



**Department of
Education**

Dennis M. Walcott, Chancellor

**Quality Review: Quality Review Report
Division of Academics, Performance, and Support
2012-13**

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Academy for Social Action: A College Board School

Secondary School 05M367

**509 WEST 129 STREET
MANHATTAN
NY, 10027**

Principal: Rhokeisha Ford

**Dates of review: March 4-5, 2013
Lead Reviewer: Anthony R. Lodico**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Academy for Social Action: A College Board School is a secondary school with 425 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 61% Black, 38% Hispanic, 0% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 22% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 76.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders make purposeful organizational decisions to utilize budget, space and resources to support the school's goals and improve student outcomes. (1.3)
 - School leaders have allocated resources to ensure that the growth of the Career Technical Education (CTE) program in digital media is a priority and is accessible to all Academy for Social Action (ASA) students. Two MAC computer labs have been recently added to the instructional spaces and a laptop cart was also purchased. Long term instructional goals include an additional laptop cart for use on the third floor. A Teacher Learning Center and a college office have been established and partnerships with College Board Initiative (CBI) and Turnaround for Children have been strengthened. These partnerships and investments have created a culture that supports college and career readiness for all learners. The partnerships have begun to change the culture by the infusion of guidance lessons into the curriculum and the increased number of college tours and college connections. The strengthening of partnerships such as the College Now Program at City College has enabled more students to be exposed to rigorous academic opportunities.
 - Grade and departmental teams meet regularly. These meetings have begun to allow teachers to look at student work and create tasks to maximize student learning. The 10th grade team meets two days per week and is focused on establishing effective interventions for students at risk, looking at tasks across subject areas and planning a unit together that is focused on the theme of human rights violations. The team's goal is to create this cohesive unit that will work on improving specific skills and competencies and cognitively engage all students. The plan is to kick off the unit with a 10th grade trip in the spring. The time to meet allows teachers to address specific student needs, align tasks with the CCLS and discuss best practices and areas of concern.
- Clearly defined data-driven, school-wide goals have been established and tracked for progress and are communicated to the school community to drive improvement efforts. (3.1)
 - The principal has communicated the shared vision and goals which are to be attained by changing school culture and making needed changes and are embraced by all stakeholders by engaging them in improvement processes through school leadership team meetings. Improving credit accumulation, Regents pass rates, attendance and graduation rates are described as the most pressing goals and are the catalysts driving professional development decisions and how resources are used as described in the school's Comprehensive Education Plan. In order to track student progress more efficiently, additional progress reports are given to students and families throughout the year. Regular checks of student progress and credit accumulation have indicated an improvement in passing rates and credits earned. The formation of an Accreditation Team and Behavior Coordination Team has created a more proactive approach in attaining the goals. The current credit accumulation rate data shows that 66% of students are on track to earn 10 credits or more.
- School leaders and staff convey high expectations to students and provide feedback and supports to meet college and career readiness benchmarks. (3.4)

- Staff and students feel that there is a positive change of culture and a true belief that all students will be college and career ready upon graduation. Parents, students and families are kept apprised of student progress toward graduation. The use of Skedula has aided with this process and there is a sense of pride as students talk about the college advisement and support they receive from both teachers and counselors. This is evidenced in the addition of the college office and the college acceptance bulletin board that boasts the college acceptances as they arrive which have increased this year.
- Teachers are given feedback resulting from classroom walkthrough visits within 24 hours and intervention plans and next steps for teachers are a regular part of the communication of expectations to teachers. These intervention plans are linked to student achievement and learning and are monitored to gauge effectiveness. Presently, 50% of the senior cohort is on track to graduate and have passed at least 5 regents exams. Six students are eligible for an Advanced Regents Diploma. This is an improvement over last year.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop and refine curricula and academic performance tasks which are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards to promote cognitive engagement for all students. (1.1)
 - Teacher teams and administrators continue to create and align academic tasks to the Common Core Learning Standards. Matching aligned rubrics are designed to help students engage in rigorous activities with the goal of cognitively engaging all learners. For example, the English departmental team is in the process of accurately mapping their courses' scope and sequence to fully align to Common Core. Also, tasks are created and implemented infusing the citywide instructional shifts with a focus on informational text and argumentative writing. However, the work being done in the grade and departmental teams regarding curriculum development and alignment is not yet clearly driven by nor connected with student learning needs, particularly English language learners and special education students. Additionally, classroom academic tasks were not consistently varied or scaffolded to offer rigorous learning opportunities for diverse students. For example, in a science class a whole-class task was for all students to answer low-level questions using a textbook as a resource. The lack of emphasis on rigorous habits and academic tasks inhibits student progress and, therefore student success rates vary across classes in the same content areas.
- Promote greater consistency of scaffolded instruction in teaching practice so that lessons include purposeful groupings, challenging tasks and effective questioning to increase active engagement and rigorous student work. (1.2)
 - Teachers are using Kagan structures and Webb's Depth of Knowledge matrix to infuse lesson activities and tasks with a design to increase active participation, promote student-to-student interaction and increase levels of rigor. Administrators expect teachers to incorporate at least one Kagan structure into every lesson. For example, in some classrooms teachers were using flexible grouping, Rally Robin, Jigsaw and Shoulder Partner discussion techniques to encourage more students to be actively engaged in discussions that require higher levels of thinking. However, there is a lack of consistency in how teachers are incorporating and using purposeful strategies to engage and motivate students and accelerate cognitive thinking. Although there is a shared belief and expectation that scaffolding to provide multiple entry points will be used across classrooms for all

learners, there was an inconsistency and unevenness of practice in terms of effective questioning, meaningful grouping and rigorous tasks and work products. For example, in a science class, students answered recall questions using their textbooks and were not challenged to apply nor engage in any rigorous tasks. As a result of these inconsistencies in rigorous classroom practices and teacher pedagogy, there are uneven levels of credit accumulation across the grades. For example, only 47% of second year students earned 10+ credits and 33% of second year lowest third students earned 10+ credits.

- Refine and strengthen the use of formative and summative assessment opportunities to inform instructional decisions that promote improved student outcomes. (2.2)
 - In addition to teacher-made formative and summative assessments, the school uses Acuity and Performance Series to gather and analyze information about student progress and learning. In some classrooms many teachers used different strategies to check for student understanding such as exit slips, student conferencing and effective questioning. However, in other classrooms, general questions like “Did you all get that?” and “Any questions?” were the only types of checks for student understanding evident in lessons. Hence, there is an uneven use of effective checks for understanding, student self-assessment nor effective questioning across classrooms. This inconsistency results in inefficiency in assessing specific student needs and a disengagement and/or lack of understanding of how to adjust lessons or components of lessons to meet all students’ learning needs.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Academy for Social Action: A College Board School	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