Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Corona Arts and Sciences Academy
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 24Q311
98-11 44th Ave.
Queens
NY 11368

Principal: Beth Hert

Dates of Review:
January 4, 2017 - January 5, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Carlos Perez
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

Corona Arts and Sciences Academy serves students in grade 6 through grade 8. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm.

School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td></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>Proficient</td>
<td></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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Quality Ratings continued

### School Culture

**To what extent does the school...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

**To what extent does the school...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.1 Teacher Support &amp; Supervision</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings
Teacher development is supported through effective feedback from a structured cycle of teacher observations that captures strengths as well as next steps.

Impact
As a result, elevated instructional teacher practices promote professional growth and reflection throughout the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Administration meets with all teachers face to face after every formal or informal observation. During these meetings, teachers and administrators discuss all aspects of the lesson including lesson planning, pedagogical practice, and feedback which includes strengths and targeted areas of focus. Administration encourages teachers to attend post-observation conferences with their own next steps in order to help facilitate professional discussions. School leaders keep binders for every teacher where they track teacher progress towards implementing next steps and addressing areas of concern. Feedback from administration is precise, measurable and actionable. For example, one informal observation report targeted higher order questioning strategies as an area of focus. Administration suggested that the teacher use “Bloom’s Taxonomy and Webb’s Depth of Knowledge (DOK) to create higher order thinking (HOT) questions to push student thinking.” New teachers are supported by using a cycle of strategically developed observations which include intervisitations to other teachers that have the skill that has been identified as their area of growth.

- Feedback is delivered to teachers in a way that captures strengths, identifies challenges, and articulates clear expectations. Teachers are active participants in the development of the feedback and this is captured in observation reports. One observation report reminded the teacher that based on the conversation they had, both the teacher and administrator agreed that “although scaffolds were available for students, they were not applicable to this lesson.” The administrator also wrote that during the post observation meeting both teacher and administrator brainstormed ideas that included creating a computer station where students could use an online intervention system such as Khan Academy that would allow the teacher to assign “struggling students a differentiated task that would meet their individual needs.” The administrator also made suggestions to create extension activities whereby students can explain their thinking or rationales. The administrator informed the teacher that she would like to hear back from the teacher within two weeks to see what impact these changes have made on individual student needs.

- Observation reports and the feedback they provide teachers is helping teacher’s professional practice. Teachers shared how every observation report has “glow’s and grow’s.” They feel that feedback is “extremely helpful” and share feedback with their colleagues during their professional learning communities (PLC). Teacher’s shared how the first question during any post observation meeting is to self-reflect on the observation and “share our thoughts before anything else.” Several teachers shared that feedback has impacted their question and discussion strategies which has allowed for more student voice and rich classroom discussion in their lessons. Teachers share student data during pre- and post-observations in order to align class and individual student goals.
Area of Focus

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

Curriculum and academic tasks show evidence of planning and alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards as well as attention to rigorous habits. However, these components are not strategically embedded throughout all subject areas.

Impact

Student access to rigorous habits and higher-order thinking skills through a Common Core aligned curriculum is evident, but classes don't always allow all students to demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- Lesson plans reviewed displayed evidence of alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards (Common Core) and the integration of the pedagogical shifts demanded by those standards. A seventh grade science lesson plan included performance of technical tasks such as taking measurements. Students were also asked to determine the meaning of symbols, key terms and other domain-specific terminology. Students were also required to compare and contrast information from the experiments, simulations and technological sources that were used during the lesson. In addition, this lesson plan covered subject-specific standards such as the factors of weather like such as pressure, relative humidity, temperature and wind. However, planning such as this was not seen in every class, including an eighth grade math lesson where specific Common Core Learning Standards were not included in the planning materials.

- Evidence of rigorous tasks and questioning strategies was seen throughout several of the lesson plans reviewed. An eighth grade math plan had students answering questions such as “Why is it important to know how to apply a linear equation to the real world?” In addition to the level of rigor, this question allows students to make connections to real-world situations. Furthermore, students were asked to answer questions such as, “Explain, what are the properties of a linear equation and its solutions?” This level of rigorous questioning was not seen in all planning. For example, in an English Language Arts (ELA) class, students were asked to answer low level Depth of Knowledge (DOK) questions that did not promote deeper levels of thinking for students. Questions such as “What is a Hook?” do not engage students in full, rigorous responses that promote rich classroom discussions.

- Most lesson plans included learning objectives, warm up’s, guiding questions, essential skills, modeling, vocabulary, assessments, differentiation for English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities and homework. For example, in a seventh grade science lesson students were tasked with determining how scientists use weather instruments to measure components of the weather. There was planning that included specific grouping for students with disabilities and ELLs that provided additional support during the construction of their anemometers. However, intentional entry points and scaffolds for higher performing students was not evidenced in the planning or in the classroom.
Additional Finding

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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**Findings**

Teachers use rubrics and follow a grading policy that is aligned to the school’s curriculum. Across classrooms, teacher’s assessment practices reflect regular checks for understanding that include student self-assessment.

**Impact**

Teachers make necessary adjustments to curriculum based on assessment results and provide actionable feedback to students.

**Supporting Evidence**

- One student shared the feedback that was given to him on his written assignment which asked him to answer the essential question “How can small acts of heroism impact a greater community?” The teacher used a five-point rubric that rated areas such as organization, conventions, and formality. The teacher supplied the student with written feedback that offered opportunities for the student and teacher to meet and address issues that were identified. For example, the teacher informed the student that he needed to address issues that were seen in verb usage, and past, present, and future tenses and offered to work with him during a lunch period as a “lunch and learn.” Additionally, the teacher offered the feedback in Spanish as well to help the student who is an English Language Learner (ELL).

- Teachers use peer-assessment as an on-going assessment tool in classrooms. A visual arts lesson used a self/peer assessment form in order for students to evaluate their work products. The objective of the lesson was for students to draw a thumbnail design. Students were given three options for the subject matter for their sketch, personal experience, historical experience and current world events. Once completed, both the student and a classmate used the self/peer assessment tool in order to gauge whether or not the student work met the objective and instructions given by the teacher. The assessment tool looked to answer two parts, “Does the artwork use one of the four compositional strategies, and does the artwork reflect its purpose: is loss evident/communicated clearly through the use of symbolism or narrative?” Students then wrote a goal for the next class, and peers were able to give advice to their classmates. In one case, peer feedback included sharing how the student could add more detail to help add on to the message of war that the student was trying to convey.

- Teacher feedback to students is actionable, timely and gives next steps for students to follow. Examples of feedback was visible in an assignment where students had to formulate an organized and cohesive paragraph describing why the Neolithic Revolution was a turning point in world history. Teachers offered strengths and areas of growth to every student. For example, feedback included praise to one student on how she incorporated multiple pieces of evidence from the text that helped make her argument strong. The teacher also offered ways to improve which included, spending more time explaining and elaborating how the evidence supports the claims made. Another piece of feedback included how a student should go further into detail other than simply stating, “Farming is good.” The teacher shared with the student that he should challenge himself and explain in detail why farming is good.
Findings
Teaching practices are aligned to the school’s beliefs about how students learn best and in many classes challenge students by providing rigorous learning opportunities.

Impact
Diverse learners are engaged in challenging tasks and produce meaningful student work products.

Supporting Evidence

- An eighth grade math lesson had group work used throughout the lesson. Students were asked questions relating to what the Y intercept would represent in the real world. Students worked in stations based on skill level, and groups rotated every three to four minutes. Each table asked different questions and two of the stations had students using computers to answer questions using the online resource *Kahn Academy*. During the lesson, the teacher posed the question “Who can tell me what the Y intercept is?” Students discussed the question as a group, then answered the question, and the teacher asked the student to explain how their group came to that result.

- An ELA lesson had students engaging in detailed group discussions that centered on the question “What does the American dream mean to you?” Students shared their thoughts on the question with some students stating, “The American dream means that we have opportunities.” The teacher then probed further and asked that the students further clarify what they meant by “opportunities.” Other students shared they felt that the American dream meant that they can do or be whatever they want because this country has freedoms, and that the American dream is what everyone in this country is living. Throughout the lesson students were fully engaged in rich class discussions and respected other classmates’ points of view.

- During lessons, teachers were seen utilizing aspects of the workshop model. All lessons incorporated some form of a “do now” or warmup exercise, mini lesson, independent student work time, and a share session. During independent student work time, teachers used this time for partner and group work. In addition, teachers modeled or used some form of an exemplar for students to use as a guide. For example, in a seventh grade ELA lesson the teacher was looking for the definition of several words, including the adjective “dehydrated.” The teacher used the example, “I was to **dehydrated.** I felt I was dying of thirst.” Using this example, students were able to define and use the word “dehydrated” in a sentence correctly. In a sixth grade science lesson, the teacher’s goal was for students to be able to identify different elements of a conclusion for an essay as a way to help improve, revise and edit student writing. The teacher presented the class with a sample of a student’s conclusion piece and asked them to underline the hypothesis in one color and the testable question in another. Students analyzed and gave feedback to their partners throughout the lesson.
Additional Finding

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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**Findings**

High expectations are communicated to the entire school community along with accountability for ongoing student progress.

**Impact**

High student achievement and a pathway to college and career readiness is a result of the support structures that are in place.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The school has a career readiness week that allows students opportunities to gain information about different careers. During this week, the school invites speakers to come in and share with the students their careers and the schools they attended. Speakers included a Research Analyst, Sports Information Director, Gym Owner, Port Authority Police Officers, and other professionals including entrepreneurs. Students are prepared by receiving a list of speakers prior to their visit. In addition, the school asks that the students each prepare questions that they could ask, and offer examples of what an appropriate question looks like and what would be considered an inappropriate question. In addition, the ELA department has a unit on careers in order to familiarize student with careers they may not be familiar with.

- Communication to parents is an ongoing process that starts with weekly parent engagement every Tuesday. Parents have an opportunity to meet with their children’s teachers every Tuesday in order to track their children’s progress. Additionally, the school has recently shifted to using student-led conferences where students present to parents how they feel they are doing in each of their classes. Parents have access to Engrade, an online platform that allows them to track student progress and monitor their grades. Many teachers use Class Dojo and Remind, two cloud-based applications that allow for direct contact with parents on a “real-time” basis. During the parent meetings parents were quite vocal about the communication and stated that communication is “excellent.” Parents feel well informed and always know how their children are doing and are kept abreast of all the activities that are going on at the school.

- During the teacher interviews, teachers shared how they are regularly working with students and communicating high expectations for students with respect to college and career readiness. The school exposes students to colleges by having a college awareness day. Teachers wear their college sweatshirts and decorate their classrooms with paraphernalia from their schools. There are three separate assemblies where teachers share their college experiences and where students can ask questions. The physical education department brings in college and high school coaches to speak to students about the opportunities that colleges have for student athletes. Additionally, high school and collegiate athletes come to the school to speak with students about life as a student athlete and the requirements that they must adhere to in order to play a sport at the high school or college level.
Findings

Teachers are taking on leadership roles throughout the school as a result of distributive leadership structures that are in place. Structured teacher collaborations allow teachers to share best practices and are improving teaching practices.

Impact

Teacher have a voice with regard to key school decisions that have a direct effect on student learning. Additionally, teacher pedagogical capacity is strengthened as a result of teacher collaborations.

Supporting Evidence

- The school is segmented into two different learning communities, Perseverance Hall and Leadership Hall. This is done intentionally to allow teachers who have common student groups the ability to meet while students are at lunch. As a result, teachers have regular opportunities to engage in structured meetings. All teachers have input into the creation of the meeting agenda and they share best practices regularly through the inquiry process. In addition student data is reviewed, analyzed and discussed throughout team meetings. Teachers then create next steps and instructional strategies that will help to address the areas of concern that were identified.

- There are many opportunities for teachers to take on leadership roles throughout the school. School leadership is continuously thinking about which staff members are showing promise and potential and could possibly become a leader in the school. This year the school has added a new leadership position called “Head of Student Support” in addition to an English Language Learner coordinator position. Teachers take on the role of facilitators for many of the professional learning communities learning sessions throughout the school year. The school has allowed teachers to take part in a “Choose Your Own Adventure” professional development (PD) initiative where teachers take part in and help create the professional development they feel would be most beneficial for them. For the month of November and December there were a total of six available PD opportunities of which all six were facilitated by teachers in the school.

- Teachers and administration both believe that school improvement is happening as a result of teachers taking on leadership and responsibility for “just about everything in the school.” Administration comes to teachers with ideas and new initiatives and teachers take on the leadership roles and run the programs. Teachers believe that the way their school runs is not from the “top down” but rather from “all around.” Teachers and administrators worked closely together in order to help address areas that were noted in their observations, and, through the professional learning community sessions, have developed and implemented an intervisitation schedule that allows staff members opportunities to visit other colleagues and use peer reflective feedback when discussing the intervisitation session. During the professional learning time, teachers discuss areas of strength that each teacher possess and use that to create the intervisitation schedule. During the teacher meeting, teachers shared that, “Intervisitations have been valuable as they allow us to steal best practices from each other on a regular basis.” This not only helps teacher pedagogical practice, but students benefit as well.