

# **Quality Review Report 2012-2013**

**Murray Hill Academy**

**High School 432**

**111 East 33<sup>rd</sup> Street  
New York  
NY, 10016**

**Principal: Anita Manninen Felix**

**Dates of review: January 9-10, 2013  
Lead Reviewer: Marisol Bradbury**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Murray Hill Academy is a/an High school with students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 41% Black, 45% Hispanic, 4% White, and 8% Asian students. The student body includes 7.5% English language learners and 27.1% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 81.2%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is Proficient.**

### What the school does well

- School leaders and teachers align curricula to state standards, making decisions to include more performance tasks in order to promote college and career readiness for all students. (1.1)
  - Teachers meet in their teams to map units of study, create projects, and develop lesson plans. In one United States History class, the unit of study stated the enduring understanding, the relationship to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), and the skills students would learn from the development of an essay on geographic factors and the effects on different regions. The Social Studies Department refined a unit plan by including a performance task at the end of the unit to better align to CCLS. The ELA team refined a unit of study, consisting of adding informational text and reading activities. This practice was consistent across subject areas, providing students with multiple common core aligned units of study across content areas.
  - Teachers' planning is thoughtful and elaborated to include the standards being addressed, connections to previous lessons, scaffolded activities, skills to be taught and learned, and a section to consider the needs of all students including English language learners (ELLs) and Students with Disabilities (SWD's). In addition, student groupings were thought out ahead of time and a rationales were provided. This planning practice results in teachers' ability to deliver rigorous lessons that address the specific needs of students while promoting the engagement, including ELL's and SWD's throughout the lesson.
- The principal's strategic use of resources and scheduling decisions support the school's goals and meet students' needs. (1.3)
  - The principal and assistant principal have developed a schedule that allows teachers to formally meet daily and weekly in order to meet the diverse needs of their students. In addition, this time permits teachers to develop their instructional and leadership capacity. School leaders meet with lead teachers to review the work of teacher teams as it relates to the alignment to the CCLS and college and career readiness. They provide guidance, feedback, and strategies for implementation, thus resulting in improved teaching practice. At the end of the term, school leaders review student performance and make changes to programming and scheduling. Consequently, students are programmed and supported based on their academic needs and curricula that promote the CCLS.
  - Through the hiring of many special educators, the principal has created a collaborative team teaching approach in all core subject areas to meet the various academic needs of transfer students, ELL's and SWD's. The benefits of having more than one teacher in the room have yielded an increase in the percentage of students being on grade level according to credit accumulation from 57 % to 67%. In addition, the principal hired a full time social worker, guidance counselor, college advisor, parent coordinator, attendance teacher, and Dean who collaborate with partnering organizations to provide social emotional support, and college and career pathway for all students. A transfer student stated "I hated school before coming here, now I love it. My teachers and all staff know me and follow up on me". Another student stated "My grades and my attendance have improved since I started coming to this school and I can talk to anyone, not just teachers." This approach has helped the school developed a comprehensive youth development program in order to match each student to a support staff member, interventions, and enrichment. Consequently, attendance rate is at 89% and steadily improving while suspensions have decreased by 5%.

- Students, parents, and staff appreciate the school's focused efforts to maintain a supportive and respectful environment that strengthens the development of students' academic, social, and emotional growth. (1.4)
  - The school's approach to culture building is clearly articulated by a set of beliefs set by the principal that teachers must know students well in order to support them academically. The dynamic group of teachers, youth development team, and administrators work collaboratively to create a respectful, supportive, and inclusive environment. Teachers receive professional development on creating a positive, collaborative, classroom school culture. Consequently, the tone of the school has improved as evidenced in the decreased number of incidents in classrooms by 5% from last year. Parents and students expressed that they are active participants in the decision making of many initiatives at the school and the progress of their children. Four parents whose children started three years ago stated the following; "We have been at the school since day one and helped develop it into what it is today. We collaborate with one another" Another parent said, "The principal, teachers, and staff know and work with us and support our children." This practice of collaboration has created a telephone chain amongst parents, thus creating a network of parents who support one another, the efforts of the school, and have a great understanding of academic expectations and college readiness as evidenced by the total graduating senior class having a college plan.
  - Systems and structures are in place so that each student is known well by teachers and staff. Members of the youth development team meet weekly to discuss case studies. Each guidance staff has a caseload and holds himself responsible for each student progress, including academics, attendance, social, emotional, and family outreach. The support staff member meets with the student weekly and more often if needed. Each student has an action plan directly linked to college and career readiness. The action plan includes a checklist with requirements for graduation, as well as the steps needed to be accepted into college, a list of potential colleges and activities such as internship work that support a college application. This very individualized practice offers a personalized approach to education leading to college and career readiness.
- School leaders support the development of teachers with effective feedback based on a research based framework to promote professional growth. (4.1)
  - Effective feedback and next steps for improvement are provided to teachers by school leaders in various ways. One approach welcomed by teachers is the individual professional growth plan, in which areas for improvement are identified. Through short classroom observations, the principal and assistant principal provide feedback to teachers in their observation reports that reference improvement toward goals articulated in the growth plans. Teachers new to the profession receive mentoring by one of the most seasoned teachers in the school. The principal has requested that teachers visit each other to identify and share effective practices. Consequently, all teachers engage in intervisitations, with lead teachers providing a summary report for each intervisitation round. This type of development and support provides teachers the opportunity to own their development, reflect on their practice, as well as learn from their peers and supervisors in order to improve practices that support transfer students, ELL's, and SWD's.
  - The principal's own goal for this school year is to improve the pedagogy of teachers by 75% related to the use of high level questioning and discussion techniques using the Danielson Framework for Teaching. In addition to providing feedback to teachers on their own identified goals, the principal has trained teachers on the Danielson framework and uses competency 3b: Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques, when observing lessons and providing feedback. This method of support and supervision allows the principal to set expectations for pedagogy to promote higher order questioning and techniques in lessons so that transfer students, ELL's and SWD's engage in higher order

learning, such as discourse, the use of academic language and vocabulary, and resilience.

### What the school needs to improve

- Deepen the level of instruction so that lessons consistently include multiple entry points, for all students to be challenged and engaged in order to extend their learning. (1.2)
  - Two teachers were present in all core subject areas, providing individual attention to students. In some cases, teachers divided the class into two groups and provided small group instruction. Students were grouped based on language and skills. In some classrooms, teaching strategies, including questioning, scaffolds, and routines were the same for all students and frequently questions were of lower order skills, generated from the teachers and directed to individual students. Thus, limiting opportunities for students to engage in the learning and support cognitive development and language acquisition. In two math classes, teachers provided the same activity sheet for all students and assessed for accuracy and procedural knowledge by calling on students to provide the answers. This practice limits opportunities to effectively assess all students' conceptual understanding of mathematical procedures.
  - Teachers develop complex, thoughtful lesson plans, yet in some classrooms, tasks, assignments, and student work products and discussions did displayed uneven levels of high order thinking skills. In one science class, students watched a video the day before on the immunization of children and implications. Students were asked to agree or disagree on the vaccination of young children. Although, students were asked to research on the internet and cite evidence, students worked independently throughout the entire period and were asked to submit a short argument explaining their perspective for the next day. Some of the activities in this lesson provided different entry points and the student work product required research, analysis, and writing, however, there were little opportunities for students to discuss their thinking, reflect on their work, and participate with other students, thus limiting opportunities to engage students in discussions that reflect high levels of students thinking, participation, and evidence based debates.
- Refine the assessment practices to reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self assessment in order to adjust instruction and provide meaningful feedback. (2.2)
  - Across many of the classes observed, rubrics assessed many different elements of student work. This included the completion of work, effort, creativity, presentation, general skills, main idea, organization of essay, among others. Specific feedback to students in order to improve the assignment and knowledge was lacking. This prevents students' understanding of their progress toward the school's chosen standards and the specific skills that are critical to the conceptual understanding of topics.
  - Assessment practices varied in type and effectiveness across the school, particularly in instances where students were asked to self assess. In one portfolio and reflection goal sheet, students were asked to reflect on their reading and writing skills, as well as on their academic goals. The feedback provided by the teacher pushed students to think deeply about strategies needed in order to improve the work and provided the teacher with a deeper understanding of the student's deficiencies. However, this type of student self-reflection was not consistent across the school. In some classes the exit slip failed to capture the essential question or understanding for the day. In other instances, the check for understanding consisted of low inference questions. These inconsistencies hinder teachers' ability adjust instruction and refine lesson plans to meet student needs.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Murray Hill Academy	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 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				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed