

NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Office of Accountability

Differentiated Accountability - School Quality Review (SQR)

SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW REPORT

DBN:	07X343
District Name:	District 7
School Name:	Academy of Applied Mathematics and Technology
School Address:	345 Brook Avenue, Bronx, New York 10454
Principal:	Vincent Gassetto
Accountability Phase/Category:	Improvement (year-1) - Comprehensive
Area of Identification:	English Language Arts -All Students; African American Students; Hispanic Students; Students with Disabilities and Economically Disadvantaged Students
Dates of On-site Review:	March 6 -7, 2012

PART 1: MISSION STATEMENT

“The Academy of Applied Mathematics and Technology (MS 343) is a community of learners who respect and support each other. Staff and parents accept, address, and meet the needs of the students in an interactive atmosphere of learning and creativity. Our school develops the students’ intellect and character while guiding individual adolescents to become life long learners. The foundation of our school is student-centered. Critical thinking skills, decision-making skills and effective communication are the educational objective of our learning community. Likewise, our goal is to nurture a community of leaders as we prepare our students for their march through the 21st century.”

PART 2: SCHOOL STRENGTHS

- The Principal and Assistant Principal, who are both new to their current positions, bring to the school a clear mission, vision and comprehensive understanding of the students’ academic and emotional needs, and they are making strategic steps to address those needs.
- The school leaders have developed a cohesive, collaborative structure in the Humanities Department. This culture of collaboration is now also evident in other content area departments.
- The school has established a safe, nurturing, and supportive environment for students. Additionally, the school’s tone is instructionally focused.

PART 3: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND UTILIZATION OF DATA

FINDING:

Data is used to address individual student needs; however, school leaders have not yet created interim benchmarks to evaluate the literacy programs that are being implemented this year.

RECOMMENDATION:

The school leaders should develop interim benchmarks to evaluate the newly implemented literacy programs and make adjustments based on the results of the data analysis. School leaders should ensure that all literacy programs are meeting the needs of the readers who are below benchmark. School leaders should evaluate the literacy programs efficacy in improving both student performance and progress.

II. TEACHING AND LEARNING

FINDINGS:

- While the school's stated objective for the silent reading program is to increase student reading, students are generally asked to respond to recall questions on related assignments. Students are rarely required to engage in the application of higher order thinking skills during the reading of the text.
- Classroom libraries are not consistently leveled or aligned with the *100 Book Challenge* literacy program that is being implemented this year. Additionally, school leaders have indicated that there is a lack of available nonfiction materials that would interest readers who are significantly below grade level.
- Achieve 3000 was purchased prior to the implementation of the schoolwide literacy plan. Based on interviews and document reviews, the review team found that school leaders have not clearly identified how this supplementary program will enhance the school's overall strategic literacy plan. No systems are in place to monitor its effectiveness.
- The school leaders are working with the Network to develop instructional strategies that specifically target students with disabilities; however, this is in the early stages of implementation.
- As a result of the school's decision to have block scheduling, teachers have inquiry meetings by department, not across grade levels areas; this has resulted in limited opportunities for teachers to collaborate across subject areas.
- There was inconsistent evidence of the use of task-specific rubrics with student-centered language that students can use as a tool for self-assessment and improvement.
- Differentiated instructional strategies were inconsistent across classrooms.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leaders should consider additional objectives beyond reading for stamina to ensure this instructional time is used for purposeful, focused engagement with text and employing various guided reading strategies. Teachers should receive professional development (PD) in the effective use of silent sustained reading beyond building stamina.
- The school leaders should prioritize the leveling of classroom libraries based on the coding of the new literacy program. School leaders should seek the support of the Network to identify additional high-interest, reading level appropriate, nonfiction options for middle school readers who are below benchmark.
- The school leaders should clearly identify the purpose and objective of the school's supplementary literacy programs within their overall strategic plan for literacy. Additionally, the program should be evaluated on an ongoing basis to ensure it is effectively supporting individual student needs and resulting in improved student achievement.
- The school leaders should continue to seek support from the Network in implementing instructional strategies that target students with disabilities. School leaders should monitor the performance and progress of this subgroup, and teachers should adjust pedagogical practices as necessary. Additionally, school leaders should provide PD to support content area teachers who work with students with disabilities.
- The school leaders should explore scheduling options that will facilitate collaboration across the content areas. School leaders should consider the implementation of consistent literacy strategies within all content areas a focus of this interdepartmental work.
- PD should be provided to help all teachers develop task-specific rubrics that use student-centered language. Student work, with corresponding student-centered rubrics, should be posted in all classrooms. Students should have copies of these rubrics available for their personal use.
- The school leaders should use classes where best practices for differentiation have been observed to serve as model classrooms for other teachers. Additionally, school leaders should work with the Network to provide PD for teachers who are not yet incorporating effective differentiation strategies into their instruction. School leaders should conduct regular observations and provide feedback to ensure teachers are progressing with implementation of these practices.

III. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

FINDINGS:

- The school leaders are in the process of implementing a three-year instructional plan for improving ELA, and there is evidence of some progress; however, there is limited evidence of interim benchmarks to evaluate the efficacy of the plan.

- The school leaders have acknowledged the lack of distributive leadership in the school. The teacher leaders, who are chosen by teacher votes to lead the various content area departments, rarely meet with school leaders. Teacher leaders are not charged with clearly-defined responsibilities based on an overall strategic plan.
- Written teacher observations were inconsistent in format and expectations and are not based on clearly-defined criterion which outlines expectations for teachers.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leaders should develop and assess interim benchmarks for the three-year instructional plan. School leaders should make necessary adjustments to ensure that all student needs, including those of the identified subgroups, are being met.
- The school leaders should ensure that all stakeholders in the school, such as the teacher leaders, dean and guidance counselor meet regularly with structured agendas. Topics for meetings should be aligned with the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) goals. Additionally, teacher leaders should facilitate aligning the work of the humanities, mathematics and science departments to ensure that literacy strategies are incorporated into instruction in all content areas. Interdepartmental professional learning communities should be established and provided with regular opportunities to meet.
- Criterion for teacher observations should be developed that provide clear expectations for teachers and result in teacher observations that are more consistent in format and expectations. Written teacher observations should specifically address areas of improvement for teachers, and these areas should align to supports that are outlined in the comprehensive PD plan.

IV. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

FINDING:

Although the school has taken a number of steps to increase parental involvement - including workshops, dinners, newsletters and classes - parents, teachers and school leaders indicate that the level of parental involvement is in need of improvement.

RECOMMENDATION:

The school leaders should seek Network/District support to explore additional strategies for involving parents. School leaders should conduct inter-visitations with similar schools that have been able to increase parental involvement to determine best practices which can be incorporated within the school.

V. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FINDINGS:

- The school does not have a comprehensive PD plan that addresses the individualized needs of teachers.

- The new school leader has acknowledged that, in addition to not having a comprehensive PD plan for teachers, an annual calendar of PD for school leaders has not been developed.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leaders should seek Network support to develop a comprehensive PD plan that addresses the individualized needs of teachers in supporting all students. School leaders should regularly monitor and observe teachers to ensure that strategies developed during PD result in improved lesson planning and instruction. Professional development regarding literacy strategies for middle school students who are reading significantly below benchmark should be provided.
- The new school leader is encouraged to develop a PD calendar for school leaders for the upcoming school year.

VI. FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

FINDING:

The completion of the school's construction has been delayed. Currently, there is scaffolding around the building, and windows are covered with plastic sheeting that blocks light and airflow. There is noise that impacts the classroom environment and dust that reaches inside the classrooms.

RECOMMENDATION:

The school leaders should seek Network support to assist them in their on-going efforts with the School Construction Authority to eliminate barriers that may negatively impact instruction.

PART 4: CONCLUDING STATEMENT

The findings and recommendations noted in the report are intended to guide the school's inquiry, planning, and the development of the CEP for school year 2012-13. The school should also continue its efforts in the implementation of the following Regents Reform Agenda initiatives: P-12 CCLS, Data Driven Instruction and the Annual Professional Performance Reviews for teacher effectiveness.