



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

**Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning**

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2014-2015**

**Alfred E. Smith Career and Technical Education**

**High School X600**

**333 East 151 Street  
Bronx  
NY 10451**

**Principal: Evan Schwartz**

**Date of review: May 5, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Buffie Simmons**

## The School Context

Alfred E. Smith Career and Technical Education is a high school with 365 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 29% Black, 69% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 19% English language learners and 7% special education students. Boys account for 94% of the students enrolled and girls account for 6%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 80.6%.

## 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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Developing</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>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

The school communicates high expectations to staff, students, and parents, to engender accountability for continuous student progress.

### Impact

Structures that support the school's high expectations amongst staff, students and their families help to provide a path towards elevated student achievement and college and career readiness.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders communicate high expectations for staff as evidenced by the professional development opportunities, faculty conference agendas, parent and student handbooks, principal's weekly message and opportunities available for students to engage in the technical and career field. School leaders conduct observations aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Additionally, administration provides professional development on the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Students participate in mandated internships which are monitored by a work-based learning coordinator or by a staff in the career and technical education (CTE) field. Parents shared that they love that their children are learning a skill and receive a paid internship.
- Parents shared the opportunities the school afford their children, such as Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) preparatory courses and tutoring. One of the parents stated, "They provide job opportunities for our children. My child is working and learning skills needed in life." Teachers stated that "all hands are on deck" to ensure students attend school, engage in their studies and graduate on time. Students have the opportunity to take college courses at Hostos Community College through the College Now program.
- The social-emotional team, consists of guidance counselors, grade teams, parent coordinator, college advisors, teachers and administrators, supports students in meeting graduation requirements and monitors students' progress. College and career placements are differentiated for students. Students are given a college and career survey to ascertain choices. The counselor maintains partnerships with various organizations, such as the armed forces, trade unions and technical schools to present opportunities for the students.
- The school community espoused the school goal of 90% in attendance, 80% credit accumulation and 70% graduation rate. Flyers and documents promulgated throughout the school. The attendance, credit accumulation and graduates have increased since 2012. Though the current attendance rate is 83.8%, the school leaders continues to hold staff, parents and students accountable by communicating and instilling individual ownership in creating high expectations.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**2.2 Assessment**

**Rating:**

**Developing**

### Findings

The school has common assessments and grading policies that are loosely aligned. Across classrooms, teachers' assessment practices do not reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student-self assessment.

### Impact

As a result, school leaders and faculty have no clear portrait of student progress toward goals within and across grades and subjects. Consequently, the lack of checks for understanding does not allow for effective adjustments to lessons, which leads to student confusion.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school grading policies are inconsistent. For example, in one math class, class participation - 50%, quizzes and tests - 30%, homework – 10% and classroom citizenship – 20%. In another math class, participation – 30%, exams – 30%, classwork – 30% and homework – 20%. In a Science class, tests – 50% quizzes - 20%, lab reports and lab quizzes – 20% and homework quizzes – 10%. In another science class, quizzes – 10%, tests – 30%, projects – 10%, lab work – 20% and homework – 20%. Moreover, students during the interview did not know the grading policies for their classes or requirements needed to be successful in the class.
- Ongoing checks for understanding throughout the lessons are inconsistent across classrooms. During classroom observations, some teachers included exit slips, questioning, and walking around to assess student understanding; however, some teachers fail to check for student understanding or ask a general question about the main ideas of the lesson or activity. For example in a Science class, the teacher asked students “how many know how to do this and how many needs help?” Out of the 12 students present, only three students responded. However, the teacher continued the task without acknowledging students who did not weigh in. There are uneven practices when it comes to assessing understanding during and after the instructional task.
- Across classrooms, varying use of teachers' feedback to students hinders their next steps. In a math classroom, the teacher wrote meaningful comments in Spanish and English to ensure correction. “You made a few boo boos but great job overall. Be careful with vertical (X=) vs horizontal (y=) lines”. Additionally, in a Spanish classroom the teacher gave specific directions to students who expressed difficulty in conjugation. However, this practice was not consistent where the presentation of student work was either devoid of student work or meaningful feedback including next steps. During the interview, students shared their work. Student work comprised of ungraded work, fractions denoting how many questions the students answered correctly (such as “3/6 or 5/6”), lack of rubrics, lack of task specificity, or had a check with great job or excellent work.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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### Findings

Curricula and academic tasks reflect the process of planning to provide students' access and alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards. However, curricula and tasks inconsistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills across grades and subjects.

### Impact

This results in inconsistent access and ownership of rigorous curriculum that cognitively engages all students, including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

### Supporting Evidence

- A review of sample unit plans shows that the school is making progress in developing units aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. However, department teams are at different stages in developing Common Core-aligned curricula and performance tasks. Additionally, some departments are following a uniform method for curriculum development and unit plan revision. For example, teachers in the English Department submit their unit plan for review. Previous English Language Arts (ELA) unit plans included limited vocabulary, projects, varied assessments, multiple texts, technology and adaptations for learners. The assistant principal provides support by reviewing plans to ensure rigorous tasks and alignment to Common Core Learning Standards. The Spanish unit plan included standards, vocabulary, assessments, differentiated learning activities and assessments, resources, scaffolds and extensions for learners. However, in other departments, unit plans were general without extensions, scaffolds or differentiated assessments and activities.
- Lesson plans included differentiation for students, objectives, standards, materials, activities, assessment, technology and homework. However, intentional entry points and scaffolds for ELLs, students with disabilities or extensions for higher performing students were not seen consistently during the classroom visits. In addition, students were asked to describe the level of rigor of their classes and many of them rated their classes as 5 out of 10. Overall, the quality of the curriculum remains uneven among departments.
- Across classrooms, evidence of writing is limited. During the classroom visits, students completed worksheets. During the interview, students work comprised of work sheets, work without tasks or directions, limited authentic writing and math computations without explanations. Student work and tasks displayed inconsistently emphasized Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. In a grade 9 ELA class bulletin board, students were tasked to complete a worksheet where they drew a picture, added a one sentence personal quote and label to their picture. One student drew a picture depicting Christmas.

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

There is an uneven application of differentiation and instructional strategies to provide appropriately challenging and rigorous learning opportunities that promote high achievement.

### Impact

The delivery of instruction inconsistently employs scaffolds, extensions and questioning techniques to provide entry points, and discussions that are appropriately challenging for all learners.

### Supporting Evidence

- The administrative team discusses and models the use of appropriate and specific instructional strategies through department meetings, inquiry, and whole-staff professional development. The school administration believes that students learn best by being actively engaged in the lesson. Therefore, the teachers are expected to facilitate group activities. Moreover, the administrative team encourages formal and informal assessment through the lesson, in addition to the use of higher-order questions that are thought-provoking and get to the heart of the content. However, there is inconsistency in how teachers are incorporating and using these learning strategies to engage all learners and improve students' skills and knowledge.
- Although the school has shared beliefs about differentiation and scaffolding the instruction to provide appropriate entry points for students, the implementation of agreed-upon strategies for extending higher-order thinking was not present in a number of classes visited. For instance, in a science class, the teacher asked students about their blood type. Students called out responses and interactions to questions were teacher to student. In another classroom, students, including ELLs, worked on problems. The teacher posed rapid fire questions and students, including ELLs, responded in choral to teacher. A student expressed difficulty answering the quick pacing of the questions stated, "Can you write the question on the board, so I can see it?"
- Across classrooms, teaching strategies, questioning and discussion, inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula. In United States History class, students, including ELLs, examine documents and worked together to write a brief sentence explaining the significance of the information in the documents. Afterwards, students worked individually to write a paragraph answering the question: Was the civil rights movement successful? Students struggled to answer the question, to make meaning of the task and cite textual evidence to substantiate their opinions. The teacher facilitated and posed Depth of Knowledge (DOK) 1 questions and improperly framed questions. A student shouted out answers but was not corrected about the form or inaccurate information, such as "Brown vs Board of Education is with Thurgood Marshall." "The 22<sup>nd</sup> amendment is prohibition, right?" The teacher agreed with both of these statements without correcting the misunderstanding. In a math classroom, students used a double entry journal to explain steps taken and justify their strategy. Students were able to complete the construction of a 135 degree angle and isosceles trapezoid with 45 degree base angles but some struggle to explain steps taken and justification of strategy. Others students were finished with the activity and were not provided with extensions to support their learning.

<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 are engaged in structured professional collaborations in teams that analyze assessment data and student work and promote the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards.

### Impact

Due to the teacher team's inquiry work, teacher practice and progress toward goals for groups of students are improving.

### Supporting Evidence

- The majority of teachers are engaged in structured professional collaboration. Teacher team meetings are utilized to monitor student progress, attendance, review student data, devise goals, and evaluate student work, Common Core Learning Standards tasks and unit plans. For example, the English Department uses the collaborative work protocol to review their unit plans. The facilitator leads an evidence-based discussion about the unit. Members of the team ask clarifying questions and share evidence, observation and next steps. For example in the grade 10 team meeting, teachers spoke about the balance between instructional shifts and citing evidence to support arguments, and engaging students in discussions as main focus areas.
- Teachers meet three times per week across grade level and content formally, as well as informally. During the formal meeting they use inquiry protocols for looking at student work. The protocol has them determine what students do successfully, what students still need to learn, and then determine implications for teacher planning and preparation. Colleagues initiate dialogues during team meetings and modify plans after receiving feedback from the team. Teacher team meetings are facilitated by a lead teacher who sets the agenda and organize group task(s) on a weekly basis. The meetings are documented and the administrators monitor progress and inform next steps.
- Teachers meet to present a case conference or a group of students. Teachers have developed methods for tracking the growth of these students and implications for planning and preparation. A guidance counselor is aligned with each grade level and the counselors support the teams weekly. Teachers, administrators and guidance counselors as needed share facilitation. In the grade 9 team meeting, teachers discuss group of students and improving their academic performance. Additionally, students are monitored as well for not wearing uniforms and disengagement. Teachers are given cohort data to examine the students missing credits and/or Regents, copies of transcripts, Individualized Education Plans and past cohort students. Students' classes were changed informally with increased check-ins for targeted groups of students. The team examined cohort data and discussed theories of action. Teachers shared during the vertical meeting that they are more aware of struggling students with low credits and Regents and how their instructional repertoire is strengthened.