Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Eagle Academy for Young Men
Secondary School 09X231
4143 Third Ave.
Bronx
NY 10457

Principal: Hector Velazquez

Dates of Review:
May 31, 2017 - June 1, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Jorge Estrella
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

Eagle Academy for Young Men serves students in grade 6 through grade 12. 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>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school…</td>
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<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>Area of Focus</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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Developing</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Celebration</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.4</strong> Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Area of Celebration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.4</strong> 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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</table>

### Systems for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.3</strong> 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><strong>3.1</strong> 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><strong>4.1</strong> 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>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4.2</strong> 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><strong>5.1</strong> 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>1.4 Positive Learning Environment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
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Findings
The school’s theory of action aligned to their core values support school leaders and teachers to create an environment of discipline, safety, and emotional support. Structures such as the attendance team, partnerships with organizations, and the house structure ensure that each student is known well and receives personalized support.

Impact
A safe and inclusive school culture that involves students making decisions that have a positive impact on the school community to support student growth. The coordinated efforts of structures such as the house system, mentoring, and guidance ensure the positive impact on student academic and personal behaviors.

Supporting Evidence
- School leaders make it a priority to maintain a positive environment that is supportive of students and adults. School leaders and teachers developed a theory of action around school culture in order to build capacity among all stakeholders to create a positive climate of excellence and high expectations that prepare, motivate, and inspire young men of color. This is supported by the school’s core values C.L.E.A.R (Confidence, Leadership, Effort, Academic Excellence, and Resilience). School leaders and staff maintain an active presence inside and outside the school to ensure smooth transitions during the school day, arrival, and dismissal. Student voice is welcomed and valued; the student leadership council has representation on the school leadership team and are also part of the hiring committee, and take part in organizing school events and support daily town halls. To address the diversity in the school, there are multicultural celebrations throughout the school year. Flags and maps from different countries representing backgrounds of staff and students are displayed across hallways and classroom doors. The 2016 school survey indicated that above 90 percent parents have positive responses on school culture-related questions.

- All students participate in town halls every morning that are designed to have students reinforce the school’s core values, recite the poem *Invictus* daily, and share thoughts about community-related issues. Each student is assigned to one of four houses that represent great leaders, where they compete for “House of the Year.” Students with the highest merit points each month receive rewards and recognition. Celebrations include student performances, acknowledgements, self-reflections, and speeches. Students also have opportunities to speak during mentoring sessions held twice monthly, and have an opportunity to participate during Parent Association meetings. Sixth-grade students have weekly mentoring sessions and the school partners with the organization One Hundred Black Men, Inc. which places positive male role models from the community and business world to expose students to various career options, the benefits of pursuing high academic achievement, and the true meaning of leadership. Additionally, during the interview with students, they reported that if they have any issues, concerns, or conflicts, there is more than one member of the school staff that they can go to. Parents echoed this and added that the school is proactive to take care of issues in a timely and effective manner and report to parents related concerns about their children. As a result, the Online Occurrence Reporting System data shows a 29 percent reduction of level-five infractions in 2017 when compared to 2016.

- The guidance team works with every student and family member to address areas of concern and provide the necessary social-emotional support to ensure the student’s success. If necessary, students and/or families are referred to a specialized organization to provide them with the necessary interventions and supports to address the social-emotional needs of the student. An attendance team works with school leaders and counselors to support at-risk students, especially chronically absent students, developing individual attendance plans and monitoring the student’s’ academic performance. The middle school is showing attendance improvements comparing attendance average from September 2016 of 91 percent to 93 percent in April 2017.
Findings

Although teaching practices are beginning to reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best, as informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching, teaching practices inconsistently engage all students, promote student thinking, and generate meaningful discussions and participation among students.

Impact

Pedagogical practices result in uneven opportunities across classrooms for all students to be appropriately challenged through academic tasks and discussions leading to inconsistent engagement and low-quality work products. This limits opportunities to increased achievement for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers are beginning to use the Danielson Framework for Teaching across grades and subjects, and are subscribing to the belief that children learn best through tasks that generate higher-order thinking through discussions and address individual student needs using multiple entry points. This was evident in some classrooms via lesson activities, questioning, and student work products. In a grade-nine global history class, students sat in groups and engaged in rich conversation about European exploration and expansion. For this task, each group read different texts and engaged in discussions using accountable-talk stems. Then, groups were rearranged so all students could present their learning to the other members of the group and students were speaking directly to one another. All students had an opportunity to participate. However, this type of student interaction is yet to be implemented across the school. In some classes, students are seated in groups, but they do not have specific protocols to engage in productive conversations. As a result, student levels of engagement are inconsistent, thus some students are not able to show progress towards their learning targets.

- In some classrooms, there was evidence of uneven levels of student interactions in meaningful discussions. In a grade-eleven US history class, students were engaged in a Socratic seminar on the topic of America’s Civil Rights years, 1954-1965. In this lesson, students sat in an inner and outer circle. Students in the inner circle managed their conversations using accountable talk stems and citing textual evidence from three different sources of text to support their claims and used a graphic organizer to take notes. Students in the outer circle used an evaluation form to evaluate their partners in the inner circle in the following criteria: speaks in the discussion, looks at the person who is speaking, refers to the text, asks a question, responds to another speaker, interrupts another speaker, and engages in side conversations. Then after the discussion, students had to reflect on the discussion. However, in a grade-six science lesson, while students were assigned to groups, their levels of interaction were not leading to productive conversations or quality in their work product. While some students were working independently, others were not clear about the engagement approach. The teacher circulated about the room interacting with students with uneven results with respect to having students complete their assignments. Therefore, some teaching practices are not ensuring that all students engage in high levels of student thinking and participation.

- In some classrooms, teachers’ questions are often open ended, which then encourages high-level responses and has students engage in meaningful conversations. However, in other classrooms, there is little evidence of students deepening their thinking by questioning each other or building on comments made by peers. Some teachers also attempted to ask questions designed to engage students in thinking, but only a few students were involved. As a result, some discussions remain teacher-directed, which then hampered students from taking ownership of and accelerating their learning.
Findings
School leaders and faculty adopt Common Core Learning Standards-aligned curriculum which integrates the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order thinking skills across grades and all subject areas for English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

Impact
The school’s purposeful decisions to build curricular coherence and to ensure a consistent level of rigor promote college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence
- School leaders and teachers adopted a Common Core-aligned curriculum for all content areas across grade levels. Key standards identified for schoolwide focus include increasing volume in writing and the use of academic vocabulary in all subject areas. In addition, the school is emphasizing finding text-based evidence to support a position and integrating other instructional shifts across the curricula. School leaders and teachers reported that faculty has selected a format for lesson planning, ensuring that all use the same components including: instructional focus, essential questions, do now, aim, standards, learning targets, literacy strategy, materials/resources/tech integration, developmental procedures, vocabulary, differentiation and tiered-instructional strategies, evidence of prior misconceptions, formative assessments, strategic groupings, higher-order thinking questions, independent and group work, exit tickets, and homework. The school’s collaborative approach to instructional planning across grade levels and subjects is resulting in a coherent curriculum where students are receiving instruction to promote college and career readiness.

- A review of instructional planning documents revealed that across all content areas learning targets and tasks consistently emphasize higher-order thinking skills. For example, in a US history reconstruction unit, a document-based question (DBQ) asks students to answer: “What do these differences tell us about how the American experiences vary for different groups of people?” Another DBQ is to identify and discuss one social, one political, and one economic change in American society that occurred as a result of the Civil War or the period of reconstruction, students will use facts, reasoning, and arguments to enrich their discussions. In a middle school science unit plan, students will answer questions such as “How does life on earth continue to adapt in response to environmental change?”

- The review of lesson plans indicates that teachers are planning to support groups, as well as peer-to-peer discussions, in developing all students’ skills to engage in rigorous tasks. For example, in a grade-nine global history class the lesson plan noted that students would be in groups using different sources of text as they worked to identify details on the importance of exploration and why Europeans started to explore new worlds for the first time. To deepen students’ skill in group discussions, the teacher prepared graphic organizers and charts as well as materials for color coding and annotating text. Furthermore, lesson plans reflected conversation prompts, differentiated tasks to provide multiple pathways of access for targeted students such as, students with disabilities and ELLs, and multiple forms of questions to address all types of learners. Teachers also used reading-leveled textbooks and texts, showing videos to engage or help build background knowledge, graphic organizers to support students in organizing their thoughts and responding to preplanned questions, and using different types of technology in class such as laptops and interactive whiteboards to address the learning needs of all students.
Additional Finding

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

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are inconsistently aligned with the school’s curricula. Ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment are inconsistent.

Impact

Inconsistent assessment practices to provide actionable feedback to students, to implement on-the-spot checks for understanding, and to engage students in self-assessment activities are preventing students from being aware of their next learning steps and limiting teachers from making effective adjustments to meet students’ learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use rubrics to gather information on student academic achievement on several learning tasks, common assessments such as Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) to determine students’ reading levels, and performance tasks to determine students’ progress. Grading policies guide performance, which is communicated to students and parents using an online grading system. However, although students articulated the grading policy, the process of using rubrics and that they receive feedback from teachers, a review of student work products presented during the small-group meeting with students, revealed that feedback is inconsistent across grades and subjects. There was limited written feedback provided as to next steps for assignments. Some feedback indicated “confusing” and posed questions such as, “Where is your voice?”, yet missed opportunities to provide specific strategies to support the student to move forward with the assignment. Consequently, inconsistent feedback hampers students’ ability to enhance tasks resulting in missed opportunities to accelerate their learning.

- Although in some classrooms promising formative assessment practices were observed, in most classrooms, teachers’ ongoing checks for understanding and adjustments to meet the needs of all learners were limited. For example, during an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) algebra class, while students were completing their do now assignment both teachers were circulating around the room assisting students, providing feedback and noting their responses. Then, they engaged in whole-group discussion while teachers, based on data they gathered and students’ responses annotated, posted students’ names on the board forming new groups for a differentiated lesson. In other classrooms, teachers used checks for understanding but did not gather information from students’ responses or make on-the-spot adjustments to the lesson. This uneven practice of using checks for understanding to adjust lessons on-the-spot hampers teachers’ capacity to support all students’ learning needs.

- Across classrooms visited, student use of rubrics to guide work product development or to self-assess how well they have performed on assignments is not yet a consistent practice across grades and subjects. For example, in a living environment class students were observed working on self-assessments, the teacher provided them with guided graphic organizers, rubrics, and reflection sheets to identify their areas of success and growth. In a US history class, the teacher provided students with reflection questions to assess the content of and their participation in discussions. Students shared that self-assessment activities are not always happening across subjects. One student mentioned, “For ELA and social studies we use rubrics for self-assessment.” Another student added, “We use Regents rubrics to self-assess how well we did in our practice exams.” Most middle-school students had difficulties articulating being involved in self-assessment activities. As a result of inconsistent assessment practices across grades and subjects, students’ ability to assess their own learning is hampered, thus limiting opportunities to meet their learning targets.
Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to all staff and provide professional development that is aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Teachers and school leaders offer ongoing communication to families regarding their children’s progress.

Impact

Structures that support the school's high expectations have created a culture of shared accountability and ownership of increased student achievement. Families receive ongoing feedback on their children’s progress towards meeting expectations connected to their college and career paths.

Supporting Evidence

- High expectations are communicated through a weekly C.L.E.A.R Letter from the principal, as well as a daily memo. The C.L.E.A.R. Letter communicates high expectations by highlighting staff members and students, and the specific practices they have demonstrated during the prior week in categories of confidence, leadership, effort, academic excellence, and resilience. The daily memo communicates upcoming events, announcements for staff and students, as well as reminders about student meetings, opportunities and activities, college visits, cohort meetings, trips, and attendance data. In addition, school leaders meet with the entire faculty every other month to communicate and clarify expectations and provide professional development (PD). The Educator Handbook is another way expectations are communicated. This document is a guide for teachers about expected pedagogical practices aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, professionalism, and logistics.

- Frequent classroom observations and feedback from classroom visits hold staff accountable for meeting expectations. Teachers reported that they receive timely and accurate feedback on teaching and PD on instructional practice and youth development topics. For example, teachers received PD on questioning and discussion techniques, assessments, strategies for vocabulary development, as well as strategies to address social-emotional needs of students. Teachers appreciated the fact that the school uses different formats to approach teacher development. For example, intervisitations and one-on-one conversations with school leaders have been instrumental to improve their practice.

- Parents shared that the school communicates with them regularly regarding their children's progress. One parent reported that they consistently receive notices from the school and with the school’s open-door policy they have access to the teachers, guidance counselors and school leaders. Another parent added, “If my child is not doing well in the school, teachers let us know before it gets to a critical point.” Parents also stated that the school’s online grading platform sends emails, messages to all parents to alert them of missed assignments, and due dates, “This is a great way to keep us aware.” Parents also noticed that this online system promotes ongoing student-teacher interaction so that students regularly receive feedback, guidance, or clarifications about grades and assignments when they need it. Another parent shared that she attributes her son being on track for graduation to the partnership established with the teachers and school leaders. Furthermore, parents participated in workshops such as: understanding the Common Core Learning Standards, curriculum nights, breakout sessions where teachers present curricular information for all grades, parent conference on special education, as well as sessions for parents to learn about financial aid options for college. Furthermore, the school promotes college and career readiness via a rigorous instructional program starting in grade six.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

The principal ensures that all teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations that meet regularly to develop curriculum, analyze student work, plan instruction and promote student learning, and share best practices. Teachers take on leadership roles and are valued in the decision-making process.

Impact

The work of professional collaborations results in the integration of Common Core Learning Standards and strengthened teacher instructional practices and teacher-led decisions that have a positive impact on student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal ensures that all teachers are scheduled for weekly teacher-team meetings by departments, and peer-collaborative inquiry teams in which they engage in collaborative inquiry activities. For example, in walkthroughs conducted during the first semester, teacher teams noticed teachers’ inconsistency in lesson alignment and how data was used to plan their lessons. As a result, teams engaged in lesson-study sessions where they created lessons together using summative and formative assessment data, analysis of student work using the ATLAS protocol, and sharing better practices they could all teach across grade levels. This was followed by inter-visitations and debrief sessions resulting in improving the quality of data-based lesson planning that includes multiple points of entry, student choice, real-world connections, and developing student-centered instruction. Also, during these professional collaborations, discussions center on refining delivery and other instructional practices to support the achievement of school goals and the implementation of the Common Core and instructional shifts. For example, the review of collaborative teacher-team meeting agendas revealed that teacher teams are focusing on the use of checks for understanding enabling teachers to gauge their own effectiveness in the classroom.

- During the observed teacher team meeting, teachers used the ATLAS, learning from student work protocol; the objective was looking at samples of writing pieces about contrast and contradiction to a character in literature. The teachers followed an agenda which outlined the order of the meeting. A teacher presented the context of the task and team members looked at student work products. Teachers recorded their findings in a note-taking tool as they engaged in discussions about the work. Based on the protocol, teachers identified what the students did well and gave suggestions for next steps. Teachers noted that the students were having difficulties in citing textual evidence and drawing conclusions. Then, teachers suggested instructional strategies which included teacher modeling for direct instruction, use of a graphic organizer to compose a short response, increasing opportunities for peer editing, planning for strategic grouping, and using the interactive white board to ensure access for all students.

- The principal promotes shared responsibility and ownership of the work of the school by empowering teacher leadership. For example, teachers serving as department chairs meet every other week to align department goals with school-wide goals. The chairs design their agendas and share the work going on in each department. Teachers meet one-on-one with their colleagues as part of colleague peer mentoring, without supervisory oversight, to conduct inter-visitations to provide formative feedback, and have a space to share pedagogical strategies. In addition, teachers plan and facilitate PD. Teachers shared that the principal values their input in key school decision making. For example, they have opportunities to make curricular decisions such as designing a lesson plan format and they are actively participating in the hiring process for school staff.