

# Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**The Collaborative Academy of Science, Technology and  
Language Arts Education School**

**M345**

**220 Henry Street  
New York, NY 10002**

**Principal: Judith De Los Santos**

**Dates of review: November 26-27, 2012**

**Lead Reviewer: Victoria Armas**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

MS 345 is a middle school with 245 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 22.9% Black, 61.6% Hispanic, 2.4% White, and 13.1% Asian students. The student body includes 5.7% English language learners and 25.3% special education students. Boys account for 55.9% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44.1%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 90%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Classroom observations that provide effective feedback and articulates clear expectations, coupled with the continuous analysis of student work, supports professional growth resulting in improved instruction. (4.1)
  - The school was formerly part of the Talent Management Pilot and is well versed in the process of improving teacher effectiveness, based on effective evidence gathering. As such, the principal conducts frequent cycles of classroom observation and is strategic and detailed in providing effective feedback and supports aligned to the Danielson framework competencies. For example, the targeted use of feedback and next steps is provided to teachers as evidenced in follow-up observations that link to earlier teacher observation reports and feedback sessions. Interim assessment data on student progress based on work products are included in the observation conversations and reports. New teachers receive support from a mentor, as well as collegial support on a voluntary basis in a structured and consistent manner. The use of a template for detailed lesson planning has been adopted school wide. Universal Design for Learning (UDL), grouping configurations, scaffolds, and the connection of content to students' lives as a motivational strategy is included in the planning template. As a result of these structures, teacher pedagogy has been strengthened supporting improved student performance.
  - School leaders and staff use the research based Danielson teaching framework to strategically provide clear feedback and next steps that are aligned to the professional growth goals for individual teachers. This is accomplished through formal and informal classroom observations, modeled lessons, instructional rounds and classroom inter-visitations. Detailed observation reports capture teachers' instructional strengths and provide supportive measures aligned to key competencies, professional goals and the school's overarching goals for improvements in instructional practices. Teaching assignment decisions are based on teacher strengths matched to student needs based on information gathered during observations and feedback conferences. Collaboration with New York University and the Common Priorities Program (CPP), as well as school based workshops and Network support, provides ongoing professional development opportunities that further strengthen teacher effectiveness. As a result, a collegial community of professional growth is in place that supports effective teaching practices as evidenced in the classroom observation feedback and the consistent review of student work samples.
- The school's goals, both instructional and organizational, are tracked and communicated to all constituencies in order to accelerate student achievement. (3.1)
  - The school leadership team (SLT) has engaged all constituencies of the school community in discussions and analysis of student achievement data and the development of school wide goals housed in a

Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) with actions plans to support improvement toward collaboratively established goals. Student performance, behavioral and attendance data are carefully monitored and utilized to thoughtfully adjust plans accordingly. Focused instructional goals are directly aligned to Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE) as well as student and staff needs. Academic performance goals are tracked and adjusted through the use of baseline assessments and culminating performance tasks every 4-6 weeks. Student progress reports are sent to families four times during the school year which articulate information on academic progress and behavior. A program to support social-emotional growth has been successfully implemented with teacher and student input into its design. Students are rewarded on a monthly basis with field trips according to scores determined and tabulated from section sheets that are completed by each teacher the homeroom class attends throughout the day. Attendance data is monitored and communicated to leadership on a daily basis. Support staff conducts outreach to families regarding attendance issues through telephone communication and home visits. These actions have leveraged changes and are promoting a school environment conducive to accelerating student learning and growth evidenced by 3.3 extra points earned on the 2011-2012 Progress Report for special populations.

- The school leader is actively involved with the school community, attending regularly scheduled meetings with the PTA, SLT and CPP instructional team among others, to collaboratively involve adults in decision making. Parents communicated that leadership maintains an open door policy for issues or concerns that families may surface and wish to discuss. Parents also shared that the school offers many forums for their participation and information, including workshops, conferences and events families can share with their students. Student homeroom leaders meet consistently with the principal for sessions to discuss school improvement and provide suggestions. All constituencies are involved and invested in the school's continual improvement, as expressed by a parent who is dedicated to publishing the school's monthly newsletter for families. The web based use of Jupiter grades provides accurate information for families regarding student progress and curriculum. The principal sends a monthly newsletter to faculty and staff called the "Castle Courier" in addition to weekly emails to maintain open communication. The school's instructional goals and benchmarks toward achievement have been made into a colorful visual that is evident in the Principal's office and referenced frequently. This visual artifact has been constantly re-visited and shared during two full scale faculty meetings, during two PTA meetings, as a part of the introduction to all families attending parent teacher conferences, and during department meetings and debriefs after instructional rounds that are conducted in the principal's office. As a result, there is a shared sense of awareness and action toward successfully meeting goals throughout the school community.
- Teachers use assessment data to provide feedback to students and ongoing classroom checks for comprehension, to meet students' identified needs and inform adjustments that improve learning outcomes. (2.2)
  - The school uses a variety of assessments aligned to standards in all content areas, for analyzing and monitoring student achievement across grades in an effort to provide actionable feedback to all students. Rubrics

are constantly used and developed by students and teachers across grades and classes, specific to student work products. English language arts classes across grades use comparative essays as a common culminating performance assessment in most units of study to track student progress. Teachers maintain data binders that serve as a tool for monitoring student progress and the analysis of trends in classrooms. The consistent use of data results in effective feedback to students regarding their progress toward high levels of achievement.

- Across classrooms, student self-reflection and teacher's ongoing checks for understanding during lessons provide meaningful next steps for learners. This includes teachers consistently monitoring students as they work independently and in groups, conferencing and the use of rubrics during a lesson so that students can self-assess their work in progress. In addition, students produce an exit slip which give them metacognitive information, and provides teachers with instructional next steps. Portfolios of student work products are maintained in every content area. Students produce written reflections on each subject area portfolio during every marking period using a formal school wide protocol. Informal assessments often integrate literacy skills into math lessons by including written explanations of thinking processes. The assessment practices in place allow teachers to thoughtfully plan and deliver instruction that is tailored to meet student needs.
- Teacher teams collaboratively engage in the inquiry process, regularly analyzing student work products to improve teacher practice and learning outcomes for groups of students. (4.2)
  - All teachers are involved on teacher teams that meet regularly in a variety of configurations, across grades and content areas, to collaborate on analyzing student assessment data and work products. This work is focused on the analysis of student work using protocols to support areas of need. The literacy and math teacher teams routinely engage in a "Student Work Analysis Protocol" which includes delineated time frames for presenting student work samples, background information about the student and the identification of the instructional problem. Team members had the opportunity to ask clarifying questions, independently review the work to identify the student's strengths and struggles and then provide suggestions to the presenting teacher for next steps. The integration of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) across the curriculum and the refining of performance tasks is also dedicated work of teacher teams to advance school wide goals. Participation in professional development through the CPP has supported the school community toward meeting goals. One area of the collegial work of this initiative is to collaboratively design exemplary lessons aligned to the CIE. The structured teacher team work at this school, with the support of the CPP, has particularly impacted the work of teacher collaboration, which is promoting meaningful conversations and analysis of student work and is resulting in improved instructional practice and student learning.
  - Each teacher has a target group of 3-4 high needs students, including English language learners and students with disabilities. The focused analysis of student work of the target groups has provided insights to teachers for the expansion of instructional strategies and scaffolds. The practice of Socratic seminar in classrooms has been developed across

the school and shared in such a way that students utilize discussion stems from this practice in other contexts outside of the formal seminar. One teacher on the math team expressed that the work of his team, “makes us better teachers and helps us to improve our practice”. Focused teacher team work at this school is supporting the improvement of teacher practice and progress towards higher level learning for specific groups of students.

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

- Strengthen teacher practices to include multiple entry points in order to engage all learners in challenging tasks and high levels of thinking to accelerate learning outcomes for all students. (1.2)
  - Teacher practice is aligned to key standards and a coherent curriculum. Evidence of a set of beliefs about how students learn best is reflected in the introduction of lessons by making connections to the relevance of content to students’ lives. Process charts and scaffolds for learning are posted in classrooms to support student independence in their learning, although students were not often able to articulate what the objective of the lesson was or the importance of the content, showing a lack of ownership of their learning. Questioning techniques in lessons across classrooms included a range of levels and types of questions, as well as a variety of methods for posing questions, i.e. teacher to student, student to student, small group discussions. Science and ELA tasks and activities showed evidence of higher order thinking skills. However, actual lesson delivery in some classrooms was primarily teacher directed with limited entry points to engage a diversity of learners in challenging tasks. Consequently not all groups of students are supported to access content and attain high levels of achievement.
- Expand on the process of aligning curriculum across all grades and subject areas in order to articulate rigorous content and skills needed to promote college and career readiness for all students. (1.1)
  - Most curriculum maps and pacing calendars reflect alignment to the CCLS and key standards are purposefully selected according to student data analysis. Teacher teams examine vertical alignment of curricula and refine academic tasks using Depth of Knowledge principles (DOK) and an analysis of student work products. The use of different math programs across grades levels has required the math teacher team to work closely to identify the gaps in learning and adjust curriculum to include CCLS and Citywide Instructional Expectation shifts. While Regents exams are administered to approximately one third of 8th graders in Living Environment and Algebra with a 90% passing, the school does not consistently challenge all students of diverse abilities across grade levels and content areas during daily lessons, particularly higher achieving students, in order to push their cognitive engagement through rigorous activities and extensions to learning. Consequently, not all learners are meeting the demands to close the achievement gap, as evidenced in some assessment data and student work products.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: <b>The Collaborative Academy of Science, Technology and Language Arts Education</b>	UD	D	P	WD			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			X				
<b>Instructional Core</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, 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				
<b>School Culture</b>							
<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				
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>							
<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				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>