Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Academy for Health Careers

High school 17K751

150 Albany Ave.
Brooklyn
NY 11213

Principal: Deonne Martin

Dates of Review:
March 2, 2017 - March 3, 2017

Lead Reviewer: AJ Hepworth
The Quality Review Report

The Quality Review is a two-day school visit by an experienced educator. During the review, the reviewer visits classrooms, talks with parents, students, teachers, and school leaders and uses a rubric to evaluate how well the school is organized to support student achievement.

The Quality Review Report provides a rating for all ten indicators of the Quality Review Rubric in three categories: Instructional Core, School Culture, and Systems for Improvement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Celebration** to highlight an area in which the school does well to support student learning and achievement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Focus** to highlight an area the school should work on to support student learning and achievement. The remaining indicators are identified as **Additional Finding**. This report presents written findings, impact, and site-specific supporting evidence for six indicators.

Information about the School


School Quality Ratings

### Instructional Core

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school…</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### School Culture

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
<td>Area of Celebration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Evaluate the quality of school-level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

| Quality Indicator: | 4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision | Rating: | Well Developed |

Findings
School leaders and teacher peers support the development of teachers, including those new to the profession, with effective feedback and next steps from frequent cycles of classroom observations, intervisitations, conferences, and analysis of student work and data. Additionally, feedback to teachers accurately captures strengths, challenges, and next steps using the Danielson Framework for Teaching in a very timely manner.

Impact
Schoolwide instructional practices and strategies that promote professional growth and reflection are elevated. Additionally, feedback articulates clear expectations for teacher practice, supports teacher development, and aligns with professional goals for teachers.

Supporting Evidence

- Observations are completed by school leaders through frequent cycles of visitations. Immediate feedback is often provided to teachers during a brief conversation in a very pointed manner to help improve the instructional practice on the very day of the observation. More explicit feedback is provided on the written Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) evaluator form. For both formal and informal observations, the evidence collected during observations is rated in accordance to the Danielson Framework for Teaching rubric with rationale. Additionally, evaluator notes are provided at the end of the APPR form, highlighting strengths observed during the lesson and including several areas for improvement based on specific classroom interactions. For example, one APPR form noted the teacher should “Let students know verbally and visually the criteria for being assessed and provide them with a checklist so they can work to your expectations and then self-correct.” Similarly, another APPR evaluation encouraged the teacher “To increase students’ intellectual engagement and quality of discussions, invite students to respond directly to their peers’ responses, build on each other’s ideas and/or ask another question.”

- Teachers overwhelmingly agree the feedback they receive from their observations appropriately reflects their development and offers next steps to improve their instruction. During discussions, several teachers noted they are often challenged about the quality and variety of their questioning. The feedback provided from several observations noted that too few higher-order questions were asked of students with disabilities. One teacher further stated she needs to purposefully ask leveled questions to support more critical thinking by her students with disabilities. Similarly, another teacher noted her observer is good at providing timely feedback with good insight. Most recently, it was recommended that a math teacher provide a geometry reference sheet for select students who would benefit from the resource. Since receiving this suggestion, the teacher has provided a reference sheet for select students and seen greater levels of engagement and understanding by those students.

- Peers and coaches support the development of their profession through walk-throughs and intervisitation. During walk-throughs, evidence of what was seen, what worked well, and suggestions for growth are collected. Specific areas of focus for all staff included using high-level questioning and discussion techniques, engaging students in learning, and using assessment in instruction. Some of these findings are used to guide conversations connected to teachers’ establishing personal and professional goals at midyear check-ins with school leadership. Data results from prior observations, benchmark assessments, formative assessments, and personal experiences are also used to set and align professional goals for teachers.
Findings

The school is developing in their use of tracking assessment tools to measure student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas. However, teacher questioning practices and the use of formative assessment during instruction are inconsistent.

Impact

Common assessment results are inconsistently used to adjust curricula and instruction at the team and classroom levels. Consequently, teachers inconsistently make effective adjustments to meet students’ learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- At the beginning of the year, teachers administer benchmark assessments across most classes. The rubrics used to grade the benchmark assessments are the same rubrics used during instruction and assessment throughout the school year. The results of the assessments are used to identify supports for some students and make curricular adjustments on maps where appropriate. Although several teachers explained how the results of the benchmark assessments are reviewed and revisited during mid-year reassessment, lesson plans were inconsistently modified as a result of the analysis. For example, while students may have demonstrated an increased awareness of content related to the Revolutionary War, and pacing calendars for that unit showed adjustments. Similar adjustments were not clearly evident across other content areas. On the other hand, the selection of students for mandatory tutoring groups was based on the benchmark results.

- Data from common assessments for specific students across their program is collected by one of the coaches and used to track and develop individualized plans by some team members in grades nine and ten. An academic progress contract highlights teacher supports and instructional adjustments for individual students, such as one-on-one conferencing or the use of positive reinforcement during instruction. However, the generically-stated supports and the uniformity of instruction across classes limit the opportunity for students to demonstrate increased achievement.

- Teachers used a limited variety of checks for understanding during instruction. Most relied exclusively on cold-calling students, having them restate the task. However, in a majority of the classes, students were not able to explain their learning objective clearly. For example, students in a math class were engaged in group work to solve an equation and present it to their classmates. However, when one student shared her correctly solved calculation on large chart paper, it was visually limiting, with students at their desks unable to see and review the work sample, though they were asked to identify any problems or errors in their peer’s work. Similarly, students in an English Language Arts class tasked with selecting song lyrics that best represented rhetorical devices were mostly unable to articulate why they choose a particular lyric or to explain any criteria for their selection.

- Questioning across most classes did not support teachers’ making adjustments or clarifying the learning objective. For example, during a college advisory lesson for grade nine students, one student raised her hand when asked by the teacher, “Is it still confusing?” The teacher asked, “What is confusing?” and when the student replied, “I don’t know,” the teacher simply restated the information and moved on.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

School leaders and staff ensure curricula is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts with purposeful decisions emphasizing rigorous habits and higher-order thinking skills.

Impact

Coherence and promotion of college and career readiness skills are embedded in instructional planning documents for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- A consistent focus on the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts exists throughout curricular planning documents. All reviewed units and daily lesson plans include an emphasis on students’ need to read a true balance of informational and literary texts. Lesson plans for anatomy and sports medicine include four articles for students to analyze, exploring the central idea to determine whether or not exercise makes kids smarter. A curricular planning document for an English Language Arts (ELA) lesson includes lyrics from eight hip-hop songs for groups of students to read and analyze how rhetorical devices are used.

- The high school offers its students Career and Technical Education (CTE) opportunities which promote college and career readiness. Students in an Introduction to Health Careers course play the role of health care providers, measuring and weighing patients, calculating the body-mass index, and providing feedback about their nutritional habits. The lesson is structured so that students are expected to greet their patients accordingly and record vital information. Partners are expected to observe the performance and check if students’ role play as health care providers and patients supported an environment of respectful talk and active listening, including body language indicative of warmth and caring. Similar experiences are created in other CTE courses that invite students to comment and challenge their peers on skills essential to college and career readiness.

- Across grades and content areas, plans emphasize research projects, assignments, and student learning experiences that mirror college level tasks. Research papers are graded based on a rubric that includes a five-scale rating system measuring criteria related to thesis development, supporting research, content, mechanics, and Modern Language Association (MLA) citation and formatting. Students are challenged with researching using appropriate and credible sources, employing published academic resources to support evidence, and including parenthetical citations. Additionally, presentations have been developed to provide students with an opportunity to ensure their completed work focuses on higher-order skills and clearly aligns with the instructional shifts.

- Students taking forensics science and ELA are required to complete an interdisciplinary bioethics webquest that includes a series of rigorous assignments, such as the submission of several written essays, a quiz, a final, and the creation of a short film depicting bioethical issues plaguing society.
Findings
Classroom practices inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula, and student tasks and discussions are not regularly appropriately challenging.

Impact
Teaching strategies reveal uneven engagement in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstration of higher-order thinking skills in student work products and discussions.

Supporting Evidence

- Both school leaders and teachers believe that students learn best through collaboration, discussion, and making real world connections. As a result of these practices, students will produce meaningful work products. Although this was evident in some classes, it was not consistent throughout classes visited. Students in an algebra class discussed in small groups how to apply distance and midpoint formulas in various situations. These student groups were assigned differentiated real world questions to work through and then asked to discuss the validity of their solutions. Similarly, students in a forensics class engaged in a Socratic seminar to formulate an opinion about the war against drugs and its social effects based on information collected from a variety of primary sources. However, in both classes, students did not have sufficient time for reflection or to follow protocol correctly, thus limiting their opportunities to demonstrate higher-order thinking and engage in widespread participation. Specifically, Socratic seminar protocol suggests students in the inner circle are to communicate with one another while those in the outer circle are to observe and record notes or patterns of discussion used by those engaged in the conversation. However, during the class, students in both groups arbitrarily responded to one another and were not observed recording notes.

- All students in grade nine attend a weekly college advisory class. During instruction they review information connected to pathways to college. Students were observed reviewing their academic transcripts and discussing graduation requirements. However, several students were not provided with the resources necessary to engage in the conversation and sat compliantly. Additionally, the presentation prepared for students was visually limiting, and the questions they were asked provided very few opportunities for any critical thinking or discussion. Similarly, in a health and careers role play activity, students were all given a checklist for ensuring they completed the necessary steps accordingly. However, few were observed referring to it or completing the steps as defined.

- Students in a ninth grade global studies class were provided with a variety of support structures to help them engage in understanding the importance Jerusalem had to multiple religions throughout history. Students were seated heterogeneously to promote discussion and thinking. A short film shown included subtitles for visual and auditory support, and select students were pulled aside to guide them through questioning. Although a variety of entry points were provided for students in this instance, it was not evident that similar differentiated supports were included in other classes.
Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations regarding professionalism, building culture, and pedagogy to the entire staff. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture of learning that consistently communicates high expectations for all students.

Impact

School leaders have established systems to support accountability regarding high expectations for teachers. Additionally, ongoing and detailed feedback is provided to students to prepare them for their college or career beyond high school.

Supporting Evidence

- Beginning at the start of the school year, staff receive professional learning on promoting a positive school, which focuses on being receptive and respectful to kids and accepting people for who they are. This training supports communication of one of the school priorities, ensuring students’ needs are being met at their respective levels. Teachers further added that they receive additional professional development on restorative justice on Saturdays. They discuss strategies to incorporate more respect and culture-building activities connected to academic progress for students across all grades.

- Teachers across all content areas support and receive training intended to further students’ literacy competency. During teacher team meetings, common planning, and professional development time, teachers focus their conversations on the Common Core Learning Standards, especially regarding building students’ communication and argumentative writing skills. Science teachers note they have strategically adopted writing expectations and implemented MLA formatting in their classes to support literacy.

- Students feel they are regularly supported and made aware of their progress towards graduation. One student stated she purposefully enrolled in this school because, “we came here to be superheroes and help people, and kids, get better.” Other students noted they are aware of the high expectations surrounding their educational experience because of the papers they have to write on a collegiate level. The senior class president helped establish an annual information day for seniors to educate underclassman about the adversities people of color face in society and how they need to remain steadfast with their personal goals.

- Graduation requirements and pathways to careers are communicated to students by staff via classroom presentations, handbooks, and advisory periods. A recent college and career presentation on “good to go” explained to all freshman what the summative goals were for grade nine. The presentation included graphs modeling a negative correlation between graduation rates and increased absences. Similar graphs were shared connecting lower graduation rates with course failures and showing the credit accumulation track a student should be on. All students are also presented with information related to post-secondary exams, such as the PSAT and SAT.
Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: | 4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations that meet regularly and provide opportunities for ideas to be generated that support their professional growth.

Impact

Inquiry collaborations have strengthened teacher instructional capacity and the promotion of school goals, while distributed leadership opportunities have provided teachers with a voice in key decisions that affect student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teams of teachers meet every other Monday to discuss student work and instructional techniques used across grade and content areas. Teachers report inquiry meetings have impacted their pedagogy by identifying certain strategies that can be used within their own classes and by selecting targeted skills to teach to support students’ individual needs. One teacher noted how her team member suggested the use of a circle frame map to assist with brainstorming and understanding concepts related to World War II, prior to having students write about it. Although it wasn’t clear how well the circle frame map strategy was implemented by the teacher, the majority of teachers agree they benefit from inquiry meetings because the tools they gather and the creative processes discussed help engage their students more and lead to increased achievement.

- Distributed leadership structures have had a clear impact on student achievement. For example, a small group of seniors who were unsuccessful in passing the Regents High School Examination in Global History and Geography asked their teacher for extra help. The teacher suggested they meet every week as an after school prep class in the three months leading up to the January exam administration. The teacher approached school leadership and asked if they could create a period nine class for those select students to help ensure their success towards graduation. After approval and parental agreement, the students attended the prep class and all but one student passed the exam as a result. The unsuccessful student noted she ran out of time, although she did improve her score to a sixty-three.

- Teachers noted cell phone possession and usage was causing a distraction in classes and with students’ ability to focus on classroom learning activities. One teacher noted that cell phone usage was banned during summer school and students were more present in their learning. As such, a teacher proposed recently to ban cell phones in school. The teacher spearheaded a committee to ban all personal electronic devices effective immediately (during the middle of the 2016-2017 school year). The teacher-driven initiative was communicated and revised several times with input from school leadership. Students and their families were notified of the change in policy. As a result, students are more focused and appreciate the reasoning for the initiative and reduced distraction to their learning. Upperclassmen appreciate many of the new teacher-led efforts to improve their learning experiences, although some students also recognize that they may not necessarily benefit from these changes as they are nearing graduation.