

# Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**August Martin High School**

**Q400**

**156010 Baisley Blvd.  
Queens  
NY 11434**

**Principal: Gillian Smith**

**Dates of review: May 20-21, 2013  
Lead Reviewer: Tamika Matheson**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

August Martin is a high school with 911 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 80% Black, 10% Hispanic, 1% White, 6% Asian students and 3% Native American, Pacific Islanders and multi-racial students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 18% 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 78.6%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school strategically organizes its resources and makes scheduling decisions to meet the academic needs of the students and positively impact their learning. (1.3)
  - The school has established relationships with various partners to advance academics and socio-emotional development. Partnerships include Publicolor, Community Mediation Services (CMS), Teen Relationship Abuse Prevention Program (Teen RAPP) and the United Black Men of Queens. This has resulted in increased opportunities for students to address current issues such as violence and self-image. Additionally, the schools in collaboration with CMS identify students who would benefit from afterschool extended learning time focused on English language arts and math. Students participate in mock Regents examinations and targeted skill development. Furthermore, 35 of 43 students who participated in CMS tutoring improved their grade point averages and earned course credit as evidenced by monthly reports and course pass rates.
  - The school is organized into five academies Aviation and Technology, Communication Arts, Culinary Arts, Legal Studies and Medical Technology. Students remain in their selected academy with a core group of teachers, for the duration of their academic high school career. The school uses the academy structure to allocate time for common planning. Thus, teacher teams meet weekly by academy and by department to case conference, analyze data, examine student work and share best practices. For example, the English language arts team uses Atlas Rubicon Learning Communities' protocol to analyze student data. Team members share findings, surfaced questions and suggest activities and modifications based on the data and needs of students, including English language learners and students with disabilities. English language arts teachers discussed creating lessons focused on inference, academic vocabulary and language development. Thus, improving instruction and increasing student engagement with challenging tasks.
- School structures are in place to promote a safe environment and inclusive culture that supports the academic and socio-emotional growth of all learners, including students with disabilities and English language learners. (1.4)
  - In collaboration with Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR) the school created a robust an advisory program focused on two goals, to increase student achievement and to improve school culture. ESR facilitates professional development for the advisory committee and advisors in order to support the development and implementation of the curricula, units and lesson plans on promotion requirements, graduation requirements and college and career readiness. Advisory meets four times per week and incorporates routines and rituals, one-to-one student conferences and guided work periods to foster self-directed learning and

time management skills. The Advisory Program and academy structure guarantee that every student is known well by at least one adult. Teacher led committees and teams in both structures coordinate academic, attendance and youth development efforts. For example, students in the Aviation and Technology Academy and Medical Academy explained how teachers are willing to provide extra help and discussed opportunities to intern and visit their academy related field. Additionally, student voice is welcomed and encouraged via the School Leadership Team (SLT). Students stated that they attended monthly SLT meetings where they put forth recommendations, such as to expand college level opportunities, and expressed concerns about the co-location of a new small school, resulting in a culture of respect where the points of view and recommendations of all constituents are welcomed and valued.

- Teachers engage in professional collaborations, and shared leadership roles to strengthen instructional practices and promote student learning. (4.2)
  - Teacher teams are organized within committees, academies and by department. Academy and department teams meet weekly to examine student work, analyze data, set goals, and engage in professional development sessions focused on integrating the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) within the curricula. Furthermore, teachers engage in inquiry work at least once per week using the School Reform Initiative's Cycle of Inquiry, including looking at student work protocols and observation protocols, such as, the Tuning protocol, Final Word protocol, Walk-Thru tool and peer observation template . Additionally, teachers participate in intervisitations and upload and share units and lesson plans using Google docs. In turn, school leaders provide feedback on units and lessons that are then sent electronically to teachers. Teacher instructional practice is strengthening as evidenced by a burgeoning collaborative learning culture, team meeting minutes and curriculum maps.
  - The school refined its distributive leadership structure to strengthen school governance, academics and youth development. The school's organizational structure includes committees such as the Curriculum Writing and Development Committee, Attendance Committee, School Development Committee (SDC), Accreditation Committee, and Safety Committee. Committees are comprised of teachers and are required to meet at least once per month. The committee structure promotes shared leadership, ownership and collaborative decision-making. Teacher voice is evident in key decisions, such as decisions around common assessments, grading policies, advisory topics, academies, and other school initiatives. Thereby, creating transparency and teacher ownership of school level decisions.

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

- Further develop Common Core aligned curricula and rigorous academic tasks across grades and content areas to promote higher order thinking skills and cognitively engage all learners. (1.1)
  - School leaders and faculty work closely to design curriculum maps aligned to key standards, and to create formative and summative assessments. However, most teachers inconsistently emphasize higher

order skills and rigorous habits to close the achievement gap, promote college and career readiness and address the needs of all students, including subgroups. For example, in one class students interpreted a quote and engaged in a limited discussion that was primarily teacher to student. In another class the teacher varied strategies to check for understanding and integrated technology while students investigated probability math problems. These inconsistencies limit students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, from being cognitively engaged in higher order thinking activities and achieving their full potential.

- Deepen instructional practices to create a range of opportunities for all students to access the curricula and produce meaningful work products. (1.2)
  - In a grade 9 math Integrated Co-Teaching class students were grouped heterogeneously in September and remain in the same groups while continuing to struggle to understand assigned tasks. Struggling students were given a copy of the previous day's lesson plan as a modification to their learning. Furthermore, the same strategies were continuously used and the same kinds of questions were repeatedly asked without opportunities to engage in question scaffolds to develop cognitive thinking skills to promote comprehension. Teachers have yet to consistently articulate a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best and inconsistently embed multiple entry points and higher order questioning within daily lesson plans, hindering students' ability to engage in high-levels of thinking and produce meaningful work products.
- Strengthen assessment and feedback practices to accurately inform decisions at school, team and classroom levels, thus meeting the needs of all students. (2.2 )
  - Teachers individually and in teams create formative and summative assessment, yet during classroom visits, it was noted that teachers inconsistently checked for understanding, thus missing opportunities to assess student needs, and make timely adjustments to inform instruction. Furthermore, when first assigning tasks or projects, teachers provide rubrics for their students. However, this practice varies from classroom to classroom. Student assessments and class assignments, displayed on bulletin boards and shared during the small group meeting, reflected uneven feedback to students regarding steps to take their work to the next level. Furthermore, the school has a grading policy and use Skedula, an online grading system to promote transparency of data among all stakeholders. However, parents and students rarely log onto Skedula to monitor student progress and retrieve feedback because most information and data is outdated or inaccurate. Hence, uneven high-quality and timely feedback impedes student achievement and interferes with teachers' ability to make instructional adjustments to meet the learning needs of all students, including subgroups.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

<b>School name: August Martin High School</b>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>		<b>X</b>					
<b>Instructional Core</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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?		<b>X</b>					
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?		<b>X</b>					
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?		<b>X</b>					
<b>School Culture</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			<b>X</b>				
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve them?		<b>X</b>					
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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?			<b>X</b>				
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?		<b>X</b>					
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?		<b>X</b>					
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?			<b>X</b>				
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?		<b>X</b>					
<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>