

# Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**Accion Academy**

**Middle School 341**

**1825 PROSPECT AVENUE  
BRONX  
NY,10457**

**Principal: Nikole Booker**

**Dates of review: April 30, May 1, ,2013**

**Lead Reviewer: Myrna Rodriguez**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Accion Academy is a middle school with 192 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 33% Black, 66% Hispanic, and 1.0% Asian students. The student body includes 19% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 88.0%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is well developed**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school designs engaging and rigorous curricula aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) for a variety of learners, resulting in closing the achievement gap. (1.1)
  - Across grades and all subjects, including the Arts, the school analyzes student data to develop core curriculum tasks in all subject areas so that individual and groups of students are cognitively engaged as evidenced in their written and oral responses and group work. The school purposefully infuses ELL and SWD teaching strategies, such as emphasizing academic vocabulary in writing and speaking, using texts that engage diverse learners within all lessons, and expectations that all students will learn the same curricula. For example, in SWD classes teachers use scaffolding techniques such as leveled texts, differentiated tasks, and lengthened time on task, so that all students learn the same content. Teachers develop lessons using literacy, math, and Art standards adopting the Common core into tasks. The Art standards from the Blueprint for Arts, is used to ensure that student projects achieve high standards of rigor. The school has an interdisciplinary approach to learning, such as the science teachers use the literacy, art, and math standards, when developing curriculum, tasks, and assessments. The Art teacher uses the social studies and science standards and appropriate grade texts to complement a rigorous art curriculum. For example in the eighth grade students who are learning about the art produced during the Depression read texts from this period in their English language arts classes. As a result, students see the interconnection of all subjects, and all students, including ELLS, SWD and high achievers, produce high levels of work as evident in the high caliber of writing and work products that promote college and career readiness .
- The school community shares a deep understanding of how students learn best and align their practices using a common teaching framework to improve delivery of curricula so that all learners are engaged, resulting in high levels of student achievement. (1.2)
  - Teachers across classrooms leverage strategies such as inquiry, critical thinking, and questioning that promote high levels of thinking. For example, in classrooms teachers strategically use a variety of scaffolding techniques including modeling and effective use of technology Teachers use of the SMART boards engage students in real world situations, such as seeing actual footage of environmental catastrophes (Chernobyl, acid rain) or interviewing workers who grew up during the 1920's. Students use laptops and computers to share information with the teacher and submit writing drafts for peer review. In most classes, students were engaged using primary sources, such as diaries, letters, and pieces of art, and using iPads and SMART boards to see videos of historical events. Teachers use the workshop model very effectively as evidenced during the transition from the whole class instruction to group and individual segment. Students have choice of tasks within their levels, and are encouraged to engage in additional tasks thus stretching their targeted goals. For example, one group in the social studies class had to choose a work of art from several time periods in history, and relate how the artist words (using Depression Era and New Deal pictures) was able to convince students to think his way. Students could choose to write and use their art work from Art class or to write and act out their responses. All students had to write, but they also had a choice of tasks and forms of addressing the task. Thus, teachers' belief that

students learn best when engaged in stimulating and differentiated tasks includes embedding various forms of the arts. As a result, student engagement is high and levels of conversation and work products demonstrate high student achievement.

- Students across classrooms produce work and engage in one-on-one and group discussions that reflect high levels of content knowledge, critical thinking and problem solving. In classrooms, students are encouraged to question author's purpose using textual evidence and other sources. Teachers use appropriate pacing and time allocations to ensure that all students are engaged and able to show mastery of the learning objectives and standards chosen for the tasks. Teachers at various intervals during class time check student work by having students share in pairs and small groups and they monitor responses by using hand signals, writing pads, and entrance and exit slips. In some classes students challenge their teachers and peers respectfully when they do not agree with interpretations rendered by the teacher or peers. In one class some students disagreed with how they should proceed with a project and the teacher asked them to prepare a counter plan to be presented to their peers. As a result of these practices students have high levels of thinking, participation and ownership of their own learning and as a consequence students are producing meaningful work products and academically achieving as evidenced in Fountas and Pinnell reading assessments, Acuity, and teacher-team made assessments.
- Leadership makes strategic organizational decisions that support the short- and long-term goals and action plans that result in meaningful student discourse and work products and teacher ownership of students reaching their goals. (1.3)
  - This is a small school and the leadership and faculty make decisions on the use of resources that leverage student learning promoting positive student behaviors academically and socially in a highly organized and structured environment. The school analyzes student performance data outcomes to develop school, class and student goals and uses its resources strategically to support teachers, students and families to attain these goals. Some examples of these resources include various technologies including SMART boards, I-Pads, and netbooks. The leadership and staff use these resources, to engage and instruct students in all subjects, including the arts and physical education. Furthermore, as all staff has received professional development in the instructional use of these technologies, students and teachers are able to use this strategy in all classes and subject areas. Across classrooms teachers and students interchangeably use the SMART boards as an effective learning tool using it to show primary resource materials, videos of actual events, virtual science experiments, and student projects, and to time class activities. Rooms have been reconfigured to address the needs of students and staff and now include a conference room where students and teachers meet with the leadership every week. All classrooms have been set up to include learning centers for math, reading, and small group work, and are equipped with manipulatives, books, audio players and laptops. Students in all classes work on tasks that are tailored to their needs. For example, in a science class students could choose several ways of responding to a task, some with more scaffolding, including vocabulary review, internet research and higher level tasks for high achievers. The school effectively uses Network resources to develop capacity building by scheduling a leadership program for teachers within the school schedule. As a result, more than half the faculty, paraprofessionals, and school aides, are on a leadership track instilling a sense of ownership

and accountability in the school's success. The strategic use of economic and human resources is evident in the results as evidenced in meaningful student work products because students have choice and are given opportunities to reach targeted goals through diverse strategies and tasks which promote student achievement.

- The school has an action plan that purposefully limits teacher total student load by having ELL, SWD, guidance, and subject teachers, push- in to classes on a daily basis to ensure strategic academic and behavioral supports for all students. All teachers hold themselves accountable for the literacy gains of their students and welcome the expertise of the ELA teachers as they plan collaboratively interdisciplinary lessons. High achievers take specialized high school courses in seventh and eighth grades and have a variety of extension tasks in every subject. This ensures that high achievers as other subgroups receive targeted supports according to their diverse needs. As a consequence of the strategic use of resources students are attaining the school's instructional goals which are evident in the school's data on reading, writing, math and science common assessments, monthly student work analysis, and State assessments.
- The leadership, staff, and students maintain a culture of mutual trust that results in community of learners that progress toward the school's and individual goals that impact positively on students' academic success. (1.4)
  - The leadership and staff have a theory of action about safety, tone and climate that starts with a vision of what a scholar should be able to do upon graduation, and thus provide the supports to attain this mission by culture building, discipline and social emotional supports. Student voice involves decision making about social activities, class, group and individual projects, and the use of school resources. A student congress provides students with a decision making voice every month with the leadership. The school has a positive intervention plan that the student congress helps to organize. Every week the student congress meets with the leadership to help track student data on section sheets that provide information about how students are progressing socially and academically every day. Classes earn points towards rewards such as special trips, lunch with teachers and leadership and pizza parties. The leadership invests in a wide variety of curricular and co-curricular activities based on student interest surveys which include leadership themed advisories, chess, yoga, track, basketball, to name only a few. Most students attend more than one activity and also work on a community project. All students work on two community projects, Earth Day and collecting recyclables which are tied in to all subject areas. Because of this purposeful and organized development promoting positive behaviors through various activities student attendance has risen over the past year, student referrals to special education have decreased, and suspensions have decreased significantly.
  - Teachers and students have developed advisories that develop mutual trust and positive attitudes. The health and leadership classes are gender specific. This is purposely developed to ensure that that every student is well known by several adults who coordinate academic and social behavioral supports within a risk-free environment. Families are included in several activities, such as the community projects and social supports such as legal, social, and financial counseling. The leadership purposefully selects professional development to help teachers support student academic and social growth that are aligned to the various positive intervention action plans which result in the attainment of effective academic and personal behaviors.

- The school's assessment and grading practices provide leadership with data necessary to provide targeted feedback to students and teachers, resulting in suitable adjustments to practice and achievement of student academic goals. (2.2)
  - Teachers in teams determine important topics to assess using common formative assessments including ACUITY, team developed tests and are now including science assessments on a monthly basis. This data is used to give targeted feedback to teachers, and to inform planning. Teachers provide students with actionable feedback, such as setting goals and next steps to achieve goals. Because the school has a clear picture of what students know and what they need to learn students are grouped for special periods and are regrouped periodically to ensure that the needs of all students are met within small groupings, as well as challenging students to meet higher English, math and science goals. Students are actively involved in collecting information from formative assessments and work with the teacher to provide input for their own and peers next steps. Students consistently self- and peer-assess using rubrics and are aware of their next learning steps. For example, students were able to articulate how they could improve a written piece using academic vocabulary indicating that they needed to refer more to the text, and use more details to convey their understanding of the content and concepts. Students stated that the rubrics and meaningful feedback from peers and teachers in oral and written form helped them to produce improved revised work products. One student showed me her draft using primary materials and a book from the New Deal, and explained how all writing pieces must include a self-reflection component and peer review before the teacher provides written feedback. Across classrooms students can be seen working on drafts, referring to texts and documents, making revisions, and consulting with peers. As a result of the high expectations held by the school about writing across the curricula and the importance of feedback, students are improving academically.
  - Across classrooms teachers monitor student understanding of content and concepts by using various techniques such as stop and jot prompts, pair share, group conferencing, quick writes and exit slips. In some classes teachers have stopped group work, to ensure that all students understand what needs to be done, by asking targeted questions to randomly picked students. Effective adjustments to teaching such as restating a question or asking other students to help are consistent practices across classrooms. As a result of these on-going checks for understanding teachers effectively and strategically revise their lessons, questioning or materials during class time to ensure that students are learning, and as a consequence the levels of student discourse, writing and work products demonstrate high levels of achievement.

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

- Further evaluate ways expectations are developed, shared among constituents, and how school level decisions are adjusted, to increase the coherence of policies and practices with attention to what teachers need to learn to support student mastery of CCLS. (5.1)
  - The school has high academic and social expectations for students and adults. Teacher absenteeism is low compared to the City average, but student attendance while having a three-point increase last year, has not improved appreciatively this year. The real effects of how attendance impacts student learning is not completely communicated to all constituents, the accountability being held by the attendance team. Although the school has an attendance action plan, it is not developed to the extent where everyone including the, leadership, staff, students and families are held accountable for the results of

low student attendance rates. The link between student academic progress, the CCLS, and future college and career readiness outcomes is not fully developed in the school's action plans, and as a result students and families are not aware that attendance affects academic progress.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Leadership Institute	UD	D	P	WD			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>				<b>X</b>			
<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?				<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>	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?				<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>	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?				<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>