



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Quality Review
Office of School Quality
Division of Academics, Performance, and Support
2013-2014**

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Aerospace Science Academy

Elementary/Middle School Q127

98-01 25th Avenue

Queens

NY 11369

Principal: Evita Sanabria

Dates of review: December 10-11, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Dr. Philip A. Composto

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Aerospace Science Academy is an elementary/middle school with 1454 students from kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 15% Black, 73% Hispanic, 1% White, and 11% Asian students. The student body includes 28% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 93.2%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders and teachers effectively align curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and offer engaging learning experiences that challenge students and support their learning. (1.1)
 - School leaders review the citywide instructional expectations and analyze student performance using common core aligned assessments to support their work on the paralleling curriculum to CCLS. As a result, a curriculum committee of six K-2 teachers, the literacy coach and the assistant principal, makes instructional decisions and revisions to address curriculum and knowledge gaps and meet the needs of English language learners (ELL) and special needs students. Teachers noted that students were not making significant gains in English language arts as evidenced by formative assessments. Data sources revealed that 30% of students were performing on grade level. The curriculum committee engages in an ongoing process of modifying curricular content of Common Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) curriculum to meet the needs of all students. For example, all students focused on organizing information, creating a clear topic and using appropriate punctuation and spelling. Lessons are modified on an ongoing basis by the utilization of graphic organizers, sentence starters, visual anchors and picture representations of academic vocabulary. As a result, 80% of the students demonstrated growth in identified areas in need of development as per ongoing formative assessments, such as quick-writes and conferring, in comparison to baseline assessments administered in September.
 - The grade 3 team analyzed a writing assignment from an Expeditionary Learning Module, their curriculum for English language arts and scored it using the New York State two point short response rubric. A protocol for looking at student work guided answers to three questions: “What can the students do? What can they almost do? What are they not doing?” The data revealed that 60% were able to write a simple paragraph with an introduction. Ten percent of the students were able to demonstrate command of conventions and grammar. As a result, teachers shared rubrics and expectations with all students, added graphics for English language learners (ELL) and students with disabilities (SWD). They also used the fishbowl protocol to model the effective use of word walls. Students participate in interactive lessons using resources from Engage NY on Smartboards. For example, sentence starters and paragraph frames are provided to improve their writing. These planned and implemented strategies by the collaborative efforts of teachers resulted in 50% of student improvement in the following ways: paragraphs are more organized, there is an increase in the use of transitional words, fewer run-on sentences in student writing, and improved spelling and the consistent use of descriptive words in student writing, thus demonstrating high levels of cognitive engagement.
- The school uses its resources effectively to build teacher capacity and improve instruction as evidenced by increased student engagement in academic tasks. (1.3)

- The principal funds four Response to Intervention (RtI) teachers that provide academic intervention services to address the learning deficits of targeted students in grades K-5. They service groups of 3 to 5 students for 3 thirty-minute sessions every week. Students remain in the group for a cycle of approximately 9 weeks, during which time the provider utilizes progress monitoring assessments to determine if RtI services should continue. If students are still in need of support, they are recommended for increased intensive services consisting of small groups of 1-2 students for approximately 5 forty minute sessions per week. Students remain in these groups for a cycle of approximately fifteen weeks, during which the provider utilizes progress monitoring assessments to determine their academic growth. After completing each cycle, the RtI team reviews students' progress and monitors data and student achievement with RtI specialists. As a result, 98% of students returned their classroom setting to receive support from their teachers with the specific strategies and resources that were used during their cycle of intervention, thereby ensuring that students experience continued success within the classroom.
- Every teacher's program includes two additional prep periods per week. One period is used for inquiry and one period is used for professional development and discussion around school-wide initiatives. During the inquiry period, teachers review student work and discuss evidence of individual academic growth and gaps in student learning. Teacher teams make evidence based adjustments to their units, lessons and teaching practices and participate in professional development activities in order to deepen their knowledge about successful instructional practices within the context of the curriculum. During the professional development period, teachers participate in grade and department conferences with supervisors, professional development sessions with coaches and grade leaders and they also engage in instructional planning with instructional lead teachers. As a result of the inquiry and professional development periods, teachers craft meaningful data-driven instructional plans that increase student outcomes as evident in improved performance on unit tests and visits to classrooms, which demonstrate that students are more actively engaged in challenging learning experiences.
- The conscientious principal has created a goal-oriented learning community which uses data-based intentional strategies to accelerate learning, and is well focused on teacher practice and student outcomes. (3.1)
 - School leaders and teams of teachers meet weekly to gather and analyze data in order to develop focused goals aligned with the Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP). They carefully track the progress of goals to improve student achievement across grades and subjects and plan professional development based on data-driven needs assessments. For example, one school goal is to decrease the percentage of students in grades 4-8 who received a Level I as measured by the New York State English language arts (ELA) and math assessments. As a result, school leaders organized the extended day program by strategically grouping students homogeneously according to their ELA performance. Examples of student groupings include general education, bilingual, dual language and English language learners (ELL). Learning targets introduced to students during extended day sessions include supporting responses to

text-based questions using textual evidence, monitoring comprehension when reading complex texts by crafting gist statements, reading, analyzing and solving multi-step math word problems and writing and interpreting numerical expressions. As a result, 80% of the students demonstrated growth noted in Expeditionary Learning, Go Math and Connected math performance tasks, unit assessments and performance-based rubrics administered in November in comparison to baseline assessments administered in September.

- Students appreciate the school's dedicated efforts in creating a safe, nurturing and respectful environment that promotes learning and supports their needs. (1.4)
 - Character education classes are conducted once a week across grades K-8 by members of the student support team that includes the behavior intervention specialist, the dean of students, the SAVE room teacher and the substance abuse prevention and intervention specialist (SAPIS) worker. Instruction is based on the six pillars of character which include caring, citizenship, fairness, respect, trustworthiness and responsibility. During these classes, students participate in activities that are designed to promote a deeper understanding of themselves as individuals and others. For example, in order to enhance students' personal skills in welcoming new students into the school community, students were separated into "old-timers" (students that were in the school during the previous year) and "newbies" (students that were new to the building). Old-timers identified what it felt like to be new in a school by reflecting on their personal experiences. Old-timers and newbies paired up to share information about important people, places and things in the building. Each pair then created a list detailing this information and a map to guide their transition into the school community. As a result, since implementing this program, teachers and administration notice a shift in the attitude of students both socially and emotionally, as well as the overall tone of the building in terms of interactions between all stakeholders. Additionally, students in grades 4-8, regularly participate in service projects based on their areas of interest and concerns about the community. For example, an eighth grade class embarked upon the Project Lend a Helping Hand (PLHH). The purpose of PLHH is to raise awareness of community and social needs, help develop leadership skills, and encourage others to take the first step in lending a helping hand. This led to a school-wide collection of recyclable items during which students across grades K-8 delivered large quantities of cans and bottles to a collection site. Through these efforts, students raised funds to purchase toys for children at the Christopher Otilie Family Home. Consequently, students indicated that they feel inspired by this process of giving, and their ability to bring joy to children that are less fortunate than they are. This then encourages students to take an active role in serving their community on an ongoing basis.
 - Weekly advisory periods are purposefully built into student schedules in grades 6-8 in order to address the demands of life as a middle school student. Teachers implement the Overcoming Obstacles curriculum to address the following foundational skills: communication, decision-making and goal setting. Additional skills include problem solving, conflict resolution, leadership development, study skills and planning for higher education. During monthly recognition assembly programs, teachers

publicly highlight students that demonstrate excellence in academic achievement, effort and citizenship. As a result, middle school students express their appreciation for having a forum in which they are able to safely address issues and concerns they face on a daily basis during their middle school year experience. Similarly, teachers express their appreciation for having a forum in which they are able to connect with and build relationships with students. By creating a space to address these issues, teachers have seen an increase of time on task during instructional blocks. The attendance committee is comprised of the attendance teacher, the assistant principal, the behavior intervention specialist, the parent coordinator and the SAPIS worker. During monthly meetings, the team analyzes weekly attendance data and discusses next steps to improve attendance rates. Examples of committee action steps include home visits, small and large parent workshops, individual parent conferences, and contact with outside agencies supporting students, such as preventive case workers, ongoing outreach and additional support for students with individualized educational plans (IEP). As a result of these efforts, there is an increase in the attendance rate from 94.9% in fall 2012 to 95.2% in fall 2013.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen teacher assessment practices to reflect effective feedback in order to make instructional adjustments and provide clear next steps to improve student outcomes. (2.2)
 - It is evident that teachers celebrate students' best efforts through checkmarks and written comments and use this information to inform instruction. However, not all student work includes feedback in the form of next steps for improvement. As a result, teachers are not fully able to evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum or instructional decisions or to consistently and immediately provide students with their next learning steps, thus limiting progress. Teacher teams and individual teachers use running records, and curricular aligned end of unit assessments to supplement summative data and identify student performance levels. However, the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment within instructional periods to make immediate adjustments to lessons is not a fully embedded practice across the school. This limits teachers' ability to pinpoint and address the special needs of student subgroups and modify targeted interventions to accelerate learning. Consequently, instructional strategies and learning tasks are not always strategically revised, hindering opportunities to meet the needs of all students during learning activities.
- Further refine teaching practices to ensure the vast majority of teachers strategically provide multiple entry points so that lessons challenge all students and result in the production of meaningful work products. (1.2)
 - Teachers plan lessons and use scaffolds to provide multiple entry points into instruction in response to student's needs and interests, including special education students. The use of word walls across classrooms helps all students build their vocabulary. Also, the school focuses on supporting English language learners (ELLs) by hiring dually certified teachers who have both Common Branch and English as a second

language (ESL) licenses. However, lessons do not always challenge all students, particularly high performers, to their full potential, in that assignments do not include opportunities for them to demonstrate higher order thinking skills or extend their learning, thus limiting even greater learning outcomes.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: The Aerospace Science Academy	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