

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**Academy for Scholarship and Entrepreneurship:  
A College Board School**

**High School X270**

**921 East 228<sup>th</sup> Street  
Bronx  
NY 10466**

**Principal: Zenobia White-DaCruz**

**Date of Review: April 23, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Carron Staple**

## The School Context

Academy for Scholarship and Entrepreneurship: A College Board School is a high school with 371 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 64% Black, 32% Hispanic, 1% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 22% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-14 was 93.5%.

## School Quality Criteria

### Instructional Core

<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</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>Celebration</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>Proficient</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>Focus</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

### School Culture

<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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

### Systems for Improvement

<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

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.1 Curriculum**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

School leaders and faculty align curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards and promote the integration of the instructional shifts, with academic tasks that emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills that support college and career readiness for all learners.

### Impact

Across grades and subjects, curricular decisions encourage inter-disciplinary coherence and include college and career readiness activities for all learners, including students with disabilities and English language learners (ELLs).

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers have developed curricula that promote coherence across grades nine through twelve. The principal has established a key instructional goal of writing across the curricula, with teachers expected to incorporate writing on demand activities that deepen student preparedness for college and careers.
- Teachers collaboratively plan curricula refinements through an analysis of student needs. All teachers' lesson plans listed modifications and supports for students with disabilities and ELLs. Teachers' lesson plans show planning of specific supports such as, varying questions, leveled texts, graphic organizers, sentence starters, front-loading of key vocabulary words, annotated notes, and homogenous grouping. As a result, students have shown an overall growth in meeting the demands of the Common Core Learning Standards across all grades and subjects leading to an increase in credit accumulation from January 2014 to January 2015.
- Unit plans in all subject areas are revised as a continuous cycle within teacher teams, provide numerous scaffolding and entry points, and reflect a backward design model that embeds rigorous tasks and higher-order thinking skills. For example, English language arts (ELA) units of study reflect choices from Engage NY, where writing tasks ask students to infer, make claims and counterclaims, frame arguments, and cite evidence.

## Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

### Findings

Across the majority of classrooms, teachers use assessments and rubrics aligned to the school's curricula to provide actionable feedback to students. Teachers consistently use ongoing checks for understanding and students self-assess, allowing teachers to make effective adjustments to meet the diverse academic needs of all learners.

### Impact

The consistent tracking and monitoring of student data and progress at the teacher team and classroom level results in students having a clear understanding of their next steps for demonstrating mastery across content areas and increased student achievement.

### Supporting Evidence

- The entire learning community of teachers has worked together to develop school-wide content specific and writing rubrics in all subject areas. An approved rubric with specific targeted actionable next steps, and the understanding that all students have the opportunity to improve their work and receive additional support from teachers to correct any misunderstandings accompany all assessed work products returned to students by teachers.
- Teachers use curricula aligned common end-of-unit assessments in all content areas and use the resulting data of formative and summative assessments to track student performance. Teachers create action plans and modify units after analyzing student work and they use this information to refine their lesson plans and adjust their teaching.
- All teachers utilize a school-wide system of checking for understanding to determine what students know. Throughout the vast majority of classrooms, teachers do on-the-spot check-ins with individuals or groups of students and require that they also engage in peer and self-assessment. Other formative assessments include entrance and exit tickets, the do-now, conferencing, discussions and class presentations where students explain their process and thinking about a given task.

## Additional Findings

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

The majority of teachers engage in structured, inquiry-based content area professional collaborations. A distributive leadership structure is in place that includes the assignment of grade and content teacher leaders.

### Impact

Professional collaborations promote the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts, and encourage alignment of practice to the school's instructional goals. A distributive leadership structure builds teacher leadership capacity, and provides opportunities for teachers to have a voice in key decisions regarding student learning.

### Supporting Evidence

- There is an established practice of teacher inter-visitation after each professional development session in order to observe teaching practices and provide peer feedback on the implementation of the topic learned. Teachers use these non-evaluative opportunities to learn from their colleagues and grow professionally as they seek to improve their pedagogical skills.
- A review of agendas and minutes shows evidence that teachers meet five times weekly to work on curriculum, unit and lesson planning, develop assessments, analyze assessment data for all students across all grades, including ELLs and students with disabilities, review student work products and provide feedback to improve instructional practice, thereby strengthening the instructional capacity of teachers. For example, after analyzing the ELA Regents data, teachers determined that more instructional time needed to be spent supporting students with citing textual evidence to support claims.
- Distributive leadership structures are embedded across all areas of the school via grade and content area teams. There are also other teams where teacher leadership is key: the School Leadership Team (SLT), the School Implementation Team for special education (SIT), the parent engagement team and the professional development team. The goals of these teams are to ensure that all students have access to the highest level of instruction, that all social-emotional needs are met and that all students understand and have access to the skills needed to be college and career ready.

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

The principal consistently communicates high expectations regarding professionalism, instruction, and communication aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching to all teachers. School leaders, teachers and staff share expectations supported with ongoing feedback and guidance supports that are aligned with a path to college and career readiness for all learners.

### **Impact**

The school's effective structures for sharing professional expectations result in staff members exhibiting a strong sense of mutual accountability in improving teaching and learning. On-going reciprocal communication with families fosters a culture of high expectations for all members of the school community in understanding student progress as connected to college and career readiness.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- The principal and other school leaders are explicit about high expectations and have a detailed professional development calendar collaboratively created with teachers and aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching and school goals. The principal shared evidence of pedagogical improvement through the ADVANCE tracker, which showed increases in observation scores, specifically in the competency area of questioning and discussion, a high leverage area the principal believes is an important area for teachers to focus on to ensure higher-order questions are being asked to promote students' thinking and engagement.
- School leaders have made business and Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) initiatives a priority to support students in meeting high expectations. Since December 2014, the Career and Technical Education (CTE) certification for the Virtual Enterprise program has been approved locally, and the school now partners with five employers in order for students to gain business certification and compete in local business competitions such as The Federal Reserve Bank, National Business Plan, and International Business Plan competitions. Additionally, there is now a computer science and research track and an advanced placement computer science class.
- Parents and students spoke about receiving regular and consistent feedback connected to college and career readiness and feeling very prepared to leave high school with confidence knowing they will have taken rigorous courses at school, and at the college level. Students reported multiple meetings and assemblies with guidance counselors and college advisors who meet regularly with them to discuss personal goals, their graduation requirements, internships, and college expectations. They discussed their appreciation for the availability of academic support and daily and Saturday tutoring, and for being able to have a voice in school decisions.
- Parents discussed receiving numerous modes of communication from the school via email, text messages, phone calls, progress reports, guidance nights, and the online grading system. They reported receiving immediate follow-up from administrators and teachers and raved about the Empowerment Parent Nights where they have opportunities to learn Spanish, computers, interact with teachers, do yoga, and participate in workshops on how to support their children with academic and social-emotional concerns. A parent stated her child has "blossomed" since attending the school.

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

Teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best, however structures for better engagement need strengthening in some classes to achieve higher-level discussions among students.

### **Impact**

Across most classrooms, all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities, are engaged using multiple teaching strategies and challenging tasks, however some student discussions require more structure to facilitate even higher-levels of engagement.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- In a social studies Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, students had to determine why the Iron Curtain was formed and using the four choices their teachers presented, use primary sources and documents to support their answers. Their teachers conducted on-the-spot assessments by having students use color-coded cards of pink, yellow or green to demonstrate their understanding, and in some cases selected groups of students were supported with annotated texts, and text in larger print or differing lexile levels. The delivery of instruction was seamless in that it was not evident which teacher was the general education teacher and which was the special education teacher as both worked evenly together providing instruction and supports.
- In an ELA class, students read the poem, "The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost, where the teacher asked for a close reading of the poem with annotation. The teacher directed a mini-lesson about the symbolism of the "road" and she elicited responses from most students and redirected one student when his response became too literal. Next, a student facilitator directed the students in a high-level Socratic seminar style discussion about why they believed the author would never travel this road again. Students discussed their analysis of the poem and in some cases made text-to-self examples as to why a person might not ever want to travel a specific road again based on their experiences.
- Although teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect a common set of beliefs, and teachers provide multiple supports, those supports are not always highly structured in the area of engagement, thus, students in some classes have limited opportunities in high-level discussions, and tend to respond directly to the teacher.