

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

**Science Skills Center High School for Science,
Technology and the Creative Arts**

13K419

**49 Flatbush Avenue Extension
Brooklyn
NY 11201**

Principal: Dahlia McGregor

Dates of review: Oct 28 - 29, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Karen Watts

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Science Skills Center High School for Science, Technology and the Creative Arts is a high school with 537 students from 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 72% Black, 17% Hispanic, 2% White, and 7% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 80.4%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school uses curricula that are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and reflect planning to engage a diversity of learners that improves student learning and promotes college and career readiness. (1.1)
 - The principal offers core high school curricula that are aligned to the Common Core standards as well as in the Arts, Medicine and Engineering and Robotics for which the school uses Project Lead the Way curricula. The school offers work-based programs through Architecture and Construction Engineering (ACE) partnership and Advanced Placement Courses in Biology, Environmental Science, English Language and Composition, English Literature and Composition, Computer Science A, Calculus AB, US History, Psychology and Music Theory. The school also extends its coursework to include the Gateway Honors Pre-College Education (a Bridge to Medicine Program), College Now courses at New York City College of Technology, as well as a college level Journalism and a four year Pre-Engineering program with courses in Introduction to Engineering Design (IED), Principles of Engineering Design (POE), Digital Electronics and Civil Engineering and Architecture (CEA). Online classes are offered through New York City iLearn program and a partnership with Working in Support of Education (WISE) for its Financial Literacy Certification Program provides additional access to a variety of curricula. The principal works with the teachers to align curriculum and unit, weekly and daily lesson plans to the Common Core standards and to ensure that each lesson includes daily analytic close reading of complex texts and argumentative writing. Teachers also frequently look at students' work products and use the results to make adjustments to the curriculum as needed. Furthermore, teachers access the curricular resources on EngageNY to inform their curricular development throughout the year. These efforts are producing academic tasks that provide better opportunities to engage all students in developing their college and career readiness skills.
- Academic and guidance structures and supports adequately address youth development needs, build an inclusive culture to improve student learning and social-emotional growth. (1.4)
 - The principal employs two guidance counselors, one to work with 9th and 10th graders and the other with 11th and 12th graders. They both use a graduation work-up sheet so that they can look at each student's transcript with the student and parent to provide academic counseling especially for students who fail two or more courses in a given marking period while asking each student the question, "What will you do differently?" Guidance counselors also continuously monitor student attendance records and conduct outreach to the parents, as necessary. The principal provides monthly attendance trips for perfect attendance to places, such as the Hall of Science or to the movies. She also provides college and career counseling using the activities and resources of the College Board website, such

as “How do you choose a major?” on College Board's Big Future website and career zone website. The guidance counselors provide mandated counseling and assist seniors with their college applications to keep them focused on a college path and on schedule. They also arrange college trips for seniors in the fall and juniors in the spring while an annual College Fair is conducted at the school. The principal also provides professional development for teachers on how to improve their

relationships with the students and to ensure that all staff members are unified in their approach regarding discipline, how to build strong relationship and outreach with parents and how teachers should work with each other as professionals. The principal celebrates student performance with an academic celebration at the end of each marking period with breakfast and Principal Certificates for achievement. Students also participate in Dance and Music performances and a Pep Rally for all new 9th graders. All staff members adopt at least three freshmen to support their transition to high school. Yearly, students also participate in Dancing with the Stars, celebration for students on the Honor Roll and 25 students are inducted into the National Honor Society (NHS). Students also participate in concerts and an annual Dance performance at Long Island University (LIU) as a display of pride in their school. The principal celebrates teachers with breakfast and both students and teachers with an Award Ceremony at St. Francis College. These structures, supports, and activities result in an inclusive learning environment that promotes the students' academic and social growth as evident in an increase in closing the achievement gap on the most recent Progress Report.

- Assessment practices provide feedback to both teachers and students so that teachers can adjust instruction to better meet students' needs and improve student achievement. (2.2)
 - The school has an assessment calendar listing all diagnostic and designated monthly, midterm, final and benchmark assessments aligned to the standards so that teachers, parents and students are aware of assessment expectations. Teachers use rubrics that are aligned to the Common Core standards to grade student assessments and use the results to provide feedback to students on their progress toward standards. Teacher teams use this information to determine areas of weakness in the curriculum that have to be adjusted. Teachers then revise plans to deliver instruction that addresses identified needs, such as supporting high quality discussions among students by assigning specific roles to students and by having students formulate higher order thinking questions in advance. The school's grading policy is aligned to the curriculum and instructional expectations of each department so that teachers can include department-wide, assessment components such as labs in science or research papers in English language arts (ELA). This provides a more accurate picture of student progress in each subject and what needs to be adjusted for further learning. These assessment practices allow for adjustments in teaching and curriculum while providing necessary feedback to students that match learning needs resulting in gains in student progress.

- School leaders provide feedback to teachers about strengths, challenges and next steps from frequent observations and design professional development to address identified needs resulting in improvements in teacher practice. (4.1)
 - The principal began the school year by conducting a Google document survey with teachers who selected four competencies of the Danielson Framework for Teaching in which they needed improvement. The principal then used this information to develop a yearlong professional development plan. Teachers then discussed goals with the principal at their Initial Planning Conferences (IPCs) as they discussed their survey responses and looked at student outcome data from the previous school year. Teachers chose one personal goal and two professional goal and chose their option for observations. The principal then discussed her expectations that teachers will move to effective or highly effective practice as per the Danielson Framework for Teaching with all teachers and created an observation plan. The principal then began observing struggling and new teachers first to support their improvements and after each observation the principal held post- observation reflections to provide immediate feedback to the teacher such as using formative assessments throughout the lesson to determine students' learning needs to address them. Her assistant principals also began conducting observations of the other teachers with each cycle of classroom observation, feedback and professional development/support occurring monthly. This practice is resulting in improvements in instructional practice as teachers attend professional development adjusted to ongoing needs and implement feedback as noted in subsequent observation reports.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve instructional practices to include the implementation of the Common Core instructional shifts and multiple entry points into rigorous academic tasks that build students' higher order thinking skills and academic success. (1.2)
 - The principal is focusing on questioning, component 3b of the Danielson Framework for Teaching, and has provided professional development for teachers to hone their skills in asking open-ended higher order questions and to teach students how to ask questions of each other. She is working with staff to focus on productive struggle to allow English language Learners and students with disabilities to interact with the high school level curriculum and she also provides for their flexible inclusion in arts and foreign language classes with their general education peers. The teachers as well as the principal believe that students learn best when their learning needs are addressed. These needs are identified through assessments, activities and conversations. There is a social initiative at the school where all students in a particular grade are reading the same book. This has increased the number of students reading daily with one book in the fall and another in the spring. During the first 10 minutes in each class, students stop and read and write entries in their

journals. However, rigorous academic tasks that consistently embed the instructional shifts and provide multiple entry points are only now being introduced, thereby limiting the students' engagement in the lessons and high levels of students' thinking and participation in classroom discussions and in their written work products.

- Develop systems to create a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations for staff members and students and provides the necessary supports to ensure a clear pathway to college and careers. (3.4)
 - The principal shares her expectations in student, parent and staff handbooks and clearly communicates to teachers that if students have individual attendance rates of 80% or better than their scholarship rates should be at least 80%. The principal meets with teachers to review their scholarship reports and teachers must discuss what actions they have taken to support any student who failed a marking period. The school shares students' academic progress and performance through online Pupil Path system and is very clear about expectations with all constituencies at the school which includes both students and their parents. There is a back to school night with teachers so that parents can become aware of the curriculum in each course and the types of assignments students will experience in each class. However, the school has not yet developed a culture of learning at the school that continuously reinforces and connects to college and career pathways and fuels teachers and students' action to ensure success for students at the next level.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Science Skills Center High School for Science, Technology and the Creative Arts	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 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards?			X				
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the 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 supports 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 those expectations?		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 student 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 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection?			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