

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Academy for Personal Leadership and Excellence

**Middle School 363
120 East 184th Street
Bronx
NY 10468**

Principal: Angelo Ledda

Dates of review: January 28 - 29, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Victoria Armas

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Academy for Personal Leadership and Excellence is a middle school with 294 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 15% Black, 82% Hispanic, 1% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 41% English language learners and 22% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 92.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has designed a Common Core aligned curriculum that includes purposefully selected key standards with appropriate strategies to promote cognitive engagement in a diversity of learners. (1.1)
 - A committee of teachers worked during the summer to plan curriculum and align maps to Common Core learning standards (CCLS) and Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE), so that they include articulated essential questions, use of informational text, and citing evidence to support ideas in writing and during discussions in English language arts (ELA). The instructional shifts now incorporated into math curriculum use exemplar material provided by the network team. Regents' courses in Living Environment and Integrated Algebra that conclude in a Regents' exam are offered to eighth graders thus giving students the opportunity to earn high school credit. Additionally, grade 7 students who are good candidates for Regents courses in eighth grade are provided opportunities to enroll in pre-Regents classes to prepare them for the rigors of this coursework. Consequently, the school's curriculum provides for the preparation of students to be college and career ready.
 - Teams of teachers discuss student work and outcomes on a regular basis as well as the delivery of curriculum, adjusting tasks, sequencing, and strategies to accommodate student needs. Modifications to curriculum for English language learners (ELLs) and Students with Disabilities (SWDs) are defined within curriculum maps and include modeling, vocabulary development strategies, the use of graphic organizers, glossaries, sentence starters, pre-review of notes for lessons, paired activities, cloze exercises, and journals. Unit maps are detailed with indications for resources and supports so that teachers are able to elaborate lesson plans that address standards and cognitively engage students.
- The school leader makes effective organizational decisions aligning resources to curriculum, instruction, and school goals, to support students' learning needs. (1.3)
 - The principal's analysis of the needs of the community leads to decisions regarding partnerships and programs to support progress toward school goals and to address the needs of the school, now in its third year of existence, as it phases in the eighth grade. Evidence of appropriate hiring of staff this year was noted, and included art, music, and technology teachers, two social workers, a math coach, an ELA coach, an assistant principal with ELL expertise to address the needs of this significant group, as well as the needed content area teachers. In addition, community based organizations (CBOs) include Inwood Prime Leaders as an after school program that offers sports programs, Wediko that supports the school's Positive Behavioral and Intervention Supports (PBIS) program, and Enact, an after school program that provides teaching artists and runs student support groups. In addition, two math clubs and two literacy programs are available for struggling students to support improved outcomes in these areas. The allocation of resources

to this end has improved school tone and has impacted the school data relative to the Online Occurrence Reporting System (OORS), by evidencing a decrease of incidences by 10% from last year for the same period.

- Teacher team meetings scheduled each week for both grade levels and content areas enable teams of teachers to review student outcomes, to identify areas of need, group youngsters accordingly, and develop classroom-based station activities twice weekly to re-teach and enrich instruction in math and ELA. Students stated that they “build confidence through station work”. The school’s parent volunteer policy is supportive of the school’s everyday needs with their presence, especially in the planning of special activities for students and families. Students, who are programmed by class and engage in lessons with peers, have the opportunity to get to know each other well and twice-daily homerooms are utilized to provide information as well as support. As a result, the community is committed to the success of students and improved achievement is the consistent focus for all.
- The use of common assessments and rubrics across grades and subject areas guides instructional decisions, which leads to the improved alignment of teaching practice to student needs. (2.2)
 - Teachers create common CCLS aligned assessments and rubrics that allow students to clearly understand their progress toward meeting goals. Students also self-assess themselves and peers using rubrics in order to identify strengths and areas in need of improvement as reflected by portfolios of work. The school’s consistent grading policy, used by all teachers is posted in many classrooms, thus providing a clear understanding of how grades are calculated and earned. Data binders are maintained by teachers to track student progress and include pre- and post-assessments, protocol sheets from teacher team analysis of student work, student profile sheets with accommodations, lesson exit slips, i-Ready measures of comprehension, Acuity predictive assessment data, NYS ELA and math results, Individualized Education Plan (IEP) goals, New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) data, and conference notes. An online system called Engrade replaces teachers’ grade books and is made accessible to students and families enabling them to view grades and progress along with links to assignments, and provides parents the capability to message a teacher with a question or concern. This availability of assessment information provides clear, actionable feedback moving towards improvements in instruction and learning.
 - Teachers analyze results from common CCLS aligned tasks in ELA and math to assess student needs, adjust instruction, and design appropriate supports for groups. Specifically, templates designed by the school capture skill levels for relevant groups of students from common assessments and track progress through pre- and post-testing. Evidence of progress identified by the ELA coach showed improvement in student outcomes through station teaching. In the skill of inferencing, autism spectrum disorders (ASD) Nest program students improved to meet standards by 26% and ELL students improved skills to meet standards in providing text relevant details by 10%. This information is used to further align curriculum and implement continuous adjustments including

changes to sequencing of tasks, as well as approaches and strategies to support needs, resulting in improvements to student understanding of concepts.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen pedagogical practices to consistently provide differentiated opportunities for all students to engage in tasks that promote high levels of student thinking and work products. (1.2)
 - A number of classrooms observed were mostly teacher directed, with lessons delivered to the whole group and little evidence of differentiation, minimizing multiple entry points to support diverse learner needs. Teachers stated that strategies for differentiation are an area that could be improved upon in their practice, although strategies to support sub-groups are articulated in curriculum maps. Essential questions are included in lesson plans but higher order questioning during lessons was limited to a few classrooms observed. Higher-level achievers are often given more activities to complete outside of class as extensions to their learning in addition to the tasks all students complete during the lesson. These practices result in missed opportunities to suitably differentiate instruction for diverse learners to advance students' critical thinking in meaningful ways.
 - Lessons include content that is relevant to students' lives and is engaging, but higher-level learning demands across classrooms are inconsistent. One ELA classroom took part in a "walk the line" activity where students were asked to express an opinion on the use of social networking sites by agreeing or disagreeing along a line on the floor of the classroom. Students were then were instructed to read the pros and cons of social networking and produce writing that reflected taking a position and developing an argument. In another ELA classroom students were summarizing paragraphs from a text to identify main idea. Most interactions across classrooms included teacher-to-student, and student- to-teacher responses, with limited opportunities for student-to-student discussion. These uneven opportunities in promoting high levels of thinking and participation result in varying levels of student engagement.
- Increase teacher effectiveness by including feedback that is aligned to targeted supports to promote professional growth. (4.1)
 - School leaders conduct six to ten classroom observations per week using an online system called Observe4Success that is aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Accordingly, this system provides for transparency as teachers are able to view notes and feedback on each observation via the online system. Furthermore, school leaders articulate teacher strengths and areas in need of improvement, with follow-up conversations after classroom observations to discuss next steps. Additionally, teachers have received some professional development on the Danielson competencies and they continue to participate in ongoing workshops. However, the use of student data was not evident as a frame of reference in individual observation reports relative to the effectiveness of teaching strategies. This minimizes a full understanding of teaching

practices on students' performance and the design of relevant professional development.

- The use of teacher observation data to design and facilitate professional development in order to improve teacher practice is inconsistent. As a result of trends identified in observation data to support teacher development, modeling by coaches has been implemented in some classrooms, there has been voluntary intervisitations, and videotaping of exemplary ELA practices are shared during teacher team meetings, particularly regarding differentiation. However, clearly articulated, time bound expectations and specific targeted supports aligned to individual teacher's feedback are limited, hindering teacher development and improved instructional practice.
- Expand on teachers' ability to engage in collaborative inquiry in order to improve pedagogy and student learning. (4.2)
 - Most teachers attend grade level and content area meetings conducted once a week to examine CCLS aligned curricula and adjust instruction. Teachers also have opportunities to meet weekly across grades and subjects areas including art, physical education, music, and technology to integrate content. Teachers articulated that teacher team meetings provide them with an opportunity to support each other through the sharing of strategies and scaffolds and the identification of trends, although focused inquiry teamwork is not yet an area of strength in the school. Teacher teams' lack of using an inquiry approach to understand and address students' needs hinders the school's ability to strategically improve instruction by targeting student needs, particularly for relevant sub-groups.
 - In the late Fall, during teacher team meetings a new protocol was implemented to analyze student outcomes on CCLS tasks by means of school-designed templates. This allowed for student outcomes to be organized into groups by levels of achievement to identify areas of need. Station work for flexible groups was developed and provided to students twice weekly in ELA and math classes, which has begun to impact student progress, however this practice is not yet expanded to all content areas. As a result of the limited practice of analyzing student work and the adjustment of instruction across all teacher teams, improved pedagogy and movement to attaining student goals is hampered.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Academy for Personal Leadership and Excellence	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