



**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

Hostos-Lincoln Academy of Science

Secondary School 07X500

**600 SAINT ANN'S AVENUE
BRONX
NY, 10455**

Principal: NICHOLAS PAARLBERG

Dates of review: Oct. 22-23, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Deena Abu-Lughod

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Hostos-Lincoln Academy of Science is a Secondary School with 528 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 22% Black, 74.4% Hispanic, and 2.5% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 11.4% special education students. Boys account for 43.9% of the students enrolled and girls account for 56.1%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 91.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Resources and programming are aligned to meet diverse student needs so that many students have access to meaningful learning opportunities that advance their knowledge and skills. (1.3)
 - The school's approach to meeting student needs is grounded in programming, which is conducted by a faculty team that evaluates each student's transcript, learning habits and characteristics before matching them to classes. This results in many students receiving programs that enable them to complete Regents exams ahead of schedule. For example, half the students have double-periods in Global Studies to complete the Regents in their first year, while others, including those with individualized education plans (IEPs) and English language learners complete their coursework over two years. Higher performing eighth graders take an accelerated social studies course that culminates in the United States (US) History Regents. To reinforce literacy skills, middle school students take a humanities course in addition to social studies and English, which enables many students to complete their English Regents during their sophomore year. Flexible programming decisions ensure some suitable placements. For example, a seventh grader with an individualized educational plan attends a 10th grade class, where he performs on par with older students in his area of strength. A special academy was developed last year for a set of students to benefit from counseling, greater parent involvement, and project-based instructional approaches in a smaller setting which supported their academic and social maturation, and was successful in getting most participants back on track. In addition, to capitalize on teacher expertise and student interest, the 8-period day allows students to pursue multiple avenues of expression. These electives successfully integrate curriculum across content areas and reinforce the school's social-emotional initiatives. For example, a domestic abuse awareness campaign led by the social worker from the Joe Torre Foundation was reinforced in the Computer Arts elective, where students used two different applications in a well-maintained computer lab to transform their substantive narratives into graphic novels as a pre-step towards creating a public service announcement. An additional partnership has enabled some students with a sponsoring faculty member to engage in extremely high level scientific research that has won national recognition. As a result of these innovations and partnerships, many students are exposed to activities that result in high level work products.
- The school ensures a safe and inclusive culture that attends to students' social-emotional needs, enabling many to attain high levels of academic and personal success. (1.4)
 - Staff stability, small class size, and the tendency of most students to stay in the school from Grade 6 through graduation facilitate the development of long-term, close relationships between the faculty and the student body. School leaders and faculty agree that meeting students' social-emotional needs is a necessary precondition for success, and they serve as personal and academic mentors. As one student who had previously had disciplinary issues attested, his teachers really "got him" and understood his needs. Students appreciate the availability of teachers to

provide tutoring and are impressed by their teachers' knowledge. As one stated, "People get learning from everyone. It's not restricted to subjects." Middle school students are pleased with the stronger reinforcement of the uniform policy, which they say "shows we're proud to be here" and prevents judgment based on clothing. Staff involvement in culture-building is evident in the multiple clubs they lead, such as the running club which grew from 4 students to a Public School Athletic League team. This has attracted faculty as well, who have been "game changers" in creating a culture for learning. In addition, a Gay-Straight Alliance has been active in broadening notions of respect and in ensuring a safe place for its members and positive relationships with adults. Artistic outlets, such as the creative arts team, the music and poetry festival, the award-winning literary magazine, and play writing class give students artistic voice, and build their sense of self-efficacy and worth. Anecdotal data illustrate how involvement in these extra-curricular activities have kept students interested in school and contributed to credit accumulation and a nurturing environment where students feel safe.

- School leaders and faculty convey and support high expectations for college to families and students that result in increased levels of student scholarship and achievement for many students. (3.4)
 - Students, parents and faculty all articulate that the goal of the school is to ensure that students graduate, having met the City University of New York (CUNY) benchmarks for literacy and math. They also state that the school expects all students to work towards an Associate degree through the school's partnership with Hostos Community College, and currently, a third of the senior class is on track to do so while the majority have earned some college credit. The program for study provides for an acceleration of coursework such that most students complete their Regents exams by their sophomore year. The guidance counselor carefully guides seniors through each stage of the college application process via a special elective seminar. Applications are monitored and acceptances are celebrated as students paint their own cinderblock which is placed in an area designed by seniors to represent the class. The school also provides special guidance to students ineligible for federal financial aid, and supports student activism in such venues as the United Nations in favor of expanding eligibility, thus giving students real-life political experience. Parents accompany students on college visits so they can evaluate the needs and expectations of college life away from home, helping them make judicious decisions. Teachers keep parents informed of student progress, test scores and assignment completion in a variety of ways, including phone calls and electronic platforms. This year, the school has acquired *Jupiter Grades*, which in addition to providing online access, issues text messages to regularly inform parents of academic expectations. Students wholly believe that the teaching staff expects them to continue their education after high school, and that they can do well if they work hard and "put their mind to it", as evidenced by responses to the Learning Environment Survey. The ongoing feedback teachers and counselors provide to students and families create a climate where each student knows what is required and where to go for support.

What the school needs to improve

- Build on promising assessment practices to develop common approaches that ensure their alignment to State standards, so that students consistently receive actionable and accurate feedback to accelerate their progress. (2.2)
 - Each teacher administers a variety of assessments that are typically teacher-developed that align with the unit of study and selected expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), and many students receive comments on their work and have opportunities to give and receive feedback to their peers. In the upper grades, assessments are modeled on the expectations of the Regents and are scored using criteria drawn from the Regents. Many teachers use task specific rubrics, and provide scaffolding in the form of graphic organizers and guiding questions to lead students through the writing process, and reading levels are assessed across the middle school grades. However, examination of student work reveals an inconsistency in the traits that are evaluated by the rubrics, as well as different understandings across teachers and subjects with regard to what is considered as grade-level work. In addition, while there are uniform percentage cut-offs for report card grades, there is variation in what comprises those grades, for example, participation, homework, and achievement, because as the principal stated, this would “go against our core beliefs to have a universal metric for each class to be graded exactly the same way”. This reduces the reliability of classroom grades as a marker of student mastery of the standards, especially in English where scores are considerably higher than in other content areas.
- Ensure that curricula across content areas consistently provide opportunities to engage in rigorous tasks that promote higher order thinking skills so that all students are prepared for college and career. (1.1)
 - Curricula in the high school division are aligned to the New York State (NYS) content standards, and units in the core content areas reflect the requirements of the NYS Regents exams with some attention to incorporating the CCLS. The principal also selected CCLS-aligned curricular materials for the middle school this year, while continuing to use elements of the Teacher College program to support fluency, stamina and comprehension. Across the school, students are working on citing evidence from text in writing; however, the practice of using text-based evidence in class discussion is less developed, and there is considerable variation in the approaches to building academic vocabulary and text-complexity. Additionally, in mathematics, the middle school curricula effectively integrate the shifts, but these have not yet informed instruction in ninth grade algebra. Furthermore, units for electives are designed to provide entry points for all students by allowing them to pursue interests such as play-writing and are integrated with real-world experiences. Texts for English classes are selected for their high interest and social-emotional appeal, but tasks address the standards inconsistently, and sometimes at levels far below grade-level expectation. Moreover, the Global Studies curriculum was revised based on an item analysis to address content gaps, and one unit was revised to align well with the CCLS. In addition, the Living Environment units provide students with regular opportunities to engage with challenging material and evaluate competing perspectives, with proper

attention to supports for students with disabilities and English language learners in the form of visuals, word banks, graphic organizers, sentence frames and adapted texts so they can participate actively. However, similar attention has not been given to all units, especially those used by students with disabilities, which hinders the school's ability to provide all students with the cognitively engaging learning opportunities to ensure adequate progress towards their goals.

- Build upon the effective development of teaching practices from a defined set of beliefs that are informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and aligned to curriculum to accelerate student achievement (1.2)
 - The school uses programming decisions to support its belief that students learn best in small settings. For example, English in the middle school is supported by an additional humanities class to reinforce reading skills through small group instruction, and lower level students are grouped together in the high school. In addition, most lessons follow either a developmental model or a workshop model that allows for a mix of direct instruction, small group and independent work. The school is still developing common approaches to scaffolding to support students at different levels across all subject areas so that all students have access to appropriate levels of rigor. While the use of picture prompts for writing has migrated from the science department across the school, the attention to vocabulary and techniques for improving comprehension of complex text varies across subject areas or does not exist, thus preventing reinforcement of key skills. Across the school, teachers build in time for student discussion, but the lack of structures and purposeful grouping in some cases resulted in uneven levels of student accountability to the content. Similarly, some teachers have high expectations for writing, conferencing with students over successive drafts and engaging them in peer review, while others do not, resulting in variation in the quality of work products. Furthermore, in one class students indicated that they were able to succeed by copying notes from the board, and do little reading or note-taking on their own, and in another class, they completed a multiple-choice test together. The variations in teaching strategies limit the degree to which students can consistently create meaningful work products.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Hostos-Lincoln Academy of Science	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
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