Quality Review Report
2016-2017

John Adams High School
High school 27Q480
101-01 Rockaway Blvd.
Queens
NY 11417

Principal: Daniel Scanlon

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

Lead Reviewer: Thomas McKenna
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<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>Well Developed</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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### School Culture

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
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</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</td>
<td>Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings

School leaders and faculty have developed a comprehensive and transparent on-line system to collect all pertinent data and action plans pertaining to curricular, instructional and social emotional interventions and practices, including the regular administration and collection of staff and student surveys.

Impact

The John Adams High School “Staff Hub” on-line system connects classroom data collection, inquiry based teacher and administrative team analysis, Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) reporting and tracking, and schoolwide goals in a simple to navigate yet interconnected and highly visual database. All information is fully accessible to all staff, allowing for up/down transparency and accountability which has resulted in an increase in the coherence of practices and policies across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- The Staff Hub system ties together multiple systems that touch upon curricular and instructional practices for evaluation and adjustment, including the New Visions Data Tracking tool, school designed student classroom assessment trackers, PBIS interventions, teacher team agendas and action plans, interstation plans and feedback data, and assistant principal inquiry team work. This repository of inter-related data is visible and accessible to staff at all levels and both teacher-team agendas and assistant principal inquiry team agendas document the system’s regular use in informing all curricular and instructional revisions. For example, analyzing uniform assessments in summer 2016 through the Staff Hub, in conjunction with regents and class level data, provided the impetus for teams to incorporate schoolwide writing prompts into the curriculum, adjust the pacing calendar, and begin the specific tracking of student writing progress across classes.

- The Staff Hub houses the school’s PBIS referral system. This system tracks all outreach, interventions, and infractions so that data-informed decisions can be made around students needing more serious supports. This referral system is accessible to all authorized individuals so that real time conversations can take place and decisive action be taken within effective and appropriate time periods. School counselors, the PBIS team, and school leaders provide multiple examples of tracking and supports for individual students of concern. The implementation of this “school culture management tool,” coincides with a 10 percent increase in the school’s attendance rate and a 20 percent increase in students with disabilities graduation with a Regents diploma. The Staff Hub also includes survey data collected throughout the year. For example, the Staff Hub tracks student self-evaluation surveys against individualized instructional goals, and the results of those surveys resulted in a schoolwide focus on personalized student feedback. As a result, credit accumulation in all grades has increased between 5 percent and 7 percent, with credit accumulation for sub-groups such as the lowest third of student performers increasing as much as 12 percent from the previous year.

- It is a clear expectation in the school that every staff member practices progress monitoring with a focus on school goals and in alignment with the Common Core learning Standards. For example, the school’s Data and Accountability Director meets bi-weekly with the leaders of the school’s seven small learning communities (SLC). Within these meetings, the SLC heads walk each other through their data findings and analysis within the framework of the school’s stated goals, and co-create action plans and additions to the monitoring structures in place. The SLC heads also give feedback on each other’s systems. This process is modeled continually at all levels throughout the school, from the leadership cabinet to departments, grade teams, and finally at the classroom level by the vast majority of teachers. The school has established specific times on Fridays to allow for data entry and reflection to ensure all systems up regularly updated.
Findings

School leaders and faculty share a cogent set of beliefs on how students learn best informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching incorporating higher order thinking opportunities and multiple entry points for learners. Teaching practices and student ownership of work products varies across the school.

Impact

Teaching practices aligned to the Common Core instructional shifts support students to engage in high level discussions and to produce meaningful work products, yet there are missed opportunities for all learners to take ownership of their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Observed teaching practices demonstrated a focus on creating multiple entry points for all learners through strategic groupings and differentiated tasks. For example, modified worksheets in science offered additional language and visual supports for students, which led to quality work products, including high-level student discussions, for students. One teacher reported, “We have moved from a chalk and talk culture to a school where you will see things like learning stations and flash debate in most classes, with teachers always asking for students to explain their thinking and problem solving.”

- Academic vocabulary and student discussion reflect higher order thinking skills. In a grade 10 social studies class, students evaluated and discussed the impact of Roosevelt’s New Deal policies on America. The teacher guided students through activities including creating sentences that demonstrate how key vocabulary terms and political cartoons are connected. The task, first modeled by the teacher and then modeled a second time by a student, required the use of appositives in making the connections in order to reinforce vocabulary comprehension.

- In most classes, students engage in collaborative learning, such as in grade ten United States history in which students worked in groups to design a Socratic seminar based on a high-level exploration of Regents style document based questions. In a grade nine class, students reflected on their writing on a food web design and collaboratively shared strategies for improvement. However, when asked, not all students spoke to the purpose of the writing task and could not fully explain how the food web illustrated relationships between organisms.

- Varied prompts and learning activities engage most learners, with some missed opportunities for student ownership of work products. In an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) Algebra class, students applied skills from a prior lesson to solve for a system of inequalities in groups of three, with a student discussion component in which students had to justify their answers to their group. However, in an ICT English Language Arts (ELA) class, teacher-centered instruction and question creating did not allow students to take ownership of the material or demonstrate their thinking fully.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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</table>

Findings

Across grades and subjects, rigorous habits and higher-order skills are emphasized for all students, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

Emphasis on rigorous habits and higher-order skills require that all students demonstrate their thinking. Students have access to the curricula and are cognitively engaged through differentiated grouping and targeted curricular modifications based on data.

Supporting Evidence

- Across the school, ELA and Math classes follow the EngageNY curricula, while Science and Social Studies classes use a Common Core aligned curricula developed by New Visions for Public Schools. Teachers do not use a separate curriculum for classes such as ENL or ISS, but instead revise and modify curriculum through supports to meet the needs of all learners. Reviewing unit and lesson plans, supports noted include the use of the WIT (Writing is Thinking) program in all four core content areas, teacher and student facing trackers, vocabulary strategies, and scaffolded annotation. Teachers have the opportunity to refine their curriculum and insert these scaffolds into their lessons during department based professional development (PD) and department based common planning time (CPT). According to both teachers and school leaders, the determination as what aspects of the curriculum need revision is based on a number of data points, including the teacher skills trackers, student implementation of feedback, monthly department assessments, and conversations arising from teacher intervisitations, among other things. A record of curricular revisions is located within the school’s Staff-Hub database system.

- Lesson plans from all observed classes evidenced teachers’ planning for the cognitive engagement of all students. Lessons included group practice with differentiated groups, ensuring that students of all levels had access to meaningful and engaging assignments. A grade ten ICT global history lesson plan delineated four staggered student-centered activities to deepen student understanding of Deng Xiaoping and his Four Modernization Policies. The lesson plan includes a plan for differentiation that physically places specific students close to the front of the room for ease of re-teaching key vocabulary with highlighted terms for specific students. Plans also show multiple modified graphic organizers, and assigned groups for both the special education and general education teachers as well as students assigned to the push-in speech teacher. The exit ticket described in the lesson includes the completion of a “See, Think, Wonder” graphic organizer as well as a reflection to provide an opportunity for students to demonstrate their thinking. The lesson also contained an extension writing activity for higher achieving students allowing for deeper research on one particular modernization policy. Most lessons plans collected contained a clear “extension” component. For example, a grade nine life sciences lesson included opportunities to explore advanced Regents level questions for high achievers.

- All lesson plans contain “identified students of concern” to confer with for the day in a section of the plan entitled “differentiated instruction,” and the vast majority of tasks within plans are based on Webb’s Depth of Knowledge. All teachers identify success criteria for their students in each lesson. Lessons then indicate areas for reflection and exit ticket activities to allow students to respond. In science, questions include “How will a species be affected if they lack variation,” and “How can a harmful mutation become a beneficial adaptation?” In global studies documents, questions include “How do the actions of the United States and Soviet Union during the Cold War still affect the world today?”
Additional Finding

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

Across the school, teachers use common assessments to determine student progress. Teachers’ assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding.

Impact

Teachers use specific common assessments across the school, collect and track those results, and use that data to adjust curricula and instruction. Teachers make effective adjustments to meet all students’ needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers continually check for understanding throughout daily lessons through multiple methods. While teachers used traffic-light color-coded desk indicators and thumbs-up/thumbs-down practices, the primary check in all classes is the teacher-facing tracker document through which teachers capture responses from all students over the course of the period. In addition, there are student-facing unit trackers for students to both peer and self-assess in most classes. In a math class, the teacher conducted a check for understanding and determined that a majority of students were making a common error. The teacher announced, “I observed that many of you are flipping the exponent in the sample problem. Why?” The teacher then adjusted the lesson by re-teaching the appropriate skill to the entire class. In addition, most classes observed used some form of exit tick as a final assessment at the end of each class.

- When interviewing teachers, several reported that the traffic-light system of checks for understanding had been a helpful development over the last year across the school. Several stated that the traffic-light system was helpful for them in clearly identifying both gaps in student knowledge and missed opportunities in their own pedagogical practice, but that there was another layer of checking that had to be included. According to one teacher, “I had taught what I thought was a very clear lesson on the differences between capitalism and communism, and when I asked the class, the majority displayed green circles indicating that they understood. However, my practice includes asking the students displaying green to explain or summarize what was taught. When three students could not, I realized I had to re-teach.”

- Across the school, teachers use and track summative monthly assessments that assess student learning from the start of the school year to the point at which they are administered each month. Teachers, individually and in teams, analyze the results of these assessments and determine which skills and content both the class as a whole and individual students have mastered, and look for existing learning gaps. Instructional strategies then are discussed during common planning time, and teachers implement these strategies into their instruction. The following month’s assessment contains both material taught since the time of the last assessment as well as questions based on learning gaps identified in earlier assessments, so that a determination may be made regarding the effectiveness of the strategies utilized. Assessments are formative because the analysis of what was learned and what was not then serves as a basis for what must be incorporated into future lessons.
## Additional Finding

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

School leaders effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that communicates a unified set of high expectations.

### Impact

Communication structures around high expectations result in a culture of accountability. High expectations for all students are maintained and supported through effective guidance and feedback that prepare students for the next level.

### Supporting Evidence

- Staff members have built a culture for learning that provides all students, especially those in high-need subgroups, with focused and effective feedback that includes next student steps in learning goals aligned with the school’s college and career readiness vision. In an effort to build that culture through smaller learning communities, the school is broken into six smaller learning communities with a specific focus that ties to students’ potential college and career interests. STEM Academy, Media & Fine Arts, Environmental Science and Investigative Institute, Medical & Fitness Careers Academy, Queens Business Institute, and Newcomers Institute each have an administrator as well as teacher leaders and other teachers in supportive roles related to categories such as curriculum or culture.

- During the student meetings, multiple students offered examples of how they thought the school was preparing them for the next level in their education. One student spoke to the opportunities through advanced placement courses and high-level enrichment activities such as the robotics club. Another student spoke to her experiences through the school’s College Now program, which for a potential first-generation college student, included Saturday classes and a local university and some of her first interactions with college expectations. Multiple students said they enrolled in the school because of the options offered in the specific small learning communities, which include the STEM Academy and the Media & Fine Arts program. Students spoke to the focus of these smaller academies within the school as being key to their success and allowing them to develop personalized relationships with specific adults who helped, as one student reported, “keep us on track to our future.”

- School leaders communicate high expectations to staff through multiple methods, which include principal memos, staff emails, and consistent postings and messaging from the leadership team. Frequent classroom observations and feedback from administrators based on Danielson’s *Framework for Teaching* contain specific language from the rubric, evidence from the classroom observation that supports the rating, and actionable next steps. These are then addressed in subsequent classroom observations. This takes place through connections between assistant principals, model teachers, coaching, designated intervisitation opportunities, and regular opportunities for debriefs with school leaders where actionable feedback for shifts in teaching practice is provided. As all classroom and schoolwide data is visible on the Staff-Hub database, this transparency itself connects to a sense of high expectations.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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</table>

Findings

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations. Across the school, distributed leadership opportunities are present across grades and teams.

Impact

Teacher engagement in strategically structured data-informed inquiry-based professional collaborations has resulted in school-wide instructional coherence and an increase in student achievement. Distributed leadership opportunities and integration into the decision making process have impacted both teacher practice and student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Interviews with schools leaders and teachers, as well as documented agenda records, demonstrate that each day of the week is dedicated to a specific type of professional development and/or inquiry. Two days a week, teachers engage in inquiry groups, which includes analyzing monthly assessments, determining the impact of teacher feedback on student work, or monitoring student progress on WIT. Departments have weekly dedicated time to collaborate on lesson planning so that strategies developed in response to inquiry are implemented into instruction. All meeting notes, agendas, and implementation steps are updated to the schools Staff-Hub data system and available to all other staff members and school administration. As a result of the improved instructional coherence, the school has had a three-year increase in the four-year graduation rate from 55 percent to over 70 percent and has increased the number of students graduating college-ready from 14 percent to 22 percent. Preliminary data for 2017 graduates shows a continuation of that trend. Teacher team work has also benefitted subgroups, resulting in more than doubling the school's four year graduation rate for Black and Latino male students from 20 percent in 2013 to 43 percent in 2016, again with higher predictions for 2017. On-track credit accumulation for the lowest third of students has steadily increased from 65 percent to 75 percent over the same time period.

- On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays in those weeks teachers are not in department CPT they are in multi-grade, interdisciplinary CPT with their Small Learning Community. According to staff and supporting documents, a major part of this work focuses on attendance and tutoring inquiry, in order to determine what strategies are effective and which are not. Tuesdays of each week focus on strategic family outreach, while Fridays are dedicated for teacher collaboration, which this year is focused on interview visits. While teachers can be given recommendations to intervisit with other recommended identified teachers to view certain practices, the culture throughout the school is one of open sharing among colleagues. For example, a social studies teacher explained that most teachers want continual feedback from colleagues and said it was not uncommon for a teacher to approach another teacher and say, “Hey, I am trying a variation on my workstations in my class tomorrow, could you come by and give me some feedback?”

- There are multiple opportunities for distributed leadership practices at the school through the multiple team structures. Leaders report a strong emphasis on developing teacher leadership in the school, and identified five Peer Cooperating Teachers (PCTs), two model teachers, and an active UFT Teacher Center. Teacher leaders, including participants in the Leaders in Education Apprenticeship Program (LEAP) and the Scaffolded Apprenticeship Model (SAM) coordinate the efforts of the PCTs, model teachers, and UFT center. This team mentors new teachers and provides PD open to all staff members. Topics for professional development workshops are chosen based on such data as Advance ratings, dean referrals, team inquiry work, and teacher input, as well as in collaboration with the school leadership team.