



**Department of
Education**

Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Quality Review
Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning
2013-2014**

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Talented And Gifted Young Scholars

Elementary/Middle School 012

**240 East 109th Street,
Manhattan,
NY 10029**

Principal: Janette Cesar

Dates of review: February 10-11, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Heidi Pierovich

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Talented And Gifted Young Scholars is an elementary/middle school with 560 students from grade K through grade 8. The school population comprises 34% Black, 23% Hispanic, 11% White, and 29 % Asian students, 2% American Indian or Alaskan Native. The student body includes 0% English language learners and 3% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 96.2%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school ensures that curricula, across grades and content areas, integrate Common Core Learning Standards thus providing all students with access to rigorous tasks that promote college and career readiness. (1.1)
 - The school has been a Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) lab site for three years, thus ensuring that site-created curricula are aligned to CCLS and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. The school has adopted CCLS aligned core curricula for all grades and has adapted the curricula for their gifted and talented student population, as evidenced by curriculum maps and performance tasks. Additionally, the school has supplemented these materials with instructional materials from Junior Great Books for all grades so that all core curriculum maps include a form of shared inquiry, or text-based Socratic Method. Shared inquiry, rooted in the instructional shifts, starts with a shared reading, then subsequent interaction of re-reading, student question development, and discussion, whereby students respond to a main question and find text-based answers in preparation for a whole group discussion which uses Accountable talk norms, thus demonstrating the instructional shifts as students cite text-based responses to discussions. Third, sixth, and eighth grade math curriculum maps demonstrate coherent plans for students to use text-based responses in problem-solving as well as require fluency, application in real world problems, and deep conceptual understanding. For example, third, sixth, and eighth grade math lesson plans show planning regarding the lowest 1/3 of students, based on student performance and data, and lesson refining is evidenced by flexible tiered groups where students are encouraged to get to the next steps. Furthermore, across grades and throughout the core subjects, curriculum maps, tasks, and lessons delineate instructional activities that connect to specific areas of focus described such as: understanding scientific practices, both non-fiction and fiction text-based discussions, close reading of text, and writers' workshop, that demonstrate planning and refinement for the lowest third student population. Assignments across grades expand vocabulary, increase academic language in writing, as well as writing techniques of audience, thesis, and structure. As a result of this coherent alignment to CCLS and instructional shifts across grades and subjects, all students have access to the curricula and tasks that prepares them for college and career.
- Teachers are strategic in demonstrating effective instructional practices informed by a common set of beliefs about how students learn best that yield high quality student work. (1.2)
 - Teacher discussions at CCLS team, grade and subject team levels demonstrate the coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best by working both individually and in groups, conducting text-based discussions, and reflecting on their learning. For example, during writer's workshop in a fifth grade class, students, in heterogeneous groups, created an opinion text-based speech on why slavery should be abolished. Within the groups, students were assigned roles based on learning styles and ability, each with leveled, nonfiction readings of varied text complexity including the Declaration of Independence, "Ain't I a Woman" by Sojourner Truth, Patrick Henry's speech "Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death", and various texts on Harriet Tubman. After writing individually, the groups connected their pieces into a cohesive speech, presented it to the class, who then graded their peers using a rubric. In a sixth grade math class, students worked in

heterogeneous groups to determine the volume and surface area of assigned cylinders. The groups were asked to create and solve word problems to demonstrate their understanding of volume and surface area, and present this on chart paper to the class. The class not only graded their peers using a student-created rubric, but also asked clarifying questions, provided feedback, commentary, and next steps to improve their presentation materials, mathematical accuracy, and speech. Furthermore, in a second grade writing workshop, students worked on a how to paraphrase nonfiction texts. Afterward, students individually completed a formative assessment in the form of a reflective response to demonstrate understanding and importance of paraphrasing. In a seventh grade science class, in heterogeneous groups, students to decide on an energy option to argue for, using support from various leveled texts provided, to create a presentation. Thus, across the vast majority of classes observed, teaching practices are strategically aligned to the CCLS and instructional shifts, demonstrating a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best as informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching. As a result, student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking, participation, and ownership.

- A positive tone permeates the school, cultivating a safe and orderly learning environment that results in student academic and personal success. (1.4)
 - The school has a safe and welcoming tone that is evident in the students' behavior and mutual respect toward each other and the adults in this multicultural school. The theory of action is a student-focused school in which high expectations are supported and rewarded while misbehavior has transparent steps for improvement. Students shared that each grade level and class uses a similar version of culture building and discipline, whereby if a student does not follow the class rules then s/he would get a red card that is a phone call home. One student explained that the cards in his grade have "green is good, yellow is slow down, and red is stop." Another student elaborated, "Plus there is also a [software] system of rewards called the 'ClassDojo;' so if you use accountable talk then the teacher gives three stars, but if your card is on yellow you lose a star, or if on red you lose 2 stars." Teachers post daily updates for parents and students to view. One parent said she not only has the Skedula app on her phone to check on her daughter's academics, but also the ClassDojo to keep up on her daily activities. Additionally, the parents support student learning through fund raising to purchase textbooks and a part-time Spanish teacher in the lower grades, and to support after school enrichment clubs. The parents find the school uniform comforting and helping with safety, especially on a shared campus. Students spoke of how the administration and teachers respect their ideas and opinions. This is evident inside and outside the classroom. In the classroom students participate in class discussions and shared inquiry process as well as are often part of the rubric creation process. This is evident outside the classroom through student advisories where students voice their own topics to be addressed. Furthermore, the school has partnered with Project Boost, to reward students who are close to the next level of higher achievement, providing academic and personal support for progress toward the school's goals. Each student is known well by at least one adult who helps to personalize supports and coordinate social-emotional learning. For example, teachers work closely with their students to develop individual learning and behavior goals. These goals are reviewed periodically and students reflect upon their own progress, selecting new goals when the others have been achieved. Additionally, a counselor and community worker meet with students individually and in town hall meetings to provide guidance/advisement through social-emotional supports regarding setting goals, knowing one-self, and bullying. The counselor has a set schedule to meet with both mandated students as well as open office hours for all students to self-select

meetings for support, guidance, and high school and college counseling. A student said, "We have two counselors and can meet with them anytime, and as a middle school student we can meet with [a certain counselor] for high school. Also, every Friday middle school has advisory class where we create a newsletter about self and share out with peers. There is always a certain topic such as bullying, going to high school, and about ourselves, but we can bring up any subject we want and can give vent to any idea or feeling." Students' spoke highly of the structure for support, stating that whenever needed it is easy to speak to a favorite teacher, or the counselor or community worker. Students further demonstrate their positive attitude toward their school through their attendance, which is at 96.9% year to date. As a result, the culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes fully support the academic and personal growth of students.

- Administrators and teachers purposefully use common assessment data, checks for understanding, and actionable feedback to increase students' awareness of their next learning steps. (2.2)
 - Teachers design rubrics plus benchmark and common assessments aligned to the curriculum and school-wide goals throughout the content areas. There is evidence that teachers analyze common assessment results to adjust curricula, and inform student work analysis by teacher teams. For example, English teachers review the interim assessments to determine areas for re-teaching students to plan their answers for an essay prompt, and determined a need to use a graphic organizer, use close-reading techniques on the prompt, and to review the rubric so students will know how they are graded. Teachers also provide students with actionable feedback on their work, which was evident on bulletin boards and in portfolios. Even when a student received 4 out of 4 in a class assignment, next steps are provided. For example, in a math assignment, the teacher gave specific feedback to the student that includes writing more detailed explanations for word problems. Similarly, in an English essay the teacher gave feedback to the student about weaving more sensory details into their writing. To further develop formative assessment practices, teacher teams have created rubrics aligned to the CCLS, checklists, and reflection sheets to assess student progress and monitor students' self-evaluation to adjust teaching and learning during the lesson. Students stated that they "use rubrics in every class and get the rubric when we get the assignment," and that they are also asked to contribute to the creation of rubrics. Students not only routinely use rubrics to self-assess, but also to assess their peers and class assignments as evidenced in the classrooms. As a result of school wide strategic assessment practices, students are able to articulate expectations and specific learning steps to increase their academic performance.
- All teachers engage in decision-making through structured collaborative inquiry, regularly analyzing student work that results in school-wide instructional coherence and increased student achievement for all learners. (4.2)
 - The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based structured professional collaborations that have strengthened teacher instructional capacity. Teachers meet during common planning time in grade level teams two to three days per week. They follow the 'Looking at Student Work' protocol to analyze student work, where one teacher presents student work from three different achievement levels including the lowest third, and the other teachers, collaborate and support each other by contributing with potential instructional strategies, planning, and grouping supports for the teacher to reteach focusing on students' needs. As a Common Core lab site, the teacher teams have been planning for three years to produce

CCLS tasks that are published on EngageNY. Currently, teacher leaders received training in the production of Measures of Student Learning (MOSL), the CCLS, and the Danielson Framework to train other staff and facilitate common planning time per grade level. They are responsible for the creation of the agendas, facilitation of inquiry meetings, and submitting notes and goals to the administration. Lead teachers analyzed the common assessment extended response data and found that students had difficulty with topic sentences, citing examples, and progression of ideas. To remedy this area of need, the school substituted writing clinics for electives, which has improved student writing across grades and the curriculum. Subsequently, teachers focused on using baseline writing assignments to determine which mechanics, usage, and techniques on which to focus. This focus on writing clinics has yielded an improvement in students' writing skills from kindergarten through grade eight and across subjects. Furthermore, teachers often visit each other's classes to observe best practices, discuss planning and instructional strategy implementation, and view bulletin boards to support their professional growth. As a result of this collaborative structure, teachers stated that the inquiry and common planning is the best professional development they have had. Therefore, it provides a welcoming climate of collegial decision-making that strengthens school-wide instructional coherence, implementation of the CCLS, and achievement for all learners.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine the process of school level decisions and adjustments to strategically develop coherence of policies and practices across the school. (5.1)
 - School leaders have an effective practice in place to regularly evaluate and adjust curricular practices within classrooms. The school organizes various events and celebrates students' success with an emphasis to "build community." In addition, the school's guidance counselor partners with the Substance Abuse Prevention Intervention Specialist (SAPIS) to further support students' social-emotional growth. Moreover, school teams meet regularly and in detail discuss strategies to impact the performance of their particular grade and student's growth. Similarly, on-going professional development opportunities that include facilitation skills for conducting "Socratic" seminar activities, the CCLS, and the Danielson Framework are offered to support teaching practice and the school's instructional goals. Hence, the absence of a refined school wide system for monitoring interventions and support structures lead to missed opportunities to strategically evaluate school systems to further support the school's instructional goals in working with the CCLS.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Talented And Gifted Young Scholars	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