Department of Education
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2013-2014

Academy for Careers in Television and Film

High School 301

1-50 51st Avenue
Long Island City,
NY 11101

Principal: Edgar Rodriguez

Dates of review: May 6 - 7, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Sheila S.- Gorski

Information about the school

The Academy for Careers in Television and Film is a high school with 464 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 17% Black, 56% Hispanic, 20% White, and 17% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 20% 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 92.9%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders and staff intentionally ensure curricula alignment to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and instructional shifts, providing rigorous and relevant academic experiences that prompt higher-order thinking in all learners. (1.1)

  o A three-year incremental approach to coherent academic curricula interlaced with the school's Career and Technical Education (CTE) curricula has manifested a collection of CCLS aligned units across grades, content and subject areas. Students are provided with challenging opportunities to cognitively engage in unit studies linked to the instructional expectations via the design of conceptual learning experiences and opportunities for deep reasoning formulated on text-based evidence. Likewise, teachers have examined the school's curricula known as production to create curriculum maps designed to mirror the academic curricula. For example, identified areas in previously school created units were intrinsically linked to the CCLS and woven into units of study modeled after the Engage New York Modules, with use of a common format to bridge the two documents, thus solidifying curricula coherence. Further, the school has collaboratively designed comprehensive curriculum maps to complement all units of study, which are systematized in a folder system on Google Drive making them easily accessible to the entire staff to engage in professional discourse. In addition, video support materials embedded in the academic courses complement the CTE courses. For example, scripts are co-planned with English standards and teacher teams look at the writing standards to ensure rigorous CTE curricula, resulting in all students creating production via a video component, thus providing opportunities for all students including English language learners and special education students to engage in activities where students actively demonstrate their thought process, preparing them for future colleges and careers.

- Across the vast majority of classrooms, instructional practices reflect a united set of beliefs that deeply engage all students in challenging tasks and opportunities to produce meaningful work products and ownership of their learning. (1.2)

  o The school's collective belief about how students learn best is founded on the premise that students learn best when they have consistent opportunities to work in partnerships and in intellectually challenging activities informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Teacher and student survey results and data on improving student-led discussions guide conversations at teacher team meetings of possible best practices and strategies to support the school-wide initiative. Additionally, the spoken and written language holds closely to scaffolds identified in a communication tool entitled, *Keys to Effective Communication.* Discussion expectations require students to listen actively and respectfully, respond in complete ideas, refer to evidence to support ideas, speak loudly for everyone to hear, direct responses to classmates, develop questions to improve clarity and propel conversation, and stay focused on the topic. Also, for written language clear, concise claims, with relevant evidence, and academic language is required. Moreover, the school's 21st century approach to learning provides entry points and quality supports, such as in an Integrated Team Teaching Class (ICT) where students used the, "effective communication tool" in a Socratic discussion and back channeling via use of a website called, "Today's Meet". During the lesson students actively participated in synthesizing multiple sources, such as, the novel,

Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian on the nature of identity and the importance of heritage and diversity. The teacher framed the lesson and while students read the text they took notes and paused several times to ask questions, engage in discourse and text-based responses. The other part of the class worked on laptops responding to questions and verbal responses shared aloud by their peers. One of the ICT teachers facilitated the online version of the lesson, while demonstrating key symbols and their appropriate use, such as required use of a hashtag (#). Further, online conversations called live tweets are monitored and both overt and covert individual discussions are saved and used to assess comprehension. Moreover, teachers integrate Google Applications (Apps) in their day-to-day practice using the system to tailor student tasks. Students also share their work, and receive feedback from their teachers. Likewise, in a math class the teacher engaged students in a mini-lesson using the SMART board as a tool for exhibiting a math model. A graph exhibited was an example of plotted coordinates and students were asked to highlight or underline a set of points to show the locus on the graph. During the lesson the teacher asked a student to use the 'be the teacher presentation' for the summary of the lesson. The student immediately began his role stating, "The locus is a set of points satisfying a given condition!" He asked other students to read the first problem and students then engaged in a discussion about the problem. One student stated, "two units above and below create a circle!" The student promoted peer interaction by using the SMART board and asked students to identify the coordinates, which he plotted on the graph. This strategy provided opportunities for students to reinforce their learning in rigorous delivery and visual demonstration, while also affording the teacher another way of assessing student comprehension. Classroom visits indicate that in the preponderance of classrooms the communication tool is promoted and peers collaborate in challenging activities, thus student work reflect high levels of thinking, interaction, and ownership.

- The school's assessment practices are thoughtfully aligned to curricula and standards, and result in effective instructional adjustments affording a clear portrait of student mastery and student awareness of their next learning steps. (2.2)

  o In a unit on *Arguing Human Nature versus Nurture* teachers used the text, *Lord of the Flies* and a specifically designed graphic organizer to serve as a formative assessment for measuring elements such as main idea, evidence, analysis, transition, evidence, and analysis tie-Up (MEATEAT). Following this order assists students in planning their MEATEAT paragraph eventually leading to an argumentative essay assessed by an aligned rubric examining meaning, language, organization, development, and citations, and provides ongoing checks of student writing. Student peer editing also examines the writing process, evidence, text citations, and includes three constructive and instructive comments. Teachers also use research notes as informal assessments, reading quizzes as diagnostic assessments, performance-based assessments, and end-of-unit exam and student exemplars. Coupled with unit reflections that measure unit strengths, challenges, entry points, and possible revisions provides a clear portrait of student mastery. Similarly, all production units are project-based and assess two major student work projects. Projects include writing a script, demonstration of acquired skill level in composition and camera movement, a dialogue scene and found-sound elements, and student exemplars in video. Moreover, teachers use culminating assessments from the City University of New York (CUNY) and State Regents to assess mastery of units. The school's grading policies revolve around the flagging of skills needed and mastery of skills. Every teacher has an electronic grading book that is published online and shared with other teachers, parents, and students, and a Google spreadsheet includes all aspects of student performance. Students who do

not meet course and assessment standards have an alternate route toward meeting the standards, which includes after school intensive instruction and the school's Mastery Based Assessment (MBA). The MBA goal is to ensure that all students meet unit mastery levels in order to earn credits. The school promotes student perseverance to increase mastery levels in every unit, as evidenced in the results of the US History Regents indicating a passing rate of 94%, exemplifying a clear representation of student mastery.

- The school strategically promotes a safe and inclusive learning environment for all students and adults via a culture of trust that enhances student academic performance and personal growth. (1.4)

  - A school-wide premise that the principal refers to as, "The ethos of the school" exemplifies how administrators, students, staff, and parents, share a common philosophy and language about the manner in which they communicate that embodies reciprocal trust and respect. Leveraged by the Danielson Framework the leadership and staff share a culture for learning that fosters communication and collaboration supporting the school goal to maintain and strengthen open and transparent systems of communication with all its constituents. During a meeting parent statements described the school environment as "'There is a culture of mentorship; how you treat people is how they will treat you.", and "Everything is seamless with an individual look at students in a compassionate, empathetic way, and in close relationship with parents." Likewise, students believe that the school is a very safe place and teachers really care, adding that they have a close relationship with their teachers. Comments, included "'Tutoring opportunities after school or morning are there, and ultimately it's up to you to make decisions about what you want to do, but it's impossible to fail in our school. You are prompted to be responsible with tasks and homework, so it's up to you." The school ensures that students understand their roles in managing their work and behavior, engaging them in decision-making on the advantages of choosing to monitor and improve   their work habits,   which is supported by the entire school community. For example, students monitor their academic work to ensure that requirements are met without compromising their grades in any one of the curricular areas, as the school holds students accountable for success in meeting academic requirements as well as CTE requirements. Moreover, there are 40 different specialties within the film and crew program and five areas of concentration. As the program becomes increasingly specified students meaningfully engage in selecting an area of concentration. All students are encouraged to engage in independent projects and must fulfill requirements, submitting a script and if approved structure the shoots, casting, and crew members, thus engaging students in strong work habits, self-regulating, organizational skills, and communication and collaboration skills which are essential skills to improving the school's CTE focus on television and film. Additionally, students initiate, guide, and commit to the work, supporting the school's instructional goals of preparing students for behind the camera careers in television and film production. Moreover, all teachers are advisors and advisory includes independent reading, college and career preparation, study hall, and financial literacy. In collaboration with the college office, advisors offer Regents preparation during advisory tapping into teachers' expertise to further support students. Individualized narrative reports provided for parents on a quarterly basis personalize student plans regarding credit accumulation, behavior, attendance in comparison to previous year's attendance, tutoring participation, and academic performance, contact, however is ongoing. The report also includes specific and detailed summaries from each teacher depicting the student's course status. These consistent efforts guide

students through a pathway of academic and social emotional support, and build strong relationships within the school community leveraging academic achievement and positive personal behaviors.

- The leadership and faculty convey high expectations that reinforce the school's positive culture and link college and career readiness with successfully partnering with families to support student progress toward achieving expectations. (3.4)

  o High expectations begin with the prospect that relative to both the academic and technical curricula students are expected to achieve at high levels. Prior to entering the school the principal and faculty, ensure that all families understand the expectations of the curricula that involve students in an intensive four years of both professional and academic instruction. Further, advisors and families share ongoing communication through Edline, the 'All Student Data' database that shares information such as student reports from content area teachers and college readiness reports, which are based on student status of State exams. The long-term relationship between advisors, teachers, students and families, has developed successful partnerships to support student progress toward a path of choices in college and careers. From introduction to film crafts, documentary unit to writing of scripts, relationships between the use of the camera, communication through sound in suspense scenes, production design, adding voice for story communication, advanced scripts, students are expected to fulfill requirements via well-planned projects. Moreover, CTE certified instructors and a director of production ensure rigorous, content, and skill-based learning. Professional collaborations between academic and content area teachers and CTE instructors promote the use of a reflection protocol to measure the instruction via analysis of student work resulting in instructional adjustments and a culture of mutual accountability toward meeting academic expectations.

What the school needs to improve

- Expand the observation process to tactically build teacher capacity, thus strengthening the pedagogical alignment with teacher goals. (4.1)

  o School leaders support teacher development and document their cycles of observations. Teacher leaders are also mentors for their colleagues, especially those new to the profession, and support the growth of all teachers via intervisitations and turnkey of professional sessions attended by identified staff. Further, teachers design and share with the leadership their individual professional development plans and reflections from scholarship data analysis, pedagogical growth, and instructional and non-instructional goals. A mid-year check-in and end of year reflection informs teacher's pedagogical progress. In addition, teachers self-evaluate based on the Danielson Framework, facilitating conversations with the administration and a series of peer inter-visitations throughout the year. However, the school has not yet sufficiently personalized professional development to strategically align and tailor the support to individual teacher goals impacting accelerating teacher capacity.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Academy for Careers in Television and Film	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score				**X**

Instructional Core

To what extent does the school regularly…	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

To what extent does the school …	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

To what extent does the school …	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