



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**Arturo A. Schomburg Satellite Academy**

**Transfer High School X446**

**1010 Rev. James Polite Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10459**

**Principal: Marsha Vernon**

**Date of review: November 13, 2014  
Lead Reviewer: Flavia Puello-Perdomo**

## The School Context

Arturo A. Schomburg Satellite Academy is a transfer school with 199 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 42% Black, 56% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 8% special education students. Boys account for 37% of the students enrolled and girls account for 63%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 63.7%.

## 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>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>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>Focus</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>Additional Findings</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

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.1 Curriculum**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

Across classrooms, curricular tasks were aligned to Common Core State Standards and scaffolded to provide access to all learners.

### Impact

Curricula and task school-wide emphasize rigorous habits for all students including English language learners and student with disabilities.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school leaders review lesson plans and units at the beginning of instructional cycle and provide feedback to ensure that curriculum maps reflect standards addressed, and that tasks promote college and career readiness. Teachers use this feedback to address instructional gaps and adjust curriculum prior to implementing their units. For example, for one the curriculum artifacts reviewed the principal indicated that although the teacher had covered claims, there was no mention of counterclaims. The teacher adjusted the unit and included a couple of lessons on counterclaims, as well as making adjustments to the overall lesson objectives, thus appropriately challenging students and addressing the course standards.
- In preparation for the school year, school leaders and network support provided over ten hours of afterschool professional development around curriculum development and adjustment at the end of last year. During these sessions, teachers had an opportunity to review curricular materials from *Engage New York*, the school aligned school-wide expectations for Performance Based Assessments Tasks, and staff created norms of curriculum development practices across the school.
- Teachers in all content areas and grades use monthly curriculum calendars to focus their teaching and learning. The pacing calendars include date submissions for all Performance Based Assessment Tasks. This process is helping to ensure that student work products, approved for presentations, are rigorous and meet all consortium criteria, in addition to Common Core State Standards.
- Through the school inquiry process and weekly department meetings, teachers review student work and assessment data, including exit slips and teacher assessments, in order to refine curricula and academic tasks. In this way they ensure that a diversity of learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities, have entry points to the curricula and tasks, and are consistently cognitively engaged.
- Teachers articulated that during department meetings they spend time looking at student work, discussing best practices, and modifying curriculum, particularly at the end of each instructional cycle. As result of these practices, all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, are able to demonstrate improvement in terms of their post-secondary readiness.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**2.2 Assessment**

**Rating:**

**Developing**

### Findings

The school is developing a system to use common assessment across classes in order to determine student progress and to guide refinement of instructional interventions.

### Impact

The current assessment systems do not consistently determine students' progress towards mastery across grades and subjects, thereby minimizing students' opportunities to encourage and develop higher-level thinking and more meaningful student work products.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school provides weekly progress reports so students are aware of how they are progressing in each of their courses. This also provides an opportunity for teachers to conference with students. Additionally, parents receive progress reports so they can be aware of student progress
- Across classrooms, teachers incorporate exit slips, peer feedback, and student self-reflection into their lesson planning. However, not all lessons observed included time for an exit slip and it was not evident that teachers use this information to make adjustments to instruction and address learning gaps.
- Teachers articulated that each content area did not consistently develop interim assessments to periodically evaluate student progress. For example, the English department completes a benchmark connected to their Performance Based Assessment Tasks, which aligns with the New York State Consortium Rubric. However, most teachers rely on the beginning of the year benchmark, the Scholastic Reading Inventory, to provide targeted instructions. The lack of consistent interim assessments limits the school's ability to adjust classroom and school-wide practices based on student assessment benchmarks, thus limiting opportunities to improve student outcomes.
- Across classrooms and disciplines, the Scholastic Reading Inventory data is used to inform teacher team discussions. While the Consortium rubrics are used to guide feedback on Performance Based Assessment Tasks, ongoing checks for understanding during classroom instruction are inconsistent. Teachers circulate during the lesson. However, actionable feedback is not given to students, and only two teachers were observed collecting data that could be used to make appropriate adjustments. This inconsistent use of checks for understanding limits teachers from providing students clear information and next steps to improve their learning.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
---------------------------	---------------------	----------------	-------------------

### Findings

Teaching practices reflect incongruence between the school's belief and actual practice. Additionally, there were uneven levels of questioning, student discussion, and peer and teacher feedback.

### Impact

Inconsistencies across classrooms limit opportunities for students, particularly English language learners and student with disabilities, to participate in rigorous discussions and become engaged in challenging tasks, thus limiting student achievement and hampering college and career readiness among students.

### Supporting Evidence

- Although students were guiding the class discussion in one of the classes, most lessons observed were teacher centered and most of the high level discussions took place between the teacher and individual students, thus limiting student-to-student interactions and discourse. Students engaged in different forms of peer feedback, and most students were engaged in the lesson; however, there were lost opportunities to engage students in more in depth discussion or analysis of their peer's artifacts.
- Opportunities for students to interact with each other during instruction vary across classrooms. In some classes students work in pairs or groups, but it was not evident that these groups were purposefully organized by the teacher. In addition, some teachers need did not model expected outcomes. These inconsistencies hinder student discussion, peer monitoring and self-reflection.
- The school believes that students learn best through group work, questioning and discussion processes that lead to independent research with an understanding of how to support their claims, along with having opportunities to present and defend their findings. However, teaching strategies do not yet consistently support high levels of student discussion, and research practices observed did not always lead to rigorous student work products, thus limiting high levels of performance and restricting opportunities for accelerated learning.
- The school focuses on supporting at-risk students by offering academic intervention services and making sure that teachers provide multiple entry points to the curriculum. However, high performing students are sometimes unchallenged and their individual learning needs are not always addressed through differentiated lessons that further extend their curriculum.

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

### **Findings**

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to students, teachers and families and have developed systems to monitor student progress and to support staff development.

### **Impact**

The structures and supports available to achieve high expectations strengthen shared accountability and help to prepare students for college and career success.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- All students are given weekly progress reports for all classes that list missing assignments and work that is incomplete or in need of revision. Students shared that the progress report allows them to stay on top of their work and helps them to know how they are progressing through the instructional cycle.
- The guidance counselor meets with students to discuss progress towards graduation, using a data sheet developed to track students' outstanding academic needs and graduation requirements. Students explained that during their seminars they have an opportunity to discuss and review their transcripts and expectations for graduation.
- Evidence from observations is used to develop teachers' goals and actionable steps to improve instruction and pedagogy. During the teacher meeting, staff members stated that the feedback they receive from administration is clear and provides new ideas and examples for how to address recommendations, which is helping to improve their practice.
- Parents applaud the constant communication both via phone calls and school letters they receive regarding students' academic progress and attendance updates. They report that they are invited to attend workshops around the college application progress and the main goal of the school is to make sure students are leaving ready for college success. To further support college readiness, the school developed a seminar course that students are required to complete that intends to make sure that all students are aware of high school graduation requirements, and to help students develop an educational plan that supports college and career preparation and success.
- The school was selected for the Scientist-in-Residence Program, a collaboration between the New York City Department of Education and New York Academy of Sciences, which will provide an opportunity for students to work with scientists in the field of genetics on a long-term scientific investigation.

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

### Findings

Teachers are provided with an opportunity to develop goals and lead instructional meetings. Most teachers work effectively in collaborative teams to share best practices, analyze data, and to plan curriculum and instruction in order to promote increased student outcomes.

### Impact

Teacher team collaboration has strengthened instructional coherence, allowing for the sharing of best practices and the promoting of curriculum alignment. The work of teacher teams is helping to improve teacher capacity and student learning outcomes.

### Supporting Evidence

- During a teacher meeting, teachers were observed assessing different protocols that could be used during intervisitations to collect low inference notes and provide feedback. One of the teachers explained that teacher-lead professional development is focused on intervisitation and on highlighting best practices so these protocols might be key when used consistently across the school during intervisitations.
- Teachers are encouraged to take on leadership roles in the school. Teacher leaders take turns in leading and developing agendas for meetings to ensure the time they spend together is productive and connected with their goals. One teacher explained that the meetings were originally facilitated by administration, but that they released this responsibility to teachers, and they in turn keep notes and agendas that are shared with the administrative team via Google Docs.
- Teacher articulated that the structured teacher collaboration helps to develop their practice and to align expectations across departments. They stated that meetings allow them an opportunity to review cohort data in order to make intervention plans. Additionally, one of the English teachers explained that this collaboration is helping them to set up shared language and common expectations for their department. For instance, they are all using the same writing manual, outline for annotation, and are aligning their practices with Common Core expectations.
- Each department has developed a set of goals aligned with short objectives that are intended to improve student outcomes and to support teacher collaboration. For example, the math department has been working on a tiered approach for student support services based on student attendance and previous performance in math courses.
- Teachers are provided with an opportunity to attend professional development outside of the school, and are expected to share and turnkey their learning with their colleagues during team meetings. The school professional development plan highlights opportunities for teacher-lead curriculum development and inquiry team meetings focused on looking at student work, support alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards, Citizen Scholar Research Methodology, and Performance Based Assessment goals.