NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Office of Accountability

Differentiated Accountability - School Quality Review (SQR)

SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW REPORT

DBN:	12X318	
District Name:	District 12	
School Name:	The School of Mathematics, Science and Technology Through the Arts	
School Address:	1919 Prospect Avenue Bronx, New York, 10457	
Principal:	Maria Lopez	
Accountability Phase/Category:	Improvement (year- 1) - Comprehensive	
Areas of Identification:	English Language Arts -	All Students; African American Students; Students with Disabilities; Hispanic Students; and Economically Disadvantaged Students
	Mathematics -	English Language Learners
Dates of On-site Review:	May 8 - 9, 2012	

PART 1: MISSION STATEMENT

"Our mission, with the support of our parents, is designed to provide our students with highly structured programs that offer rigorous standards based curriculum. In order to create a school community dedicated to promoting continuous learning and achievement, our intense focus is through the application of advanced "state of the arts" technology. This process will nurture, prepare our community to be empowered and adapt for the purposes of meeting the demands of an ever-changing world."

PART 2: SCHOOL STRENGTHS

- There is a strong sense of community among the teaching staff. New teachers feel welcomed into the school.

- The school enables students to develop their technological skills through a "MOUSE Squad" program that supports the school mission.

PART 3: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND UTILIZATION OF DATA

FINDINGS:

- Document review and interviews with staff conducted by the review team indicate that the school collects data centrally and disaggregates the information to provide the school community with a substantial quantity of academic and demographic information about their students. There is limited evidence, however, that this data is used to regularly monitor the impact of instructional practice on student achievement and make timely schoolwide changes to the instructional program.

- Document review, interviews with staff and lesson observations conducted by the review team indicate that the school has instructional programs to support the needs of students participating in English as a Second Language (ESL) and bilingual students programs. However, there is limited evidence that the school has disaggregated existing data to identify specific groups of students, such as newcomers who are struggling readers in their native language, long term English language learners (ELLs), or ELLs (including long term ELLs) who are also students with disabilities, and regularly provide interventions that meet the specific academic needs of these students. As a result, the school is not consistently providing targeted intervention to support the academic progress of students within these groups, which impacts student achievement.

- Document review, classroom observations and interviews with school leaders and students conducted by the review team indicate absenteeism is a problem in the school.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leadership should review the current practice of data collection and identify formative and summative data points to monitor the progress of identified subgroups. The school should ensure that data collection efforts focus specifically on monitoring the impact of instruction and other school initiatives on student achievement. The school leadership should use the available data to identify trends and patterns in student achievement to explore the effectiveness of the instructional model, inform next steps in progress monitoring, and adjust instruction and schoolwide initiatives as needed. The school leaders should establish expectations for student progress at every grade level in both English language arts (ELA) and mathematics, with interim benchmarks against which to measure student growth, to ensure that every student makes at least one year or more of progress. The school should use data resources to monitor grade, class, and individual student progress and outcomes throughout the year and make timely adjustments to plans and instruction.

- The school leaders should review data collection practices related to specific groups of students and ensure that data is disaggregated to identify patterns within the identified subgroups of ELL and students with disabilities. This should include analysis of the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) modality report, as well as using the Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAO) tool to analyze the effectiveness of bilingual and ESL programs. This analysis should be used to create targeted interventions in both ELA and mathematics that address the specific academic needs of subgroups within the identified groups.

- School leadership should develop a protocol for monitoring schoolwide attendance data and analyzing trends and patterns to understand reasons for student absenteeism. The school should ensure that teachers regularly record attendance data in Skedula and use this data to support the schoolwide attendance policies and initiatives. The school should develop a plan to address any patterns found through this analysis. School leaders should ensure the plan to raise student attendance is shared and implemented by the entire school community. School leaders should ensure that teachers take students' attendance accurately and attendance records for all classes are correctly captured in Automate the Schools (ATS).

II. TEACHING AND LEARNING

FINDINGS:

- Document review, interviews with school leaders and teachers as well as classroom observations conducted by the review team indicate the school has chosen to use "SpringBoard," from the College Board, as its primary ELA curriculum. Additionally, the school has developed curriculum maps in both ELA and mathematics using Rubicon ATLAS software that provides units of study incorporating essential questions. However, neither program defines supporting lessons and guiding questions to provide guidance to teachers in how to deliver instruction. Additionally, interviews indicate that teachers in both ELA and mathematics plan lessons independently. As a result, the quality of instruction and time frames for delivery vary from classroom to classroom.

- Document reviews and interviews with school leaders and members of staff conducted by the review team demonstrate that individual teachers keep substantial Assessment Data Analysis (ADA) binders that include common end of unit assessments and notes of individual skill assessments. These binders provide teachers with data that can be used to group students and inform instruction. However, a review of teacher lesson plans and classroom observations conducted by the review team provided limited evidence that ELA and mathematics teachers regularly use the data from the ADA binders to differentiate and scaffold instruction to meet the diverse needs of learners, including students with disabilities and ELLs.

- Document review and interviews conducted by the review team indicate that ELA teachers use common end of unit assessments that are kept in each teacher's ADA binder. Interviews also indicate that teachers develop their own interim progress monitoring assessments that are administered within each of the units of study in ELA classes. There is limited evidence, however, that these interim progress-monitoring assessments are uniform across grade levels. Additionally, there is little evidence that teachers use data from these assessments to regularly inform and adjust their instruction or to develop specific progress benchmarks for students.

- Interviews with school leaders conducted by the review team indicated that the school expected teachers to structure lessons using the "Point of Entry" model (POEM), which includes a posted aim, a mini-lesson, time for independent student work, and a summary. However, classroom observations conducted by the review team provided limited evidence that teachers were implementing this model with fidelity throughout all classrooms. In many ELA classrooms, lesson pacing was slow and mini-lessons were often extended, resulting in limited opportunity for guided

and independent student practice. Consequently, instructional time was not maximized to meet students' varied needs.

- Lesson observations by the review team provide evidence that, in a few mathematics classrooms, students have opportunities to complete mathematics problems in groups or independently. In most mathematics lessons, however, pacing of instruction is slow, limiting opportunities for student practice. In one lesson, students were given nearly 15 minutes to complete a single problem. As a result, students are not being given the opportunity to build stamina in solving mathematics problems.

- Document review by the review team shows that the school offers eighth grade students the opportunity to take an Integrated Algebra course. However, a review of student assessments for this course, present in student work folders within the classroom, indicates the assessments are not aligned with the Integrated Algebra Regents exam. Some mathematics problems were taken from the Grade 8 New York State Math assessment, rather than the Integrated Algebra Regents exam. As a result, students may not be sufficiently prepared for the Regents exam. This practice makes it challenging to determine students' preparedness for the Regents exam.

- Document review and interviews with staff conducted by the review team indicate the school is currently taking the first steps, through the Middle School Quality Initiative (MSQI) grant program, towards implementing a system to identify at-risk readers, including students with disabilities and ELLs. This approach uses running records to identify student strengths and needs and next steps. There is limited evidence that before the implementation of this program the school had an established, schoolwide plan for monitoring student progress in reading. As a result, the school has not yet continuously assessed all at-risk readers or implemented interventions to address their specific needs, which impacts on the school's ability to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

- Reviews of documents and observations of resources as well as interviews with staff conducted by the review team provide evidence that the school has purchased a Spanish language Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) system. However, there is limited evidence that the school uses this system or has developed another system for monitoring the progress of literacy in Spanish for struggling readers in the bilingual program. Additionally, the leveled books intended to be used for assessment within the DRA system are being used as the native language leveled library in the bilingual program. As a result, ELLs in the bilingual program have limited choices of independent reading material to support developing literacy skills in their native language.

- Document review and classroom observations conducted by the review team indicate that rubrics are used to give students feedback on their end of unit work. There is limited evidence, however, that rubrics are consistently used throughout units of study to provide students with ongoing feedback. Similarly, there is limited evidence that teachers make available exemplars in ELA and mathematics to provide students with examples of work at Levels 1, 2, 3 and 4. As a result, students do not have clear guidelines on what constitutes proficient and advanced work.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leadership should ensure that teachers use the provided common planning time to develop the ELA curriculum and ensure consistency of instruction. School leaders should also

consider providing professional development (PD) in how to develop supporting lessons that are differentiated and scaffolded to ensure the curriculum is accessible to diverse learners, including students in identified subgroups. The school should consider using teachers who are experts in scaffolding and differentiating instruction to support other teachers in this process.

- The school leaders should provide PD to all teachers, including ELA and mathematics teachers, on developing strategy-based lessons and tasks that use data gathered in ADA binders to inform differentiated grouping and differentiated tasks. School leaders should develop expectations for teacher planning that include the use of ADA data to inform daily instruction. School leaders should regularly monitor teachers' implementation of these strategies through regular formal and informal observations of teacher planning and delivery of instruction.

- The school leadership should ensure that ELA teachers use common planning time to develop common, interim progress monitoring assessments that are aligned with the curriculum and monitor student progress throughout the unit of study. School leaders should ensure that data from these interim assessments are used to develop supporting lessons that are differentiated and scaffolded. Teachers should also work together to set specific benchmark goals for students and use the common planning time to regularly evaluate student progress towards these benchmarks.

- The school leadership should provide PD supporting the implementation of the school's selected model for instructional delivery, including guidance for teachers on how to plan and effectively deliver a lesson using the POEM. The school leadership should develop and publish criteria for lesson planning that will support teachers in developing lessons to ensure that all elements of this model are fully planned for and implemented during daily instruction. School leaders should also regularly monitor teachers' implementation of these strategies through frequent formal and informal observations.

- The school leadership should ensure that mathematics teachers are provided with PD on how to effectively plan and implement quality mathematics instruction within the school's chosen method for instructional delivery, POEM. The school leaders should regularly monitor teachers' planning and implementation of the learned PD strategies to ensure that students are regularly provided with time to work both independently and collaboratively to solve mathematics problems.

- The school leadership should regularly monitor instruction and assessment within the school's Integrated Algebra course to ensure that it is sufficiently rigorous to prepare students for the Regents exam and high school mathematics courses.

- The school leadership should build on the initiatives being implemented through the MSQI program and develop a schoolwide plan to expand reading assessment and intervention to address the needs of all at-risk readers. This plan should include opportunities to continuously assess student reading progress in both instructional and independent levels through running records and provide specific and appropriate interventions to students who continue to need additional support in reading. Furthermore, the school should seek to procure extensive leveled classroom libraries in students' native languages and English in order for students to have access to adequate books for guided reading and independent reading and support students' varied interests and learning needs.

- The school leadership should ensure that components of the Spanish language DRA system are used to assess student literacy in the native language. The texts associated with the assessment system should be used for assessment purposes only and the school should provide separate native language leveled libraries.

- The school leadership should collaborate with teachers to establish structures and expectations for developing task-specific rubrics for use during units of study. These rubrics should demonstrate clear expectations for high-quality work and provide students with guidelines to help them take responsibility for assessing and improving their own work. School leaders should regularly monitor and evaluate the quality and use of rubrics in providing feedback to students.

III. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

FINDINGS:

- Document review and interviews with school leaders conducted by the review team provide evidence that, in addition to formal observations, the school leaders conduct informal observations using the TeachScape program. School leaders also participate with teachers and the parent coordinator in monthly instructional rounds. However, there is limited evidence that school leaders have developed a formalized system to ensure instructional practices improve as a result of these observations. Concerns identified during classrooms walkthroughs included "lack of standards," "lack of rubrics, models, exemplars," "teachers answering their own questions," "teachers unprepared," and "wasted time." There is little evidence that the subsequent PD and follow up monitoring was aligned and related to these concerns.

- Document review and interviews with staff conducted by the review team indicate that the school has both an ESL and a bilingual program. However, the majority of the teachers who provide ESL instruction are not certified in ESL, and there is limited evidence that they have been provided with PD to support ESL instruction. Additionally, review of documentation and classroom observations by the review team indicate that some ELLs are not receiving the mandated instructional minutes. Some ELL students with Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs) who are a part of the identified subgroups that have not made AYP in English language arts are not being provided with adequate instructional support in classroom settings to meet their language development needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leadership should develop a calendar for informal observations that includes a structure for regularly monitoring teachers. The school leaders should follow this calendar and use the TeachScape program to record and revisit recommendations made to teachers to ensure teachers are implementing recommendations effectively. The school leaders should also regularly analyze data provided from the TeachScape program to identify PD needs of teachers.

- The school leaders should review the school's table of organization and identify teachers who are not certified in ESL. The school leadership should ensure that these teachers are provided with opportunities to access appropriate accreditation and additional PD support. Additionally, the school should ensure that all ELLs are programmed to receive the mandated instructional time to

support their language development. The school leadership should also revisit the current teacher assignments in order to ensure that certified ESL teachers provide service to the maximum number of students possible.

IV. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

FINDINGS:

- Interviews conducted by the review team with members of staff indicate that the school's system for referring students to special education includes implementing Response to Intervention (RTI) prior to initial review. The interventions offered include afterschool, Saturday School or academic intervention services (AIS) conducted during the school day. However, there is limited evidence that the school has developed a method for measuring the impact of interventions on student progress.

- Document review and interviews conducted by the review team with staff and the School Leadership Team show that the school's Positive Behavioral Intervention System (PBIS) has been in place for four years. There are PBIS posters in the hallways, the staircases, and the cafeteria. However, classroom observations conducted by the review team indicate that this program is not being implemented consistently throughout the school. As a result, behavior problems persist in classrooms and hallways disrupting student learning.

- Lesson observations conducted by the review team indicate that many classrooms have reading resources and some have leveled libraries. However, there is limited evidence that libraries throughout the school are consistently leveled to meet students' reading needs in each classroom. In addition, many libraries do not have sufficient materials to support guided practice and independent reading or provide books for at-home reading. As a result, instructional and independent reading is not fully supported, and students, including those in the identified subgroups, are not consistently supported in developing the fluency, comprehension, and stamina necessary to reach the proficient or advanced levels.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders should ensure there is a method for measuring progress in order to establish the effectiveness of interventions. The school leaders should review the school's system for referring students to special education, including consideration of the amount of time available for RTI and a review of the effectiveness of the current system. The findings from this analysis should be used to make adjustments to the school's process for referrals.

- School leadership should provide teachers with ongoing PD support to enable them to implement the PBIS program effectively and consistently and ensure students have a clear understanding of expectations for appropriate behavior. School leaders should monitor teachers' continued integration of the PBIS program through regular formal and informal observations.

- The school leadership, with the support of the Network, should review the school's funding streams and grants to facilitate the acquisition of reading resources that support leveled guided practice, independent reading, and lending libraries for at-home reading.

V. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FINDING:

Document review and interviews with members of staff conducted by the review team show there is a calendar of PD activities that take place throughout the year. However, there was limited evidence that the school currently has a comprehensive PD plan aligned to the school goals indicated in the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP). As a result, PD is not strategically designed to address both schoolwide needs and teachers' individualized needs in order to promote ongoing school improvement.

RECOMMENDATION:

The school leadership should work with staff to develop a comprehensive PD plan to address schoolwide and individualized needs. The aim of the plan should be to improve students' performance, including those within the identified subgroups, through the schoolwide integration of effective pedagogical practices.

VI. FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

FINDINGS:

- Classroom observations conducted by the review team indicate that a few classrooms are organized to support instruction, with print-rich environments and desks set up in clusters to facilitate group work and cooperative learning. However, this is not consistent throughout the school. Some of the classrooms that were observed were cluttered and disorganized, with student belongings and teaching materials placed haphazardly throughout the room.

- Observation by the review team indicates the school's library contains computers as well as reading materials. However, many books are outdated. Although there is a section dedicated to Spanish language books, these resources do not sufficiently support instruction in native language arts. Additionally, there is limited evidence that teachers regularly use the library as a resource to enrich their own classroom libraries.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leadership and staff should develop schoolwide expectations for teachers in maintaining classroom environments that support student learning. Additionally, school leaders should incorporate a review of classroom environments into their instructional rounds in order to monitor consistent implementation of expectations.

- The school leaders, with the support of the Network, should identify additional support to update library resources. School leaders should also consider working with teachers to ensure that the updated library is a welcoming environment for students and teachers and provides sufficient support to ELA teachers to enrich their curriculum.

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 Comprehensive Educational Plan (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 Common Core Learning Standards, Data Driven Instruction and the Annual Professional Performance Reviews for teacher effectiveness.