

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Theatre Arts Production Company School

**Middle-High School 225
2225 Webster Avenue
Bronx
NY 10457**

Principal: Ron Link

Dates of review: March 19-20, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Elaine Lindsey

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Theatre Arts Production Company School is a middle-high school with 524 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 27% Black, 70% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 19% special education students. Boys account for 31% of the students enrolled and girls account for 69%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 90.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school's curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and refined to cognitively engage students and promote college and career readiness. (1.1)
 - Units of study, curriculum maps, and tasks emphasize key standards and integrate Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE) as well as CCLS. Writing across disciplines requires the citing of specific textual evidence to support the analysis of primary and secondary sources. This was evidenced in a global studies unit culminating in a research paper requiring students to compare and contrast the believed points of views of individuals of their choice during the Crusades. Students used and analyzed three quotes that supported their point of view while citing evidence from a minimum of three sources in order to support their claims. In an eighth grade genetic engineering class students were asked to complete a research paper on whether or not the government should allow genetic engineering. Each student was required to take a position and cite evidence using outside sources to support their position. These types of tasks exemplify the school's curricula focused on selected key standards that promote college and career readiness.
 - Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined through structured teacher team meetings that meet regularly to plan and adjust curricula as well as academic tasks using student work and data. An analysis of student work indicated that the lowest third, including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs) struggled with organizing their thoughts. Refinement of an academic task aligned to a unit on ancient Greece included the modification of text, guided notes, graphic organizers and spider maps so that students experience curriculum that leads to increased engagement.
- School leaders make strategic organizational decisions utilizing resources to support the school's instructional goals with an emphasis on student learning needs. (1.3)
 - A new policy for programming students based on need and skill level has provided students with opportunities to earn credit. The principal strategically incorporated mixed grade level classes designed to address students' coursework needs. An 11th grade United States history class consists of 10th, 11th and 12th graders. All courses are mixed grades providing students with courses that support progress toward graduation requirements. Students report that being allowed to take classes based on need and not grade level is helping them to be more successful in class. As a result, there is customization in class assignments that impacts student growth as evident in the completion of second and third drafts to perfect assignments, reflecting increased persistence and greater focus.
 - The principal's purposeful hiring of dually certified teachers to properly serve the school's theme and student needs effectively supports the

school's instructional goals. A special education teacher is also certified in the arts and teaches a theatre arts class. Teams of teachers share the responsibility for meeting the needs of a small cohort of students. In addition, teachers are strategically placed in order to close the achievement gap, as evidenced by the re-assignment of a high school English teacher with college experience from teaching middle school technology to teaching high school English. As a result, the percentage of students passing high school English increased from 72% to 88.57% as evidenced by teacher scholarship reports.

- Staff and students appreciate the principal's focused efforts to create a safe, respectful and orderly environment that supports their needs and promotes academic success. (1.4)
 - The school's collaborative approach to a safe learning community where there is respect among staff and students involves an inclusive culture that meaningfully involves student voice in decision making to initiate, guide and lead school improvement efforts. Students are actively involved in student government where in addition to a president and vice president, a representative from each grade participates on the council to ensure student voice across all grades. Weekly student council meetings, student surveys and items from the student suggestion box provide continued opportunities for student voice and input in school decisions. Students generate their own petitions as well as a Student Bill Proposal process where the council submits written proposals on behalf of the student body outlining a proposed initiative. A proposal for academic after-school clubs and a school-wide dance were submitted, presented and passed. Students stated that their voice is heard. The principal listens to them and students encourage each other to do well in class, as well as present ideas and concerns to the council. Students also conduct town hall meetings, participate in student focus groups and initiate and sign petitions to address concerns around the building resulting in an increase in student satisfaction as demonstrated on the school survey.
 - The new Central Applicant Self-Service System (CASS) system allows staff and administrators to monitor and track students' daily attendance. Students were impressed with how quickly the staff notices when they are absent or not in class and a call is then made to their home to inform their parents. In addition to the CASS system, there's an attendance team consisting of the guidance counselors, deans, pupil personnel secretary and assistant principals that meets weekly to discuss student progress. Each student is known well by an adult in the building. Students are assigned an agent teacher who meets with them weekly to review academic and social-emotional progress. Agent teachers set goals and benchmarks with students, communicate with their teachers and dean in order to track progress using the online pupil path school system. Agent teachers discuss students at weekly grade team meetings where protocols are in place to review data and provide strategies for interventions. As a result, the number of superintendent suspensions has decreased from a total of 15 in 2011-2012 to three in 2012-2013.

- The school uses common assessments to analyze student performance, inform instructional adjustments, and determine student progress across grades and subject areas. (2.2)
 - Teachers create and use common assessments and rubrics aligned to CCLS in order to evaluate student progress towards goals, reflect on expectations and adapt instruction to align with the school's key standards and curricula across disciplines. English teachers use a common rubric to grade and provide feedback with suggestions for improvement on first and second drafts of research papers. Actionable feedback is given to students, providing opportunities for student mastery. Furthermore, a school-wide grading policy that supports the creation of assessments that are aligned to standards includes 40% of final course grades from exams, promoting an improved understanding of achievement by teachers and students.
 - Departments use common assessments that ask students to demonstrate knowledge and write extended answers that require high levels of thinking. Departmental midterms, finals and Acuity exams are used across grades and subjects to assess student progress towards mastery. Assessments are analyzed during team meetings to identify common areas of struggle to inform changes to curricula and tasks as evidenced by the team's minutes. A special education team meeting analyzed Acuity exam data and found that students' continued to struggle with reading comprehension. Suggestions for targeted support included modified text and tasks, small grouping and leveled reading in order to meet student learning needs.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs to ensure that teaching strategies offer multiple entry points to engage all learners. (1.2)
 - Across classrooms students respond to teacher questions, however, questioning is typically lower level and does not push students' critical thinking. In a social studies class students were asked, "Where is the power after the fall of Rome? By 100AD what's starting to happen with the king?" In a science class students are asked, "Do things sink just because they are heavy? If your density is higher, does it help you float or sink?" Students do not form their own higher order questions and lessons do not typically generate student query. Although students work in groups, lessons are not delivered with sufficient differentiation to support multiple entry points. In most classes students are given identical tasks to complete, thus hindering the school's ability to engage all learners in increasingly higher levels of work that is aligned to their instructional levels.
 - The lessons observed across classrooms were typically teacher centered resulting in little opportunity for student interaction. Interactions were primarily between teacher and student limiting opportunities for student inquiry, accountable talk and student to student discussions. For example, in a math class the teacher told the student to ask her classmate "Why did you divide by 10,000?" In an English class the teacher tells the class "Give me the reason for your choice of the

quotation.” Student responses were generally directed to the teacher with no follow-up or inquiry from fellow classmates, thus hindering discussions that reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

- Further develop frequent observation cycles using a research-based framework to provide teacher feedback and supports in order to promote instructional practices that lead to professional growth. (4.1)
 - While school leaders have conducted some cycles of observations, feedback to teachers is not yet fully connected to a research-based common teaching framework that articulates clear expectations for teacher practice. A review of formal and informal observation reports indicated that informal observations based on the Danielson Framework for Teaching have not been solidified to include written, actionable feedback that highlights teacher growth and areas for improvement resulting in the school’s inability to support teacher development in order to advance instructional practice.
 - A review of the school’s observation practices indicated that school leaders are developing a system to use teacher observation data to effectively design professional development. An informal observation report showed the beginning stages of a classroom visitation tool aligned to the Danielson Framework. Although each of the framework competencies outlined in the citywide instructional expectations (CIE) have been outlined, the tool does not allow the observer to effectively identify teacher strengths and areas for improvement, thus limiting school leaders’ ability to compile and analyze data to effectively design targeted professional development to impact teacher pedagogy.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Theatre Arts Production Company 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