

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Life Academy High School for Film & Music

K559

**2630 Benson Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11214**

Principal: Lisa Marie Ferraiola

Dates of review: November 28 - 29, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Aimee Horowitz

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Life Academy HS for Film & Music is a high school with 258 students from ninth through grade 12. The school population comprises 53% Black, 23% Hispanic, 18% White, 5% Asian students and 1% other. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 45% of the students enrolled and girls account for 55%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 82.6%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school's curricula are aligned to select Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) according to student data analysis to close the achievement gap and promote college and career readiness. (1.1)
 - The school community identified mastery of five CCLS as a main priority to facilitate college readiness through Regents item analysis, Institute of Student Achievement (ISA) assessment data, analysis of student work, and teacher anecdotal information. Subject area curriculum maps and unit plans have been revised to ensure alignment across grade levels to provide continuity of instruction, progressive skill development, and maximized instructional time through the elimination of overlaps in instruction. Curriculum maps and unit plans including performance tasks are aligned to State and prioritized key CCLS. Tasks require students to take a clear position, develop their claim with evidence supported by information from various cited sources, draw inferences from the text, and develop and refute counterclaims with evidence and evaluation. (a) Coherence across subjects and grade levels and rigorous tasks have resulted in higher order student works products.
 - The school utilizes formative and summative assessment data including exit tickets, connection activities, work from students' CCLS portfolios, Regents item analysis, ISA assessments, anecdotal data from Skedula, Students in Need of Academic Plan (SNAP) referral data, and teacher tracking sheets and conferencing notes from CCLS portfolios. Teacher teams analyze this data and make revisions to ensure that curricula and academic tasks engage all students including English language learners, students with disabilities, and students in the lowest third. As a result the school earned 5.33 points on its most recent Progress Report for closing the achievement gap.
- The principal's informed, purposeful, and effective organizational decisions are aligned to the school's instructional goals, facilitating growth in student and adult learning. (1.3)
 - The School Implementation Team's (SIT) comprehensive data analysis revealed three overarching areas for improvement, which build upon the school's work from the 2011-2012 school year. The school is focused on improving attendance, instruction, and assessment practices this year to promote improved student outcomes. To aid in improving instruction the principal opened a UFT Teacher Center to provide onsite, ongoing professional development and individualized support to teachers. A dedicated coach supports the math department in developing curriculum, in creating rigorous tasks and assessments, and in planning lessons that cognitively engage all learners. In other core disciplines an ISA coach collaborates with the Teacher Center specialist to provide additional supports to teachers to foster students becoming college ready. To support students' social emotional and academic success, the school's advisory program has been revamped. In addition to checking in twice daily with advisees to monitor attendance, advisory teachers are provided

with a non-teaching period to conference individually with advisees' regarding academic needs, progress, attendance, social emotional issues and create academic plans for students at risk. Weekly professional development, grade, and department team meetings further support improved instruction and increased student outcomes. This work has evidenced a substantially higher rate of first marking period passing rates in all subjects as compared to school year 2011-2012 as well as an 80% decrease in Superintendents' suspensions.

- Staff time has been restructured such that teacher teams meet regularly to look at teacher and student work to target strategies to students' areas of weakness, create and revise curriculum maps, and collaboratively plan CCLS aligned units and tasks. The SIT, comprised of the principal, assistant principal, Teachers' Center Specialist, and a lead teacher from each team meet weekly to discuss and assess each team's progress and challenges, tweak systems based on feedback, and evaluate progress towards school wide goals. Further, student time has been restructured to include additional periods of instruction in mathematics and English to support students in building problem solving, writing, and literacy skills. As a result, students in all classes are reading informational text and are engaged in formative and summative assessments, which include performance tasks aligned to CCLS.
- Student performance on common standards based assessments is consistently analyzed to target instruction in order to accelerate achievement. (2.2)
 - To assess student learning and progress towards mastery of five key CCLS in literacy and math, a teacher developed grading policy and a CCLS portfolio system including use of uniform CCLS aligned rubrics to assess tasks that measure the same standards have been implemented school-wide. Through the CCLS portfolio system all teachers collect evidence and monitor students' progress with regard to CCLS in math and literacy. Portfolios, students' self assessments, teachers' assessments of student learning and progress, and conferences targeting strategies to help students improve their work facilitate students' awareness of next steps and of their progress in moving towards mastery. Results of portfolio tasks coupled with ISA assessment results in mathematics and literacy drive daily lesson planning, unit design, curriculum map revision, and targeted instruction to support students' areas of weakness. Students state, "CCLS portfolios allow us to note our strengths and weaknesses and our progress over time. They let us reflect on our work and inform us on how to make it better so it can be college ready. These portfolios are helping us to use the skills we will need to use in college."
- School leaders provide focused observation feedback aligned to a research based framework that provides teachers with actionable next steps to elevate practice and increase student achievement. (4.1)
 - Due to frequent, framework aligned observations and an analysis of student work, teachers report that there is coherence between the feedback they receive and professional development. This support facilitates progress towards meeting department and school-wide goals.

Support from colleagues through team meetings and formalized Instructional Rounds furthers teachers' development. As a result, all teachers understand and have incorporated specific learning and writing strategies into their lessons to engage students in higher order thinking. Evidence of these practices includes the students' use of textual evidence to support a claim orally and in writing, making inferences and connections, higher order questioning, comparing and contrasting, and visualizing. Teachers also engage students in metacognitive practices, making them aware of the processes they use to complete tasks and solve problems. Accordingly, teachers share a common understanding of engaging, rigorous instruction that is translated into elevated practice.

- Feedback to teachers' notes strengths, areas in need of improvement, and implementation of prior feedback. Actionable next steps are delineated with specific attention to questioning, engaging students in critical thinking through the use of DOK, facilitating student to student discussion, and providing multiple entry points for learners. Examples of specific feedback provided to teachers following observations include: "Student discussion: develop responses that keep students thinking by asking the remainder of the class to respond to an idea one student presents and then continue to direct students to respond to one another"; "Incorporate open-ended questions to push student thinking and lead to a lesson structure that includes student discussion requiring them to use evidence and reflect before responding to an answer"; and "Scaffold your questioning to higher levels using the DOK to increase levels of thinking to a 3 or 4". This feedback supports using questioning to engage students in critical thinking as well as facilitating student to student discussion. Observations and conversations during feedback sessions consistently focus on teachers' progress in specific competency areas, implementation of feedback, and progress towards meeting school-wide goals resulting in their professional growth.

What the school needs to improve

- Further enhance instructional delivery to strategically provide multiple entry points and opportunities to extend their learning so that all students are challenged to achieve at high levels. (1.2)
 - The school believes that students learn best through critical thinking. As such professional development has included work around using Depth of Knowledge (DOK) to create higher order tasks and questions, connecting learning to students' lives, and cognitively engaging students in learning. All teachers now begin their lessons with an open-ended DOK Level 3 Connection Activity. The Connection Activity provides all students with access by requiring them to take a position and support it with evidence from prior learning and/or experiences. However, not all teachers consistently engage students in appropriately challenging tasks or in higher order thinking through questioning throughout their lesson thus limiting student achievement.
 - All teachers consistently use connection activities and myriad additional strategies to provide multiple entry points for students in order to support struggling learners. Students are engaged in higher order thinking through questioning and writing tasks calling for evidence and analysis

from informational text and other sources to develop and support claims and refute counter claims. However, teachers do not maximize student learning by strategically removing scaffolds and providing extensions to support higher achieving students in deepening their learning and reaching their potential.

- Ensure that the school's high academic and post secondary expectations are communicated in multiple settings and means to students and families across grade levels so that all understand and can articulate them. (3.4)
 - All students articulate the school's high expectations to graduate and pursue post-secondary education. Through the use of Skedula and frequent contact with students' advisors, families are well aware of student progress and deficiencies in particular classes. However, students and families across all grades are not consistently aware of requirements students need to meet to move to the next grade level and families are not aware of the expectations for college and career readiness and where they stand in meeting those expectations. Further, partnerships with parents to support student progress are not yet developed. Consequently, not all students have a realistic picture of what is required to get to the next level and parents do not yet have a deep understanding of how to prepare their children for their next level.
 - In all core courses and in electives such as film and foreign language, teachers consistently communicate high expectations holding students accountable for explaining their work, finding and using relevant evidence from multiple sources to support and refute claims, and engaging in analysis of the selected evidence. Through individual conferencing with teachers and with their advisor and through the use of school wide uniform CCLS aligned rubrics students are provided ongoing, detailed and actionable feedback on their progress and their work so that they are well aware of next steps to improve their work to move to the next level on the rubric. As this practice becomes firmly embedded in the school's culture, student accountability and ownership for their educational experience and performance will increase.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Life Academy High School for Film & Music	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score			X				
Instructional Core							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula, including the arts, physical and health education, 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 that is informed by a research-based, common teaching framework and is aligned to curricula, engaging and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?			X				
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?			X				
School Culture							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X				
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve them?			X				
Systems for Improvement							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet students' learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			X				
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?			X				
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching with a research-based, common teaching framework 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				
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?			X				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed