



**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

**The Academy of the Arts**

**08X335**

**888 Rev. James Polite  
Bronx  
NY 10459**

**Principal: Glorimer Lopez**

**Dates of review: January 7-8, 2014**

**Lead Reviewer: Timothy Behr**

## **Part 1: The school context**

### **Information about the school**

PS 335, The Academy for the Arts is an elementary school with 272 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 28% Black, 69% Hispanic, 1% White, 1% Asian students, and 1% Multi-Racial. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 13% 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 91.1%.

### **Overall Evaluation**

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school provides a safe and caring learning environment that supports students' social, emotional, and academic growth, leading to their increased interest and engagement in learning. (1.4)
  - Hard work today results in success tomorrow. This school theme enhances student's self-esteem as well as social skill development. A Positive Behavior Intervention Program monitoring system entitled, "Keep it on Green", motivates students to be interested and engaged in their learning. A "3 strike" matrix encourages students to follow positive behavior rules and school procedures. Monthly, incentives such as "Star bucks" for the lower grades and field trips for the upper grades motivate all students to behave in an appropriate manner. In addition, students have opportunities to participate in school decision making, as evidenced by their input in planning a winter dance and determining school food choices. The school environment is warm and inviting, with many smiling adults' and children's faces. Teachers visit students in temporary housing to extend classroom learning and help address barriers to their learning. As a result, safety has improved at the school, as evidenced by a reduction in Online Occurrence Reports to date, compared to last year, and students focus more on academic achievement, as shown by improved independent reading levels.
  - Each student is known well by at least one adult who helps coordinate both emotional and academic supports. The principal recognizes children by name and is aware of their specific strengths and needs. Students are welcome to stay after school to complete homework or receive remedial tutoring. The school collaborates with "Elevate NY" where students receive peer mentoring from high school students. Students state that "school experiences are enticing and very rewarding". Astor Mental Health, a community based organization, provides in-house services to students and outside family services to support students' social and emotional development. Urban Mental Health representatives ensure that children have all their vaccinations and conduct physicals for students. These services are extremely important for the students who live in temporary housing and may otherwise not have the opportunity to receive these services. Student achievement is regularly celebrated and showcased via attendance and "Student of the Month" ceremonies. The New York Road Runners sponsor guest speakers to promote positive influences on students' academic and social development and participants in Jump Start's "Read for the Record" initiative, encourage Early Childhood reading. Consequently, all students are actively involved in school wide events which have contributed to improved student learning, as evidenced by the most recent report card grades.
- The school's assessment program provides feedback that allows teachers to know their students' strengths, needs, and achievement levels, leading to adjustments in curricula to support targeted instruction in core content areas. (2.2)
  - Teachers engage in a deep analysis of formative and summative assessment data, enabling them to identify student's strengths and next steps. As a result,

for English language arts, the school has prioritized writing, with emphasis on students specifically supporting their opinions and arguments with textual evidence. For math, the school has prioritized mathematical fluency. The use of a school wide grading policy and a 2 point extended response rubric enables teachers to effectively gauge the instructional moves that they should make for students during lessons and provides staff and students with feedback on levels of achievement across content and grades. A student goal setting worksheet helps students to self-reflect in terms of their progress in attaining academic objectives. Consequently, feedback from assessment data drives instructional adjustments to meet the needs of targeted students, resulting in improved English language arts and math scores for students, as evidenced by results of assessments.

- Individual teachers and teacher teams analyze assorted student data from common assessments, including summative data, unit reviews, interim classroom performance, and at times, anecdotal observations of students. Teachers introduced a “Beginning, Developing” and “Secure” (BDS) rubric conference sheet to check for students’ progress towards goals. This strategy has enabled teachers to reflect on the specific impact of their selected instructional resource and practice and make adjustments as needed to improve student performance. For example, fifth grade teachers realized that although students “secure” specific skills to correctly complete math problems in class, the skills do not carry over to unit reviews or on measures of student learning baseline results. Consequently, they adjusted instruction and assessment to include multiple step application of skills to solve word problems in addition to completing numerical problems, with the result that most students are now able to use the BDS worksheet to guide their next steps in order for a particular skill to be “secured”. Hence there is ongoing improvement of instruction and revisions of curricula to meet the diverse learning needs of students.
- The school uses the Danielson Framework to monitor the impact of pedagogy, with a clear focus on enhancing adult learning in order to improve the delivery of instruction for students in all classes. (4.1)
  - In June 2013 teachers participated in activities that normed the Danielson Framework, leading to feedback that identified individual teacher’s strengths, needs and next steps for improving pedagogy. For example, administrators target the school wide focus of deepening the practice of differentiated instruction and tiered activities, such as modeling, small group instruction, scaffolding, think-aloud, and team talks, in alignment to feedback provided to teachers. The network’s talent coach supports these initiatives, including the use of the Hess Cognitive Rigor Matrix, providing teachers with additional feedback to improve questioning skills and clarifying expectations for development of teacher pedagogy. The administration now uses this tool in conjunction with the Danielson Framework, to effectively gauge and promote improvement in teacher practice. Norming activities occur consistently via classroom intervisitations, leading to a clear focus on strengthening teacher practice in providing targeted instruction for all students.
  - Based on observation data and on instructional priorities, the school offers all staff a continuum of professional learning opportunities both in teams and individually. Beginning during the summer of 2013 and continuing in the current

school year, through Lunch and Learns, staff conferences, inquiry and grade meetings, teachers receive support to address their specific needs. The current focus is on having teachers ask more “why?” instead of “what?” questions. There is a succession plan that clearly delineates the hierarchy of the school in case of the principal’s absence. As a result, school administrators use teacher observation data to identify pedagogical trends throughout the school and effectively plan ongoing professional development activities to support teachers in improving their classroom practice.

## **What the school needs to improve**

- Continue to refine curricula to support teacher capacity to provide rigorous instructional activities, to ensure that all students continue to make academic progress across grades and content areas. (1.1)
  - The school’s English language arts and math curricula provide for the application of learned skills in tasks for all learners. In writing, tasks enable students to improve their ability to support their opinions/arguments with textual evidence. For math, tasks require students to complete activities to improve math fluency. However, not all lesson plans reflect tasks requiring students to use higher order thinking skills. For example in a mixed grade English language learner class, the lesson plan shows all students receiving the same assignment. There was no evidence of the adjustment of plans and goals to meet the varied academic needs of these students. In some classrooms, student portfolios contained minimal evidence of high quality work products, especially in science, as there is no formalized science curriculum. As a result, teachers are not consistently planning units and tasks that require all students to use higher order thinking skills in producing rigorous work in all content areas.
  - Based on analyses of student work and data, the school is prioritizing vocabulary development and numerical fluency to accelerate student performance in English language arts and math. Teachers meet during and after school hours to evaluate and re-evaluate implementation of curriculum and related tasks, to ensure student mastery of these skills, especially for students in the upper grades. However, the adjustment of plans and tasks to incorporate supports for students, such as English language learners and students with disabilities, to have full access to cognitively engaging tasks in all content areas, is not a consistent practice for all teachers. Consequently, all students do not have access to curricula and tasks that allow them to perform to their full potential.
- Promote greater consistency in implementing instructional strategies that generate challenging student work products and high level discussions in all subject areas, allowing all students to constantly engage in higher order thinking. (1.2)
  - The administration acknowledges that teachers’ questioning skills are a work in progress across grades, classes and content areas. The preponderance of teachers’ questions ask, “What?” which limits students’ ability to deepen their knowledge of academic content. Across classrooms student portfolios were inconsistent as some samples of student work were ungraded. Some lessons showed little evidence of enrichment activities to allow students to demonstrate higher order thinking skills. As a result, student learning is not maximized, as

evidenced by 2013 English language arts and math state test results which show the majority of students are performing below proficiency levels.

- Although there are classrooms where student displayed work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation, this practice is not consistent across all grades and class. Students work folders, especially in integrated co-teaching classes and in an English language learner class, contain minimal work to determine the impact of selected instructional resources and teaching practices on student achievement. In some classrooms, teachers supply the answer to a question before a student can provide a response or answers require a “yes, no, agree or disagree” response. Hence, during lessons teachers are not consistently utilizing classroom strategies and approaches to implement instructional moves that ensure high levels of student participation in discussions and push student thinking about lesson concepts and content.
- Expand the process of making informed and effective organizational decisions across all aspects of the school, to support improvements in student learning in all core content areas. (1.3)
  - Through strategic budgeting, the principal added an assistant principal to the administrative team at the end of the academic year 2012-2013. This decision has enabled the principal to actively supervise teachers, as evidenced through observation reports and daily informal classroom walkthroughs. The school has also added third grade classes for the first time this year. This is the final phase of the school’s growth as outlined by the New York City Department of Education. The gym teacher will take ownership of a vacant room which will serve as the physical education and nutrition resource center. However, at the time of this review, the school’s curricula did not include focused instruction via a science program and there was no evidence of a scope and sequence curriculum map, unit plans, lesson plans, and consistent assessments for science, to support in-depth student learning in science. Consequently, organizational decisions do not yet reflect full alignment to instructional goals, resulting in missed opportunities to consistently engage all students in high quality inquiry based work across all disciplines.
  - The principal schedules teacher teams to meet once per week for curriculum enhancement and inquiry to improve student outcomes. Teachers also have time during the week to plan curriculum to support the delivery of instruction prioritizing the instructional shifts. Teachers in grades 3, 4, and 5 use a “Beginning, Developing”, and “Secure” rubric to analyze student work. This enables the school to monitor and utilize data to inform decisions and support school wide decisions that focus on improving students’ numerical fluency and vocabulary skills. However, although teacher grade teams share performance information about their students, they do not consistently identify and work with a nominally sized target population of struggling learners to implement and evaluate the impact of specific instructional change strategies, using baseline indicators. As a result, this inhibits teachers in systematically implementing instructional modalities to meet the unique needs of students, thus limiting the impact of team collaboration in improving instruction and engaging students in challenging tasks.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: The Academy of the Arts	UD	D	P	WD			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>		X					
<b>Instructional Core</b>							
<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				
<b>School Culture</b>							
<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				
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>							
<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					
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>