Department of Education
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Albert Shanker School of Visual and Performing Arts
Middle School Q126

31-51 21st street,
Queens, NY 11106
Principal: Alexander Angueira

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Lead Reviewer: Dr. Joseph O'Brien

The School Context

Albert Shanker School of Visual and Performing Arts 30Q126 is an intermediate school with 555 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 15% Black, 51% Hispanic, 10% White, and 23% Asian students. The student body includes 14% English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 95.0%.

School Quality Criteria

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

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Well Developed

Findings
Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts. Teaching strategies, including questioning, instructional scaffolds, and routines strategically provide multiple entry points and high-quality supports and extensions into the curricula.

Impact
All learners including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs) are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher order thinking skills in student work products

Supporting Evidence

- Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices are informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts. In six of seven classrooms, students collaborated in flexible groups on tiered activities. For example, in eighth grade English language arts class, students were placed into one of four differentiated groups to identify character traits, textual evidence, and supporting details. In a seventh grade Science class, students posed hypotheses and used the scientific method in one of three differentiated groups. In a 12-1-1 special education class, students were given the choice of which scaffold they would like to use; iPads, graphic organizers, or differently themed non-fiction texts.

- Student discussions stemming from think-pair-share, turn and talk, and stop and jot strategies were seen in six of seven classes. Questions including “Can someone give me an example from the text of what the narrator accomplished?”, “What changes will we see if we alter the variable Y?” and “Who do you think Snowball represents in Animal Farm?” were posed to students. To support teachers, professional learning opportunities on scaffolding and differentiation of instruction and Webb’s Depth of Knowledge are conducted at least once per week.

- Rigorous tasks that included the support of claims with textual evidence, use of the Scientific method, compare and contrast, and multi-step word problems were observed in seven of seven classrooms. Across a vast majority of classrooms, lessons were aligned to the Common Core learning standards. For example, in sixth grade math class, students adjusted one of three recipes for cookies using multiplication and division of fractions in one of three tiered groups.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
Across classrooms, teachers design and use assessments, rubrics, and grading policies aligned with the school's curricula. Common assessments are utilized to determine student progress and adjust curricular and instructional decisions.

Impact
School assessments provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement and result in adjustments in instruction and curricula to meet the learning needs of all students.

Supporting Evidence

- At the start of the school year, teacher leaders met to examine state exam results to develop item analysis data to inform curricular decisions. The data revealed students struggled with providing textual evidence and showing their work in numeracy. Adjustments were made to curricula including reading and writing supports to provide scaffolds for students.

- Teacher teams and administration have adapted rubrics, tasks, and assessments from the CMP3, Writing Matters, and ReadyGEN programs to better meet the needs of students. Teachers worked collaboratively to align tasks, NYC assessments, ReadyGEN, and CMP3 pre and post assessments. A uniform grading policy is in place across all grades and subjects.

- Student progress toward goals is tracked via benchmarks on Schoolnet, item analysis of student results on math and ELA state exams, and teacher created assessments. Teacher teams review student progress at least twice per week and school leadership meets each Monday to review data as a cabinet to inform next steps in professional development and teacher support.

- Datacation's Skedula online grading system is utilized to provide parents access to their child's progress. Teachers use Skedula reports to track student progress by grades and subject areas as well as to keep students and families informed of student progress.

- New York State English as a Second Language Acquisition Test (NYSESLAT) data revealed that academic language has been a challenge for English language learners. Professional development was provided to support teachers on the use of academic vocabulary in reading comprehension and words that contain multiple meanings (Tier 1 and Tier 2 words). Teachers modified instruction to incorporate academic strategies into their lessons.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed

Findings
School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core learning standards (CCLS) and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Rigorous habits and higher order skills are emphasized in curricula and academic tasks and are embedded coherently across grades and subjects.

Impact
The school's use of engaging and rigorous curricula for all learners including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs) results in coherent instruction where students demonstrate their thinking and promotes college and career readiness for all children.

Supporting Evidence

- Curriculum has been adapted from resources such as ReadyGEN curriculum for ELA, CMP3 for Math, and Writing Matters to meet the needs of all students. Professional development has been provided on Webb's Depth of Knowledge and best practices in curricular adaptations for ELLs and SWDs to support teachers in developing tasks that consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order thinking skills. Grade level teacher teams including English as a second language (ESL) teachers meet at least once per week to refine curricular to meet the needs of ELL students.

- Curricula maps and unit plans include questions, vocabulary, assessments, learning objectives, sequence of learning activities, differentiated activities, and scaffolds for SWDs and ELLs. For example, ELA unit plans include specific differentiated tasks for SWDs and ELLs across multiple lessons. The specific mathematical shifts and their descriptions are included in maps as well as a list of skills students should master by the end of the year such as, "addition and subtraction of units up to 20".

- In the curriculum maps for Gifted and Talented English language arts, scaffolds for students to compose sonnets, debate textual interpretations, writing activities, graphic organizers, and teacher-created paraphrasings, and meanings of related Romantic and Victorian era poetry were seen. In the grade eight math curriculum maps, detailed descriptions of mathematical shifts including procedural skill, fluency, conceptual understanding and application were seen. Seventh grade Social Studies unit plans teaching the history of Vietnam War protests included extensions for advanced students and teacher created rubrics and graphic organizers.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations that promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of the Common Core learning standards. Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students they share or whom they are focused on.

Impact
Structured professional collaborations strengthen teacher instructional capacity and support student progress toward goals towards college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet weekly to adapt curricula for all students including ELLs and SWDs. Resources from EngageNY and teacher created materials are used to augment CMP3, ReadyGEN, and Writing Matters curricula. Teachers and consultants from Writing Matters have provided ongoing professional learning opportunities and side-by-side coaching for all teachers in all core subjects in curricular adaptation and writing across subject areas.

- Teacher teams analyzed student data and discovered that SWDs and ELLs struggled with textual evidence. Special Education teachers created a mnemonic device for students to aid in the use of textual evidence that is now used school-wide. The APE strategy (answer, prove, extend an opinion) is used to promote the use of evidence and elicit complex student thought. Teacher teams led professional learning opportunities using the APE strategy and offered inter-visitations to teachers of all grades and subjects. In one 12-1-1 ELA class, when one group of students struggled with finding textual evidence to support their claim, the teacher said, “Class, let’s APE it!” and students in all groups began to use the strategy to identify additional evidence to support their classmate’s claim.

- Eighth-grade math and social studies departments meet with the English language arts team to collaboratively design writing projects and conduct data analysis on student writing. Teacher teams in math and English have adapted an item skills analysis worksheet that they developed with the data specialist.

- On Mondays, teacher teams and school leaders review assessment results, make modifications to curricula, and design connections and units for science and social studies. Data revealed that students were having difficulty in claim and counterclaim so the school made modifications to curricula maps to ensure additional time was devoted to providing scaffolds and supports including graphic organizers and task choices for students with disabilities, ELLs and advanced students.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
School leaders consistently emphasize a culture of learning that communicates high expectations connected to a path of college and career readiness and have a system of accountability to meet those expectations.

Impact
School leaders have developed supports and training for the entire staff to meet expectations and provide ongoing feedback to families regarding their child's progress towards meeting expectations connected to college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- High expectations for teacher effort and student performance are communicated at pre- and post-observation conferences. Teachers create two professional goals each aligned to the school's instructional foci. Professional learning opportunities were created to support teachers on providing access for all students into curricula and applying Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DoK) to ensure students were engaged in rigorous tasks. There is ongoing professional development in lesson planning using DoK, differentiation of instruction, and improving student-to-student discussion. Teachers receive specific feedback aligned to their goals and to ensure they are implementing next steps.

- The school consistently provides ongoing detailed communication with families through the PupilPath online grading platform. Through PupilPath, teachers, students and families engage in online conversations regarding student performance and progress toward academic goals.

- Parents receive quarterly progress reports, a monthly principal to parent memorandum, and a detailed parent calendar to ensure they are informed of upcoming workshops and adult education opportunities. The PTA has a dedicated space in the building for parent workshops on topics such as parenting skills, CPR, use of PupilPath, and the Common Core Learning Standards.

- Teachers and school leaders have developed a common understanding of rigor as a school community and set high expectations for all students through rigorous tasks with access for all students, including ELLs and SWDs. School leaders ensure that lessons and tasks incorporate this shared understanding of rigor and require that teachers use detailed scaffolds and supports including unique tasks, resources and discussion stems to promote rigorous habits that are connected to college and career readiness.