

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Alfred E. Smith Career and Technical Education School

High School X600

**333 151 Street
Bronx
NY 10451**

Principal: Evan Schwartz

Dates of review: February 11-12, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Elaine Lindsey

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Alfred E. Smith Career and Technical Education High School is a high school with 738 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 36% Black, 62% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 22% special education students. Boys account for 93% of the students enrolled and girls account for 7%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 74%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school's efforts to establish a safe and nurturing environment results in students' personal and academic growth. (1.4)
 - The school offers a safe learning community where there is respect among staff and students. This year administration focused on school tone. Structures have been implemented that include electronic referral systems and instant follow up on referrals, better collaboration between deans, security and teachers, in addition to a more efficient and courteous scanning procedure. The school has also provided students with three shirts to support the school wide uniform policy. Students stated that the overall tone of the school has improved. The implementation and improvements to the school's tone has created a sense of pride and ownership in the community.
 - Each student is known well by an adult in the building. There are three guidance counselors which includes a senior counselor who meets with students regularly. Counselor responsibilities have been redistributed with a focus on college and career readiness. This year seniors have been able to meet with a counselor specifically designated to work with seniors on the college application process, enabling them to meet time sensitive deadlines. To further support students' socio emotional well-being advisory classes have been established for 9th and 10th grades. In addition, a team headed by the assistant principal meets regularly to monitor attendance resulting in an improved attendance rate of 83.5%, an increase of 9.5% since the end of last year.
- Teachers use assessments to analyze student performance in order to inform instructional decisions as well as advise students of next steps. (2.2)
 - Teachers are in the beginning stages of analyzing student work in order to make adjustments. Teachers use rubrics to reflect expectations and address standards although they are not standardized across departments. Some feedback is provided to students based on rubrics; however this is not a consistent practice. Individual teachers have created grading policies according to their subject area. Supports for creating well aligned assessments to standards and their implementation is being provided through professional development resulting in an improved understanding of student achievement.
 - Teachers conduct checks for understanding including questioning and the use of exit slips although this practice is developing across content areas. Students self assess learning in a limited number of classrooms.

In one classroom students were developing and presenting a lesson on the free enterprise system, which was evaluated by the class using a rubric. The network team currently supports teachers through professional development to utilize formative assessments in order to adjust lessons to meet the needs of diverse learners and provide meaningful feedback to students.

- School leaders communicate high expectations to staff and students and are developing systems to support and ensure everyone achieves their best. (3.4)
 - The principal has created an environment where high expectations are spoken across grades and subjects. Teachers are in the process of aligning curriculum and performance tasks, maps and unit plans to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). Teacher teams meet regularly for common planning. Unit plans are submitted to assistant principals for approval, and teachers are provided feedback using a common teacher unit plan rubric aligned to CCLS that measures rigor and engagement of all learners. In addition, administrators conduct frequent observations and provide actionable feedback using the Danielson Framework promoting accountability for improved teacher practice.
 - School leaders and staff communicate expectations that are connected to a path for college and career readiness. Parents are invited to Bring Your Parent to School day in addition to workshops concerning the college selection and financial aid process. Ongoing phone messaging, flyers and letters are forwarded to homes to apprise parents of upcoming deadlines and events. Feedback to inform parents regarding their student's progress towards meeting the school's expectations is communicated through regular phone calls and report card mailings resulting in a better understanding of the requirements toward college and career readiness.

What the school needs to improve

- Further develop curriculum to include rigorous CCLS aligned units and performance tasks that consistently challenge and cognitively engage all learners. (1.1)
 - The school is beginning to implement CCLS aligned units and performance tasks. The math department has completed two units and 10th & 11th grade teachers have completed one unit in English language arts (ELA). Across classrooms questions do not engage students in query or higher order thinking, and tasks assigned do not typically emphasize rigorous practice. A lesson plan was not evident in a social studies English as a second language (ESL) class and students were answering multiple choice questions from the text book. In an ELA class the do now assignment consisted of the students jotting down examples

of various ways we use language depending on the audience, setting and situation and asking if there are any thoughts on dialect. Students were told that they did not have to use complete sentences as phrases would be fine. Upon giving the definition for dialect the teacher recited the poem "Mother to Son". After the recitation students were asked to give their first thoughts. Lessons and assignments across grades limit the school's ability to cognitively engage students at all levels in higher order skills through rigorous CCLS aligned tasks.

- Curriculum maps are designed to provide guidance for teachers to plan learning activities that offer multiple access points and provide opportunities for all learners to engage in learning through hands on activities, visuals and pertinent real world application. However, associated tasks and questions are often designed for lower level thinking resulting in planning that fails to emphasize rigorous habits and scaffolds to cognitively engage a range of learners. End of unit enrichment activities outlined in a bio-chemistry unit map covering "The Cardiovascular System" included providing examples of disorders caused by abnormalities of each of the formed elements, explaining the mechanism of each disorder; discussion of diagnostic blood tests including the ABO and Rh blood groups. A United States history unit map outlines that students will read and understand the role of 1-2 additional muckrakers and create a resume or biography which will reflect their understanding of the text and concepts. These tasks reflect low challenge, thus stifling the school's ability to cognitively engage all learners in problem solving and higher order thinking that results in extended response and work products that integrate CCLS.
- Ensure that lessons and tasks consistently require all learners to think critically through instruction that provides multiple entry points and results in meaningful work products. (1.2)
 - Lessons observed across classrooms were typically teacher centered. Questions were generally lower level recall type primarily between teacher and student, which limits opportunities for student inquiry, accountable talk and student to student discussions. In a math class students were working on how to use a box and whisker plot which involved finding the mean, median and range. Questions presented by the teacher were: Why do we need to write the numbers in order? What do you do when you find the median? How do you find the second median? Why do we need a box and whisker? Student responses were always directed to the teacher with no follow-up or inquiry from fellow classmates. Strategies typically do not provide multiple entry points into the curricula thus limiting the schools ability to engage and challenge all learners.

- While there is some student writing across classrooms student writing is typically paragraphs, journal entries, PowerPoint presentations or essays. Writing assignments rarely require independent research, use of outside resources or analyzing information. Students stated that although they've done some research most does not require citing from outside resources and information is often obtained from textbooks. Across classrooms student work products and discussions reflect a lack of student thinking and participation. All learners are not challenged to think or write at high levels causing limited self-guided exploration and engagement in meaningful work products thus hindering the school's ability to adequately prepare students for college.
- Strengthen organizational decisions to ensure that structures are in place to support the school's instructional goals that will lead to improved student outcomes. (1.3)
 - Teacher teams are scheduled to meet regularly, but have not yet developed structures for examining tasks that produce high quality student work products. A meeting for the English department revealed that the team was meeting for the first time to look at student work. Protocols had not been established and were being put in place at this meeting. A grade team meeting revealed that the focus for the first semester was primarily professional development concentrating on the Danielson Framework for Teaching and introducing the Common Core. Infrequent meetings to discuss and examine student work have hampered the school's ability to improve instruction that will engage all learners in challenging academic tasks.
 - Although school leaders have hired additional teachers and are making adjustments to teachers' schedules, an abundance of English teachers continues to leave a gap in social studies and science departments. English classes are often taught by more than one teacher which hinders the school's ability to offer more social studies and science courses, thus limiting staff teaching assignments and student programming options for more rigorous and engaging courses.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Alfred E. Smith Career and Technical Education High 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