wright**

**Dates of review: March 27-28, 2012**

**Lead Reviewer: Mary Barton**

## **Part 1: The school context**

### **Information about the school**

P.S. 335, The Academy of the Arts, is an elementary school with 193 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 1 and grades 4 and 5. The school population comprises 27% Black, 70% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 15% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 91.6%.

### **Overall Evaluation**

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal utilizes resources well, enabling staff to meet regularly to monitor student data and work resulting in improved student progress. (1.3)
  - Teachers meet three times weekly due to specific meeting time built into teachers' schedules. During meetings, teachers study student data as well as focus on their work around the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) aligned task. Specifically, teachers use this time to study student work, particularly writing, and share instructional strategies that are later used in the classroom. This work has resulted in revisions to lesson plans and curricula and improvement in teacher practice as recorded in feedback from teacher observations.
  - The school has a small population and, thus, has a limited budget for academic intervention teachers. The school had not met Adequate Yearly Progress with English language learners in English language arts for 2010-11. In order to provide additional support for this subgroup, the principal tapped into the expertise of a fourth grade classroom teacher who is English language learner certified. This teacher is servicing English language learners daily and this teacher's class receives literacy instruction from the literacy coach. In this way, the needs of the both sets of students are being met. As a result, student writing products from the students in this fourth grade class have improved as measured by simulated English language arts assessments. English language learners have made progress as measured by benchmark assessments.
- The principal and staff work as a unified team to support students in a respectful environment that leads to students growing academically, socially and emotionally. (1.4)

In order to personally support students with academic needs, administrators have formed lunch clubs that meet daily where they tutor students in English language arts and math. Also, in an effort to improve the school's attendance last year, which was 91.6%, the school partnered with the Department of Education as part of the Mayor's Attendance Initiative. Teachers, school social workers and staff from the South Bronx Mental Health Council, an organization housed in the school building, participate daily in attendance coordination of students. Students having perfect attendance are celebrated at the school's student-of-the-month assembly and their parents are invited to a monthly celebratory breakfast. As a result, attendance rates have increased this school year with overall school attendance rising by 1% to date this year.

- The school encourages positive behavior and guides students to support their own academic success through programs like Positive Behavior Intervention Supports. Consistent behavioral modification programs are used across the school through the use of the red, yellow, green card system. The school also uses a rubric that is familiar to all students and reviewed frequently so that students are aware of the school's student behavior expectations. Aligned with this rubric is a "starbucks" system where students receive "starbucks" for positive behaviors and can shop in

the school store at lunchtime for rewards. In addition, they implemented the “100 Book Challenge” where the school has purchased books and other supplies enabling all students to more easily participate. Students read independently in school daily and are encouraged to do so at home. They log their reading, which is also tracked by their teachers. The school then recognizes student achievement in reading by awarding students certificates as they reach particular milestones as well as at special ceremonies throughout the year. These systems have helped maintain a culture that celebrates learning and positive behavior, resulting in fewer suspensions and classroom removals this year as evidenced in the On Line Occurrence reporting system.

- School leaders have communicated expectations to parents and students while providing supports so that these school constituencies are on the path to meeting them. (3.4)
  - The school has structured multiple ways to communicate its academic and behavioral expectations to parents. The parent coordinator serves in the pivotal role of coordinating workshops for parents around academic and social-emotional issues such as how to assist children in preparing for state testing, homework help, how to use computers, fire prevention and asthma management. Parents are called regularly and are notified through backpacking information and email. In addition, the school has its own medical clinic as there are a very high percentage of students who have asthma and miss school. One parent called the clinic “a godsend.” Through the supports provided by the school, parents are aware of their obligation to send their children to school and are provided with guidance and services to assist in this process. This has resulted in increased attendance for children at school and increased participation by parents at school award ceremonies and workshops.
  - Students are made aware of the school’s expectations around academics and behaviors through the use of rubrics. At the start of writing assignments and projects in visual arts, rubrics are shared with students. These rubrics are visited during the course of the tasks and then utilized at the conclusion of the task with students knowing their next steps. In addition, teachers regularly confer with students during independent reading to monitor reading strategies, discuss current goals and set new goals. Students discuss their reading and their selection of “just right” books. These expectations are also tied into the students’ role in meeting the 100 Book Challenge and as well as their contribution to the meeting the school level goal. In this way, students know what they need to do to be successful in these areas.
- The school has developed tools to aggregate and organize various assessment data and use this data to make instructional decisions to meet specific student needs. (2.3)
  - The school has developed specific structures and expectations for teachers to organize and aggregate data across the school. Teachers have binders in which they collect all data information, including social-emotional data, and have it in one place. Examples of data collected include item skills analysis on periodic assessments in English language arts and mathematics as well as Fountas and Pinnell benchmark

assessment results. School leaders conduct data dialogues with teachers periodically to identify students and their making progress discussing next steps with teachers. As a result of collecting, organizing and studying the data, students are flexibly grouped in English language arts and math during the school day, and are placed in after school and/or in Saturday programs that are provided to help meet student needs.

- The school community has demonstrated their commitment to elevating school-wide instructional practices that promote professional collaboration and growth in teacher practices. (4.1)
  - The school has used the Danielson framework as a tool to structure communication around the instructional expectations and to center feedback. This school year the school has honed in on competencies 1e, Designing Coherent Instruction, and 2b, Establishing a Culture for Learning. Teachers stated that supervisors are in classrooms frequently utilizing the short cycles of observation and engage with them in collegial feedback. Supervisors frequently model strategies for teachers and provide opportunities for teacher inter visitation around specific needs. The literacy coach provides support to teachers around areas for improvement that arise from the feedback. Teachers report feeling supported in the development of their professional practices in this collegial, non-threatening environment that has led to improvements in teacher practices as evidenced through teacher feedback.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Incorporate the expectations of the CCLS throughout curricula in various core subjects so that students experience rigorous learning. (1.1)
  - While the school has done extensive work in developing curriculum that is aligned to the CCLS in English language arts and focusing on key standards in the upper grades, there was little evidence of this work in mathematics. As a result, teachers are not developing lessons with a clear focus including mathematical practices aligned to the CCLS.
  - While students in grades 4 and 5 experience literature conversations with protocols and writing tasks in English language arts that emphasize rigor through the use of Junior Great Books, it was apparent that tasks in other areas did not emphasize the use of deeper thinking as students do not consistently have the opportunity to interpret, analyze and problem solve. Little evidence of mathematics work was in evidence in classrooms. In addition, there did not appear to be evidence of student involvement in problem solving and constructing explanations of student thinking in math in many classrooms. This inconsistency does not allow students to take their thinking to higher levels as expected in the CCLS.
- Ensure that instruction is differentiated across all classrooms and that questioning extends thinking in all subject areas so that students are afforded the supports to meet them at their appropriate entry points. (1.2)
  - The use of the Junior Great Books program utilizes an inquiry model for students to ask and answer higher level questions as well as to write responses. In many of the other classrooms visited, however, the

questioning was mainly at a recall level. Student content area writing, in many cases, was also at the recall level. As a result, students are not given the opportunity for expanded thinking across all content areas.

- While children were intentionally grouped in many of the classrooms visited, the text that was utilized or the task that they worked with was the same in several classrooms. As a result, specific students within school subgroups, including English language learners and students with disabilities, are not consistently supported at their appropriate entry point.
- Use results from assessments to determine instructional implications for the performance, progress and learning needs of student subgroups. (2.2)
  - While the school has adopted the practice of aggregating and organizing data, and looking at specific students and fashioning strategies to meet their needs, teachers were not able to speak to the use of periodic assessment data to identify the needs of specific subgroups of students and adjustments to instruction to focus on them. Consequently, key groups of students are not targeted with explicit instruction to meet their needs.
  - While the use of specific rubrics created for assignments are firmly in place with the upper grade English language arts classrooms as well as the art classroom, rubric development or use in other content areas is very general. Thus, there are missed opportunities for particular feedback to students as well as limited information to make instructional adjustments to curricula.
- Ensure assessments are aligned to key standards that will ensure that students are on a path toward meeting the CCLS. (5.2)
  - The school assesses upper grade students through the use of English language arts and math simulations of the New York State test three times yearly. Students are exposed to questions aligned to state standards. Fountas and Pinnell benchmark assessments were added this year and are administered three times yearly in the upper grades and twice yearly in the lower grades. With this, the school has not yet adjusted their periodic assessment practices with the CCLS in mind. Thus, students are missing the opportunity to be exposed to CCLS-aligned assessments and, thus, to meet and/or exceed the standards.
  - While the school communicates progress and performance information with parents frequently through personal interaction, phone calls, emails and reports, the school has yet to reflect upon and revise the ways in which they share progress and performance information in writing with families to make information clearer and concise. As a result, parents may not have all of the information they need to assist their children at home.
- Create structures to evaluate the effectiveness of school capacity building and leadership development. (5.4)
  - Grade leaders are in place and teachers facilitate grade-level curriculum team meetings. School leaders often attend these meetings. However,

school leaders do not have a system in place to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher leaders, connecting it to data. In addition, teachers have limited opportunities to share their work vertically and in taking on other leadership roles in the school. As a result, there are limited opportunities for the development of leadership and for feedback on opportunities presently in place.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: The Academy of the Arts/X335	UD	D	P	WD
<b>Overall QR Score</b>		<b>X</b>		
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>				
<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?		<b>X</b>		
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?		<b>X</b>		
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?			<b>X</b>	
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			<b>X</b>	
<b>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.</b>				
<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?			<b>X</b>	
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?		<b>X</b>		
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?			<b>X</b>	
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students progress toward school and class expectations?			<b>X</b>	
<b>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.</b>				
<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?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			<b>X</b>	

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