

# Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**Arts and Media Preparatory Academy**

**K589**

**905 Winthrop Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11203**

**Principal: Robert Hall**

**Dates of review: December 10-11, 2012**

**Lead Reviewer: Aimee Horowitz**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Arts & Media Preparatory is a high school with 283 students from ninth grade through grade 12. The school population comprises 88% Black, 10% Hispanic, 1% Asian and 1% other students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 46% of the students enrolled and girls account for 54%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 85.3%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school provides a rigorous curricula and designs data informed tasks in order to prepare all students with college and career readiness skills. (1.1)
  - Through project based learning (PBL), students are consistently engaged in research, critical thinking, problem solving, written and oral communication, constructing knowledge, and metacognitive reflection on their thought processes. Across subject areas the school provides project entry documents and scaffolded group and individual tasks within each project, where most students, including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities are challenged to think and produce work products at high levels, that are CCLS aligned. For example 9<sup>th</sup> grade physics students completed “The Egg Drop” in which they respond to the driving question, “How can we use our knowledge of motion of falling objects to design a container that will reduce acceleration due to gravity and protect a falling object from the force on landing?” As students are engaged in both group and individual work, in building, drawing, researching and writing, all students can access the work and more students are completing projects at higher levels.
  - The school uses formative and summative assessment data, including exit tickets, graphic organizers, students’ writing and other work products to plan and design appropriate learning tasks for all students. Teacher teams analyze this data to provide targeted support to individual students and refine curricula and academic tasks to engage all students, including students with disabilities, ELLs and students in the lowest third citywide. Accordingly, the school earned 4.64 points in its most recent Progress Report for closing the achievement gap.
- The principal’s strategic organizational decisions, key technology partnerships and scheduling are well aligned to the schools’ goals as evidenced by meaningful student work products. (1.3)
  - Partnerships with key organizations aided the school in implementing “wall to wall” PBL, in ensuring that students are technologically and media literate, and in engaging students in producing authentic, meaningful work products. A partnership with the Educational Video Center (EVC) is increasing adult and student learning. EVC is partnering with the school to engage students in producing documentary films while providing a simultaneous experience for teachers. Through film, staff is documenting their own professional development process with the goal of producing an iBook for faculty reference and reflection as they too learn to use the technology. An iZone, partnership with New Tech helped the school work with students to create a culture based on core values and student leadership while simultaneously becoming a technology based PBL school. New Tech aided the school in launching Echo; a web based learning management system. Students discussed how Echo has made them more accountable for their work, how it allows them to ask a teacher or another student a question while completing work, helps them to track their own progress, and enables them to collaborate with peers while they

are not in class. Through Apple Affinity Groups the staff has learned how to engage students with technology during field work for real world learning in all disciplines and are currently part of mastery based learning pilot. These strategic partnerships have led staff to create richer, more rigorous and engaging projects which have led to more meaningful student products demonstrating innovation and higher order thinking as evidenced by Activism in Government students pitching plans for school change and improvement to school leaders.

- In addition to weekly grade team meetings, staff has an extended block of time to meet in inquiry teams. The student schedule provides longer blocks of class time allowing students to engage in challenging tasks and collaboratively produce meaningful, authentic work products. For example, through a partnership with the Youth Philanthropy Initiative (YPI), 10<sup>th</sup> grade students are working on a project through which they are experiencing what it means to create social change, to advocate for an organization, to create a media campaign, and to be a grant maker. During the YPI course, students work in groups to research and select a community based organization they believe worthy of a \$5,000.00 grant. They then create and present a media product to persuade people of the worthiness of their organization. Foundations courses in math and literacy, taken simultaneously with the student's math or English course, support students in need of work on basic reading, writing and/or math skills. As a result, students' use of evidence in writing, stamina, the structure of their writing, and their ability to logically and effectively convey a point of view, has improved. In mathematics, students are more comfortable explaining their work and are more eager to and can better tackle challenging problems as their basic skills are enhanced.
- The use of common assessments and tasks, along with school wide rubrics provide consistent progress monitoring and facilitates adjustments to curriculum and instruction to improve outcomes for all students. (2.2)
  - To evaluate student learning and mastery towards content outcomes the school implemented a school wide grading policy and uniform CCLS aligned rubrics to assess tasks that measure the same skills. The new grading policy reflects the importance of students demonstrating mastery of school wide outcomes as well as completing content mastery statements to demonstrate and reflect on their learning and its applicability to the real world. Through Echo all teachers collect evidence and monitor students' progress with regard to school wide content outcomes and CCLS in math and literacy. This on-line compilation of student work, students' Mastery Statements reflecting on their learning, actionable feedback provided to students on their work, advisory conferences targeting students' progress towards their individual goals, and conferences in which teachers provide targeted feedback to aid students in improving their work, facilitates awareness of next steps and of their progress towards mastery. Results of CCLS aligned tasks, DY0 assessment results in math and literacy, and teacher feedback drives instruction, determines which students are enrolled in Foundations courses and targets students in needs of tutoring during the school day. Students state, "Our work is preparing us for college. Echo and our content outcomes teach us about how to interact with others, how to be self directed and interdependent learners, how to be critical thinkers-

those are all skills they are teaching us that we will need to use in college.”

- Strong professional collaborations across grades and disciplines enable teachers to reflect on student work, improve instruction, and develop leadership skills to improve student achievement.(4.2)
  - Grade teams meet weekly to case conference students. Using Mel Levine’s lens they design interventions to improve student achievement for students they have in common. Inquiry groups meet for extended periods weekly. Each teacher is involved in creating and revising CCLS aligned literacy tasks to improve student writing. They then present this work to the staff. Teachers also work in self selected inquiry committees addressing school wide goals. Inquiry committees focus on PBL, differentiation, personalized learning, Looking for an Argument (LFA) debate, and working with the EVC to support increasing student media output. Each committee engages in a design-thinking approach to make school wide improvements, with each group having an action plan addressing initiatives across school goals. The groups design and implement systems, present to the whole staff, and monitor the progress of their systems to gauge the need for adjustments. As a result, a more rigorous LFA program is being piloted in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. For example, numeracy has been infused, greater numbers of students have submitted LFA position papers and there is increased authenticity in projects. Consequently, across the school the quantity and quality of student argumentative writing across disciplines has increased.
  - A redesigned inquiry structure resulted from a teacher committee that provided feedback and collaborated with administration to create this structure. Based on an analysis of student data, inquiry teams design and pilot initiatives and present them to colleagues for feedback. For example, the LFA team created a new model for debate currently being piloted in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. This teacher created model enhances students’ use of evidence and citing sources in an argument, infuses numeracy into debate, and ensures that students are engaged in the art of persuasive speaking and writing. The LFA team also refined the outline students’ use for their position papers and the school wide rubric for argumentative writing. The 9<sup>th</sup> grade debates are videotaped and shared with staff for feedback on the new format. In addition, the team maintains a Google doc so that all teachers can contribute resources to debate packets and the team can evaluate what should be included. As a result of this work, greater numbers of students are turning in position papers, their papers are better organized, and more students are actively engaged in speaking extemporaneously in debates, while also citing sources. In addition, teachers have a shared leadership role and state that they are constantly involved in designing key initiatives that impact student learning.

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

- Ensure that teaching practices consistently reflect the school’s work around questioning and its belief that students learn best through critical thinking so that all learners are challenged to achieve at high levels. (1.2)

- Instructional practices, informed by the Danielson framework have included creating project based learning experiences that engage students in authentic tasks, critical thinking through questioning, problem solving, discussion, and presentation. In most classrooms, culminating PBL tasks require students to read and analyze informational text, to work collaboratively to solve a problem, to take a position and support it with evidence, and to present their findings orally and/or in writing. However, not all teachers engage students in critical thinking during the formative tasks and circle discussions that lead to their culminating task, thus limiting opportunities to challenge some students to higher levels of achievement.
- All teachers use strategies including sentence starters, graphic organizers, chunking text, film clips, and visuals to provide multiple entry points for students including English language learners (ELLs), Students with Disabilities (SWDs), and struggling learners. However, across classrooms, teacher questioning does not consistently engage all students in higher order thinking, in asking high level questions of one another, or facilitate student to student dialogue. Further, teachers do not maximize student learning by challenging higher achieving students with extensions, in order to deepen their learning and push them to higher proficiency. Consequently, not all students are presented with learning scaffolds that challenge them to reach higher academic potential.
- Provide feedback to support families and all students in meeting the expectations for college and career readiness. (3.4)
  - Through the use of an online grading program and frequent contact with students' advisors and teachers, students and families are well aware of student progress and deficiencies in particular classes, as well as progress towards individual goals. However, despite this communication from the school, families are neither aware of requirements students need to satisfy in order to move to the next grade level, nor of the expectations for college and career readiness or where their children stand in meeting those expectations. Thus, in the absence of feedback to families on college and career requirements, parents have not yet gained an understanding of how to support their children in reaching their next level for post secondary readiness.
  - During the course of completing their projects, students collaborate with peers, research, use relevant evidence from multiple sources, solve problems, make claims and refute counterclaims, engage in analysis of evidence to support their points, and present their learning. Through extensive individual and group conferencing with teachers, individual conferencing with their advisor and through use of the school's uniform content outcomes and argumentative writing rubrics, students are provided ongoing detailed and actionable feedback on their progress towards goals and on their work. As a result, most students are well aware of next steps to improve their work to move to the next level. However, accelerated students are not consistently pushed to their highest potential and some students and not all are aware of expectations for college and career readiness. As a result, not all students are completely accountable for their performance over time and some are hindered from achieving at the highest levels.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Arts and Media Preparatory Academy					UD	D	P	WD
<b>Overall QR Score</b>							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 <b>inquiry approach</b> 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	