



# Quality Review Report

## 2015-2016

**Collaborative Arts Middle School**

**Middle School Q355**

**145-00 Springfield Boulevard  
Queens  
NY 11413**

**Principal: Tammy Holloway**

**Date of review: February 11, 2016  
Lead Reviewer: Deborah Burnett-Worthy**

## The School Context

Collaborative Arts Middle School a middle school with 394 students from grade 6 through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 1% Asian, 91% Black, 6% Hispanic, and 1% White students. The student body includes 2% English Language Learners and 25% students with disabilities. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 92.1%.

## 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>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 <i>Framework for Teaching</i> , aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	<b>Focus</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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</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>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

School leaders consistently communicate a shared set of high expectations to staff and families that promote a positive culture for learning.

### Impact

These communications result in a culture of mutual accountability for the staff and successful partnerships with families to support student progress towards high school, college and career readiness.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders determine the instructional foci, which are aligned with the Common Core Learning Standards and the Danielson Framework for Teaching, in collaboration with Peer Collaborative Teachers (PCTs) before the start of the school year. Teachers clearly articulate the instructional foci and their responsibility for moving student performance towards achievement of high instructional standards such as taking Regents exams in junior high school and preparation for success in high school courses.
- Communications of high expectations are consistently delivered in professional development workshops on: questioning techniques, the student centered classroom, rigor, technology in the classroom, accountable talk and using data to drive instruction. Weekly reminders of these communications are documented in the minutes, agendas and action plans resulting from each session. Reviewed documentation from a grade level meeting directed seventh grade teachers to consider the following *Big Picture* questions: “How well is the class doing in comparison to their grade level peers or other students in the school?”, “Why are these trends occurring?”, “What specific action steps can we take to address the identified conclusion?” and “How will you check progress?”. Expectations around a procedure for next steps, asking teachers to implement a strategy, review the data and re-assess to see if the strategy is working. These regular communications support all faculty members in challenging students to successfully progress towards college and career readiness.
- The parent interview revealed a majority of parents shared positive reactions to parent-teacher communications stating that in their experience it was frequent and productive. Several parents spoke of their being empowered to assist their children with schoolwork because of parent workshops that allowed them to become an educational partner with the teacher. Parents spoke specifically of being able to support their children with math work and projects after taking an Algebra workshop for parents. One parent shared that she can finally find “x” something she had difficulty with when she was in school. Similar experiences were noted after workshops on using technology and the Common Core Learning Standards. A parent stated how being computer literate makes her better prepared to support her child in completing his Common Core work.

## Area of Focus

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

Across classrooms most teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs that are informed by the *Danielson Framework for Teaching*. Across classrooms student discussions were regularly observed.

### Impact

Teaching practices demonstrate inclusion of rigorous tasks and student discussions despite some missed opportunities to further push student thinking.

### Supporting Evidence

- Student groups and pairs were created to provide opportunities for student discussion. For example, groups and two partner teams were created in a grade 6 math class and a grade 7 science class. Students were asked to “watch, listen, check on the work of their partner and ‘coach and praise’ them where necessary.” This activity took place while the science teacher monitored students’ activities by silently navigating the room. The math teacher had conferences with one group at a time, checking for understanding.
- Across math, science, English Language Arts and social studies classrooms, students were required to turn and talk, and engage in discussions centered on creating a safe place to express oneself. In a grade 8 English class students were asked to make sense of problems and persevere in solving them, construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others while teachers monitored, facilitated but did not direct the activities. Classroom visits also revealed students routinely being asked to present the evidence from the text that supported their way of thinking.
- Across classrooms student discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation with particular attention paid to building on each other’s contributions. Students reactions to each other began with, “I agree”, “I disagree”, “I have a question for...” and “I would like to add...” was routine. Though many contributions were thoughtful opinions, students are just beginning to support their responses with research and quotes from given text.

## Additional Findings

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

Curricula that is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and emphasizes rigorous habits for all students is utilized across grades and subject areas.

### Impact

Across classrooms students are consistently exposed to rigorous curricula and academic tasks that build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students.

### Supporting Evidence

- A review of online curricula maps reflect alignment to specific standards such as developing central themes in history and English which is reflected in the 8th grade humanities course. Curricula maps in math and science also demonstrate alignment to literacy standards and the importance of stating claims.
- Teachers and school leaders collaborate on unit maps, lesson plans, scores and shared agendas through the use of online data systems, including *Data Driven Decision Classrooms* and Google Apps for Education (GAPE). These collaborations resulted in revisions to the curriculum that created access to cognitive engagement for a variety of learners. One such revision is the “I Can” statement that is now a part of every lesson taught at this school. All learners now have access to rigorous learning objectives that are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards across grades and content areas. For example, an “I Can” statement for a math class reads, “I can design and conduct an investigation to demonstrate how natural selection works with preexisting variations.”
- English language learners and students with disabilities supports are aligned with rigorous content objectives and challenging tasks that are included in the curricula to support the student subgroups. For example: “Use the number line model to support their understanding of the rational numbers in the number system” is listed as a support in the 8th grade math unit on rational numbers and “Review the meaning of symbols, key terms and other domain -specific words and phrases, as they are used in a specific scientific or technical context” is listed as a support in the 8th grade science unit on inquiry and scientific method.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### **Findings**

Teachers use common assessment practices and grading policies across classrooms and content areas.

### **Impact**

Teachers provide students with actionable feedback. Informed adjustments and instructional decisions are made at the team and classroom levels after analyzing gathered information on student learning outcomes.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Across classrooms teachers commonly use rubrics and “Glow and Grow” feedback forms to provide students with positive reactions and actionable feedback. Student work is consistently displayed with assessment slips attached. In a 7th grade science class the “Grow”: “Instead of using upper and lower case, use scientific vocabulary such as dominate and recessive.” was on display. In a social studies classroom “Glow”: “Your words are intense and angry and that would be understandable for the slave owner.” and the “Grow” You must remember to focus on your specific point, refer to your prior knowledge and explain your reasoning. Instead you mention several different thoughts. Just elaborate on who would slaves want to contact and why?” Rubrics with peer feedback are also on display. “Glow”: “Your first paragraph was clear and I can tell that you were explaining the procedure” and the “Grow”: “Your paragraphs are pretty short. Add more details.”
- Teachers use common assessments across grade and content areas that are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. Results of these assessments are then used in weekly Data Driven Decision Classroom meetings to make informed decisions on adjustment of the curricula and instruction. Action plans are based on the discovered trends. For example, the math team discovered that students across grades were struggling with constructive responses. Periodic assessments revealed that students were able to solve given math problems but were not able to explain their solutions or their thinking. This resulted in teachers designing standard based tasks that allow for multiple strategies to solve. For example, in one adjusted learning activity, students were required to distinguish between rational and irrational numbers, convert a decimal expansion that repeats eventually into a rational number, convert a fraction into a repeating decimal, find rational approximations of irrational numbers, locate approximations on a number line and estimate the value of the expressions. These changes in curricula and teacher and student practice are a direct result of action taken using data gathered from common assessments.
- Post assessment data gathered to determine student progress in math across grades revealed that grade 6 students had difficulty understanding ordering and absolute value of rational numbers. A majority of grade 7 students struggled with solving real world and mathematical problems involving the four operations with rational numbers. It was also discovered that grade 8 students needed support comprehending and applying the properties of integer exponents to generate equivalent numerical expressions. The school used these results to adjust unit and lesson plans to include needed supports. Post-assessment data in English Language Arts classes resulted in the instructional focus shifting from guided reading to explicit understanding of class texts and writing.

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

Inquiry teacher teams, the peer collaborative teacher that leads the team and administration engage in collaborative data review and other inquiry practices. Distributive leadership structures are in place so that peer collaborative teachers have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

**Impact**

The inquiry teams’ engagement in structured professional collaborations promote shared leadership that has strengthened the instructional capacity of teachers and resulted in progress towards goals for groups of students.

**Supporting Evidence**

- All teachers use their data administration periods to complete Data Tool Kits after all summative tasks. Grade level teacher teams review the data in order to set priority standards for the upcoming units of study. Students are identified for small group instruction. Teacher teams review student work in search of trends across grade levels. When trends are found, instructional decisions are made to improve student learning. For example, the grade 8 math team discovered that two classes were functioning much lower than the rest of the grade when attempting to solve addition problems using scientific notation. After a close analysis of the data and student work, the team came to the conclusion that integer computation and lack of memorization were the two major skill sets that had to be addressed. The plan of action created to address the issue included the short-term action of including tasks that address integer deficiencies in all units and re-addressing common misconceptions about property rules.
- Teacher teams thoroughly analyzed assessment data and student work and provided each department with a list of the top three standards in which students struggled and needed support. The math inquiry team discovered that 70% of grade 6 students mastered the standard requiring students to write expressions that record operations with numbers and with letters standing for numbers. They also discovered that only 21% of sixth grade students have mastered the standard requiring students to find the area of a right triangle, other triangles, special quadrilaterals and polygons by composing into rectangles or decomposing into triangles and other shapes. Teacher practice has improved by applying the findings of the inquiry teams and making adjustments to pacing and tasks in unit and lesson plans. Teachers have decreased time on mastered tasks and have added time, support and additional checks for understanding to non-mastered concepts.
- The distributive leadership structure in place at this school has provided Peer Collaborative Teachers (PCT) with built in leadership capacity that results in them making key decisions that affect student learning across the school. For example, there have been adjustments made to school wide action plans, instructional foci and curricula as a result of PCT conclusions.