



**Department of  
Education**

*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2014-2015**

**City College Academy of the Arts**

**Middle-High School M293**

**4600 Broadway  
New York, NY 10040**

**Principal: Burnedette Drysdale**

**Date of review: November 25, 2014**

**Lead Reviewer: Tammy Pate**

## The School Context

City College Academy of the Arts is a middle/high school with 589 students from grades 6-12. The school population comprises 4% Black, 93% Hispanic, 1% Amer. Indian or Native Alaskan, 2% White, and .68% Asian students. The student body includes 5 % English language learners and 8% special education students. Boys account for 44% of the students enrolled and girls account for 56%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 is 95%.

## School Quality Criteria

<b>Instructional Core</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
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	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Developing</b>
<b>School Culture</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	<b>Celebration</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

Students and families appreciate the school's central focus to prepare students for college and beyond and are thankful for the school's practice of consistently providing feedback and detailed guidance and advisement supports to help families understand student progress that prepares children for the next level.

### Impact

School leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations that are connected to a path to college and career readiness that has translated into a culture for learning for all students and led to sixty-two percent of graduating students in the prior year meeting the college readiness index and eighty-six percent enrolling in a college or post-secondary program.

### Supporting Evidence

- Students effectively take and pass college level courses starting in the tenth grade at City College of New York (CCNY) and complete the majority of their high school credits during by the end of the tenth grade. Once they enter eleventh grade, most students attend class on the CCNY campus that are taught by college professors.
- Administrators and teachers communicate high expectations for all students to graduate with up to sixty college credits. There are academic supports to help all students to be prepared to take at least one class at CCNY by the time they are in eleventh grade. Struggling students are identified during ninth grade and are given classes to help them with the necessary skills for college success such as being organized as well as becoming an independent learner.
- The school's guidance department works with parents and students to develop a course-completion goal sheet and teach students and families on how to track their progress. All students are offered courses at City College of New York. Many of the school's students graduate with up to 60 college credits.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.1 Curriculum**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core learning standards (CCLS) and/or content standards, integrate the instructional shifts, and that tasks emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills.

### Impact

Curricula reflects a focus on preparing students to engage in rigorous courses in order to participate in the City College of New York Partnership and purposeful decisions have been made to build coherence that promotes college and career readiness across grades and subjects for all students including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs).

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and faculty ensure that all curricula are aligned to the Common Core learning standard and/or appropriate content standards. The English language arts department uses a CCLS aligned curriculum from Scholastic for the middle school grades and the high school uses EngageNY. The math department has chosen to follow the modules from EngageNY for CCLS aligned courses such as Algebra and Geometry. All other courses culminating in a Regent's exam follows the appropriate curriculum determined by the state.
- Curriculum maps and unit plans show alignment to the CCLS and/or content standards. Some lesson plans reviewed incorporated the instructional shifts. In several classrooms visited, there was evidence that teacher had planned lessons where students were required to defend their answers. For example, in one Algebra 2/ Trigonometry class, the teacher had students explain their thinking in writing of other ways to represent an exponential expression.
- Middle school grades are developing similar systems for differentiation and strengthening critical thinking skills for all students including ELLs and SWD in order to better prepare students for the heavy course load in the high school grades. Content teams span from six through twelfth grade in order to build planning and instruction norms that embed rigorous habits and higher order thinking such as the identification of power standards and the use of protocols in instruction.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching are becoming aligned to curricula and teaching strategies such as questioning, scaffolds in English and/or native language where appropriate, and routines are inconsistent and lead to uneven engagement in appropriately challenging tasks.

### Impact

School-wide teaching practices inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula for all learners including ELLs and SWDs.

### Supporting Evidence

- Observation feedback utilizing the Danielson Framework for Teaching is inconsistent across administrators and includes errors in application so that individuals and groups of teachers are unable to establish cohesive and aligned instructional practices. Upon review of observation feedback, some administrators failed to identify evidence for the ratings given to a few teachers. This has resulted in inconsistent practices observed during classroom visits. For example, in an eleventh grade ICT Algebra two class the teacher worked from the front of the room while a co-teacher and three para-professionals stood or sat and never spoke a word even when the teacher made an error on a calculation. In a seventh grade ICT ELA class the co-teachers and para-professional took turns facilitating and each conducted a small group conference.
- Across classrooms visited there were limited instructional strategies used to accommodate a diversity of learners in the classroom, including ELLs and SWDs. Questioning observed involved low cognitive demand utilizing levels of questions that focused on Webb's Depth of Knowledge 1 & 2 (recall/production and skill/concept) tasks. For example, in a chemistry class, the teacher directed students to turn to page 128 and answer the questions without providing any meaningful lesson. In a seventh grade social studies class the teacher offered the following questions: How would you describe the events on this image? Who can remind us of what propaganda means? Who would create such a picture?
- School leaders stated a belief around students learning best by being able to self-assess and peer assess by using rubrics, however, work posted across classrooms visited lacked rubrics. When middle school students were asked about their work in the classroom they could not distinguish between directions written on the whiteboard and a rubric, which resulted in uneven engagement in the lesson. In a seventh grade ELA class some work was posted but lacked a rubric and no teacher comments were seen on the work.

**Findings**

Across classrooms, teachers create and use assessments and rubrics that are loosely aligned with the school's curricula, and inconsistently utilize instructional strategies for ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

**Impact**

Teacher use of assessment data to understand student progress and provide actionable feedback was limited, resulting in inconsistent modifications of curriculum and instruction.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Student work in portfolios revealed minimal teacher feedback and no student self or peer reflection. Students stated that teachers use rubrics to assess their work but found it hard to achieve a level 4 on their work. During class visits, student work posted on many bulletin boards within classrooms did not contain rubrics, standards, or actionable teacher feedback. Most of the work displayed contained check marks or numerical grades only and no student reflection or peer feedback. Several bulletin boards in the hallways contained students' work, and teacher comments referenced a rubric.
- Classroom observations revealed inconsistent checks for understanding. In one Algebra 2 class the teacher asked the following questions: What's  $(5^2)^5$ ? How many of you agree? Less than 50% of the class responded. She then put three more problems on the smart board and told students to simplify them. This practice failed to address the unique learning needs of this ICT class and failed to leverage the three other adults in the room to assess student understanding. In a Chemistry class, the teacher assigned questions from a textbook and students worked silently to complete the assignment.
- School collects and analyzes Measures of Student Learning (MoSL) and State test data in order to track growth and decline by grade and teacher. The school also uses online assessments and test creation tools including Grade Cam Insight, J-map, Problem-Attic, Learn Zillion, and CBM, which are beginning to impact revisions to curricula.
- There are academic intervention services (AIS) services in place for all students. For example, students performing at levels one in sixth and seventh grade math are mandated to attend after school tutoring in lieu of an arts program. In the eighth grade, there is a learning lab mandated two times a week for students sitting for a Regent's exam in June.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### **Findings**

Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and distributed leadership structures have built teacher leadership capacity.

### **Impact**

Analyzing the work of students that teachers have in common has resulted in improved teacher practice, increased student performance, and empowered teacher leaders to have a voice in key decision making that affect instruction and student learning.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Teacher teams meet to look at student work in order to refine curricula and inform next steps. Teams span across content areas and grades and utilize both programmed meeting time and contractual afterschool time. Team leaders also participate in leadership initiatives such as the Department of Education's Teacher Leadership Program (TLP) to build their capacity when working with their colleagues.
- In order to meet the needs of a diversity of learners, grade teams analyze target student populations that represent the diversity of a class. For example, in the seventh grade team meeting, teachers analyzed student writing samples from three students at three levels; a student that is exceeding standards, a student meeting standards, and a student approaching standards. The team used a protocol to guide their inquiry work. The teachers on the seventh grade team stated they are scheduled to meet on two Tuesdays a month.
- Teacher teams used scheduled meetings to discuss the performance and needs of students they share in common. During a team meeting, teachers shared an anecdote of a student with disabilities that had struggled with a complex concept. With the support of colleagues in that team who taught the student the previous year, they discussed strategies to support that student. All teachers spoke about how valuable team meetings were to teaching and learning.
- To support teacher voice in key decision making and leadership the school has distributed a professional development interest survey to identify areas that teachers would like to engage in professional learning communities (PLC) to deepen their understanding of strategies that impact student learning.