

# **Quality Review Report 2012-2013**

**Satellite Academy High School**

**High school**

**120 WEST 30 STREET  
MANHATTAN  
NY, New York, 10001**

**Principal: STEVEN ZBAIDA**

**Dates of review: Dec 4-5, 2012  
Lead Reviewer: Monique Darrisaw-Akil**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Satellite Academy High School is a/an High school with 248 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 35% Black, 60% Hispanic, 3% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 39% of the students enrolled and girls account for 61%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 58.35%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- School leaders and staff collaboratively make purposeful decisions to align key standards to curricula and ensure a rigorous curriculum that cognitively engages all students, preparing them for college and careers. (1.1)
  - The school's curriculum is aligned to both the New York State Consortium standards and the Common Core Learning Standards. The school's administrative team and the school's professional development coach regularly review course outlines and curriculum maps to ensure alignment to the school's identified standards. School staff has identified key standards in English language arts and math to focus on instruction and assessment. They have identified argumentative math writing, using textual evidence to support claims in writing, modeling with math, and math reasoning as areas of focus as evidenced of these foci in classroom lessons and in student work. For example, in a humanities class students watched clips of the film, "Juvies" and read articles which discussed the dilemmas juveniles involved in the criminal justice system face. Students discussed the pros and cons of how states deal with juvenile offenders. Students were asked to identify claims and counterclaims from the sources which resulted in a culminating research paper on the topic. Additionally, across classrooms students are required to read a variety of texts and use text-specific evidence to support their written responses resulting in accessibility to a curriculum that prepares students for college and careers.
  - Teachers design and implement units of study that engage students in performance-based assessment tasks. In math classes students are required to apply math concepts in real-world situations and to model using math. For example, in an algebra class students had to design a bungee-jumping experiment to that would show a doll jumping out of a third floor window, a height of 1,015 centimeters, and landing securely on the ground below. For this project students were required to make predictions, construct a scatter plot of their data, develop an equation for their experiment and provide a rationale for their methods in writing. These rigorous practices encourage higher-order thinking of all students thus leading to improved student outcomes.
- School leaders make strategic decisions about the use of resources, time and space in order to maximize staff and student learning resulting in meaningful student work products. (1.3)
  - The use of resources and budgetary decisions are aligned to the school's instructional goals and action plans. The school hired a staff developer four days a week to support teacher growth and the development of teacher teams. The staff developer meets weekly with school leaders to assess and revise the school's professional development plan and to conduct observations, provide teachers with feedback, monitor student performance data and plan professional development for the whole staff as well as individual teachers. The staff developer works closely with new and struggling teachers to improve pedagogy by modeling lessons and providing coaching. The staff developer meets with teacher teams to engage in inquiry into student work. The strategic hiring of this staff developer has resulted in highly effective teacher teams and the development of student work products aligned the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and the school's *Habits of Mind* framework as evidenced by student performance based assessments. Additionally, school leaders have used a combination of school funds, allocations from the New York City Council and grant funds to equip every classroom with SMART boards and to create a new student computer lab. Students in this school are utilizing a variety of technological tools to conduct research, prepare presentations and revise their writing. The school's investment in instructional technology has resulted in equipping students for the technological skills needed for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Teachers receive a yearly allocation for the purchase of classroom supplies and instructional materials in order to enhance student learning experiences, especially in the science classrooms, thus acting on the school's belief that students

learn best by engaging in hands-on learning activities. This year the school purchased an on-line data system, *Focus*, to capture information on student performance regarding credit accumulation, attendance, behavior issues and student performance on classroom and interim assessments. The data stored in *Focus* is used to identify student strengths and areas of challenges and adjust instruction to better address student learning needs. The strategic use of resources and partnerships has resulted in improved performance outcomes and meaningful work products.

- The school has designed a schedule that allows teachers to meet for three hours every week in teacher teams. These meetings are in addition to faculty and departmental meetings. Teams of teachers meet to engage in collaborative inquiry of student work in order to revise curriculum and assessments resulting in improved teacher practice, implementation of a college preparatory curriculum, and school-wide instructional coherence around the focus areas. The school has invested in professional development for all teachers by offering site-based summer institutes on the school-wide focus areas, such as writing skills, the instructional shifts and the creation of interim assessments. Teachers also attend summer training offered by the New York State Consortium of schools in order to norm their practice to other consortium schools especially in aligning practice to consortium rubrics. The strategic scheduling of teacher teams has resulted in rigorous units of study across the disciplines that reflect the school's Habits of Mind skills and access to a college preparatory curriculum for all learners.
- The school has created a safe and nurturing school environment which supports all students thus, providing them with social and emotional support needed to achieve their fullest potential. (1.4)
  - Students are assigned advisory groups to monitor and support students academically and socially, so that students have the support to meet the high expectations the school has set for them. Advisors meet with students to review goals, support attendance outreach and track student progress toward graduation. The school's orientation program focuses on peer mediation, conflict resolution and building a shared understanding of school behavioral norms. Elective courses and programs such as the Sadie Nash women's class and Project Stay, address social issues such as sexual health, dating violence, HIV/AIDS and responsible decision-making. School core values of honesty, personal responsibility, and embracing diversity are promoted through awards ceremonies, advisory meetings, incentives and small tokens of recognition for students who are exhibiting positive behaviors. The school's social worker provides additional support to individual and small groups of students who require additional emotional support. The social supports provided by the school have contributed to students excelling academically as evidenced in the increase of student progress on the school's progress report from 32.3 in 2010-2011 to 49.1 in 2011-2012.
  - Students and families state that this school is a close-knit community which supports and encourages all students to succeed. Structures such as advisory, parent orientation, leadership class and staff accessibility are in place to ensure that students and families feel welcomed and supported. School staff receives training in facilitating and managing an advisory group thus fostering a caring, personalized learning community for all students. Parents receive progress reports three times a semester in addition to the standard report card. Advisors and other school staff communicate regularly with parents about student performance via email, text messages and personal phone calls. Parent leaders are piloting parent access to FOCUS, the school's on-line data system, with the goal that all parents will have access to real-time student performance data. Students and parents agree that this structure result in students becoming good decision-makers and promotes the development of responsible young people.
- Teacher teams continuously enhance their professional collaborations by meeting frequently to analyze student performance data and examine student work products, resulting in effective teacher practice and student achievement for all learners. (4.2)

- Teachers reflect on their practice, their curriculum and assessments as an imbedded school practice that builds on teacher capacity. Teachers meet weekly in both departmental and inquiry teams to engage in inquiry of student work and develop action plans to address findings. Teachers also examine tasks, interim and other assessment data and a variety of student work in order to identify trends and patterns in student work in relation to the New York State Consortium rubric and identified key standards. Collaboratively they use data analysis to develop instructional next steps for students. For example, in the ELA department teachers discussed a student work task using the “Tuning Protocol.” The focus question that guided the team discussion was, “How do students use writing tools to help them organize their work?” One teacher described the work and then listened as the other team members asked clarifying questions and then provided “noticings” about the task. Together the team surfaced strengths and gaps in the student writing. In the math team meeting, teachers analyzed student writing that resulted from a math project on tile patterns. In a prior meeting this team decided to focus on making connections in the writing because an analysis of the interim assessment revealed this is an area for growth for many of their students. Teachers reviewed a variety of student work samples, made low inference observations and discussed findings. As a result of this process, the team decided to revise their curriculum maps to include skills students were lacking based on their findings. Additionally, teachers engage in regular intervisitations where they employ a scavenger hunt to find examples of high quality student writing, questioning and entry points for students based on a Depth of Knowledge (DOK) level. As a result of these practices there is coherence across classrooms in the use of writing strategies and math problem-solving as evidenced in the use of primary source documents, argumentative writing tasks, common grading rubrics and questioning strategies during class. The collaborative teacher practice and the use of the common strategies implemented, has resulted in improved learning opportunities for all learners.
- Teachers participate in shared decision-making with the school's administration resulting in a collaborative and inclusive school culture focused on student outcomes. Facilitation of teacher teams is rotated ensuring that all teachers are provided with leadership development opportunities. As a result, teachers are prepared to facilitate conversations about tasks, data and student learning needs. Teachers serve on a variety of committees including the hiring committee, school-wide planning, professional development and student scheduling committee. Teachers provide input in school-wide programming in order to maximize student learning opportunities. For example, math teachers noticed that students who entered the school having passed the Algebra regents were not being pushed to their full potential when sitting in classes with students who had not yet passed the examination. This noticing led to the creation of a new math course for students who passed the Regents examination resulting in greater learning opportunities for all students. Teachers also report having a voice in the direction of the school as well as how resources are used to support student learning. The school uses staff meetings and planning retreats to solicit the input of teachers in decision making. The authentic opportunities for teacher leadership in this school have resulted in improved overall school performance as evidenced by the school’s second consecutive grade of “A” on their progress report.

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

- Develop a school-wide instructional approach that engages all learners including advanced learners, English language learners and students with disabilities so that all students have opportunities to show high levels of thinking. (1.2)
  - Although it is clearly evident across classrooms that teachers and school leaders have adopted a common set of beliefs about how students learn best through inquiry, project-based learning and authentic learning experiences, teachers have not yet created high-quality supports for English language learners, or student with disabilities. Teachers are planning lessons which provide multiple entry points for students through questions, scaffolds and routines to ensure that students are engaged

in the lessons. In most classes students are working in heterogeneous groups. A common instructional strategy is for students to ask group members for help before asking the teacher, fostering a culture of inquiry and peer interdependence. However, during classroom instruction there was little evidence of instructional supports for students with disabilities or English language learners. The school has a licensed special education teacher who co-plans with teachers to address student learning needs but lesson accommodations were not visible during classroom observations. Students who require special education teacher support service or Integrated Co-Team Teaching services receive those services either via team teaching support or individualized support by the special education teacher. Providing the scaffold supports and multiple entry points to students with disabilities and English language learners during the regular instructional period will ensure that all students have full access to the school's challenging and engaging curriculum.

- In most classes student work and discussions reflect high levels of thinking. Students are given choices within a range of topics to engage in further study and research. Each student must complete a series of performance based assessments (PBAs) in order to meet graduation requirements. One student's PBA was entitled, "Parabolic Paths: Using Mathematical Modeling to Investigate the Flight of a Basketball" and another student wrote about the impact of the, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa. According to one student, "every class forces you to make deep connections." Students appreciate the hands-on class work. However, in a few classes lessons did not provide students with the opportunity to think deeply about text, but instead asked to summarize readings or respond to questions which did not require analysis, resulting in some students not being challenged to do their best work.
- Strengthen the practice for providing feedback to teachers aligned to a research-based framework so that teachers receive targeted and specific feedback that fosters professional growth. (4.1)
  - School leaders hold teachers accountable for delivering rigorous instruction by conducting regular observations and providing teachers with feedback verbally and in writing. School leaders have established a tool to categorize all teachers on the continuum according to the Danielson domains which ranks all teachers either "effective" or "not effective." This tool is used to track feedback to teachers and to assess teacher performance over time. Data is used to inform professional development plans and to support individual teachers. Even though observations are normed by the school's leadership, feedback is loosely aligned to the Danielson framework. School leaders have not clearly identified the focus areas of the framework, resulting in feedback that is general and does not provide teachers with specific next steps. Commendations and recommendations are provided but they do not evidence a clear line of focus, especially for teachers of concern. This limited alignment results in a missed opportunity to develop a school-wide lens for looking at instruction.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Satellite Academy High School	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score			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