Quality Review Report

2018-2019

The SEEALL Academy
K-8 20K180
5601 16 Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11204

Principal: Gary Williams

Dates of Review:
May 21, 2019 - May 22, 2019

Lead Reviewer: Jerry Brito
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

The SEEALL Academy serves students in grade PK 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

### Instructional Core

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<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>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 Quality Ratings continued

## School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school…</th>
<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>
<td>Well Developed</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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Systems for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school…</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</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>
<td>Well Developed</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>
<td>Proficient</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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</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>
<td>Well Developed</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>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

| Quality Indicator: 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: Well Developed |

Findings

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

Impact

Partnerships with families support students in their progress toward college and career readiness. Supports ensure that all students take ownership of their progress and are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and staff use tools, such as the parent handbook, to communicate high expectations to all students and families. The parent handbook outlines the grading policies for both the elementary and the middle school, which delineate the different areas that comprise a student’s overall grade, such as class participation and homework. In addition, the handbook also highlights the various honor-roll programs available to students, including the criteria needed to qualify for any given honor-roll. Teachers also provide families with progress reports that outline their children’s academic performance. Progress reports provide information on summative assessments and focus areas related to reading, writing, and math. For example, in one progress report, a family was informed that their child needed to focus on understanding the place value system. A review of submitted documents showed that school leaders and staff consistently communicate high expectations and student performance to families. During a parent meeting, all agreed that school leaders and staff reach out to communicate about their children’s progress.

- School leaders and staff use a variety of ways to help families understand the criteria needed to attend college and prepare for future careers. School leaders hold an annual College Awareness Day Family Visit, held at Brooklyn College. Families toured the campus and attended a workshop on college affordability, college options, and the academic expectations to be successful in college. In addition, school leaders and teachers facilitate Family Interactive Night, which consists of a series of workshops in different content areas that teach families how they can support their children at home. Workshop offerings included understanding how to read a child’s Individualized Education Program (IEP), and the social studies curricula. In addition, school leaders provide workshops to families of incoming sixth-grade students to prepare them for the transition from elementary to middle school. Overall, school leaders and staff emphasize the importance of college and how families can support their children to be successful in that venue.

- School leadership and staff hold an annual career day event, in which professionals, such as a chef and a police officer, share information regarding their career paths. During this event, students are encouraged to come to school dressed as if they were going on job interviews. In addition, seventh-grade students attended a college fair, in which colleges, such as Mercy College and City College of New York, provided information on their respective schools. Teachers also facilitate student activities, promoting the reading of fiction and non-fiction books during the month of March, in commemoration of Dr. Seuss’ birthday. The focus on high expectations leading to college and career readiness has supported high academic achievement, evident in 31 percent of eighth-grade graduates attending New York City specialized high schools in 2019.
Findings

Teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs expressed in the students educationally enriched as learning leaders (SEEALL) philosophy. Students participate in discussions that involve high-level thinking.

Impact

Students work collaboratively within small groups, where high levels of students thinking and participation are evident, but not across the vast majority of classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders expressed their belief that students learn best when following the SEEALL philosophy, which involves students actively participating in their education through group work discussions. In a third-grade math class, students classified geometric shapes, such as quadrilaterals, according to their attributes. Students worked in groups, which were determined according to content proficiency rates and English language designation. Student groups engaged in discussions to classify the shapes, and some groups used manipulatives to facilitate their work. Students were guided in their group work using differentiated worksheets. In a sixth-grade English Language Arts (ELA) class, students analyzed documents in order to write a document-based question (DBQ) essay that connected ancient Chinese inventions to today’s society. Students were heterogeneously grouped according to their ELA assessment scores. Students discussed the documents and peer-assessed their essay drafts. A review of classroom practices indicated that the SEEALL philosophy promotes student discussions and was evident across classrooms.

- Although lesson activities were designed for group work, student discussion involving higher-ordering thinking was not consistently evident across classrooms. In an eighth-grade ELA class, student groups presented their analyses of literary devices, such as dialogue, monologue, and soliloquy using Shakespeare’s play, Romeo and Juliet. Student groups were formed based on prior literacy assessments. Each group analyzed different parts of the play to determine what literacy device it represented, and present their findings to their classmates, projecting the text they analyzed on an electronic whiteboard. After each presentation, the teacher encouraged students to ask questions of the presenters regarding their findings. However, student questions were limited, with the teacher asking the majority of questions of the presenters.

- In a fourth-grade math lesson, students worked in groups to design a city using geometric shapes. Group tasks were differentiated based on student math and language proficiency levels. Each group engaged in tasks, such as comparing and contrasting quadrangles, and solving a polygon puzzle. Though tasks called on group members to engage with one another in discussion, there was little evidence of student-to-student interaction. The teacher tried to encourage groups to engage with one another in discussion, at one point advising them to ask each other questions about the task before reaching out to her for help. Overall, while lessons were designed to facilitate student group discussion, student discussion was not consistently evident in the visited classrooms.
Findings
School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate academic vocabulary. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact
Curricula are coherent across grades and subject areas, which promotes college and career readiness for all students. All students have access to the curricula and are cognitively engaged through differentiated groupings and tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core and strategically integrate academic vocabulary. Teacher-teams use the inquiry process to embed academic vocabulary in curriculum maps, unit plans, and lesson plans across all content areas. In a third-grade ELA unit plan, Common Core standards for the months of October and November, such as using the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text to distinguish literal and nonliteral language, are clearly delineated along with learning objectives, activities, resources, and assessment tools to be used in the teaching of the standard. The unit plan also presents key vocabulary words, such as pecks, cuddles, and enormous, that students will need to know in order to understand the assigned texts. Lesson plans are designed using curriculum maps and unit plans, and culminate in lesson plans that focus on the standards and the explicit use of key vocabulary words.

- Curriculum maps are used to establish a framework for teachers to reference in developing lesson plans. In a fourth-grade curriculum map, students are to be engaged in a year-long study of multi-digit numbers, algebraic expressions, and the manipulation of fractions. The map is divided into a series of units that prioritize when particular Common Core standards are addressed during the school year. Teachers are provided with a series of activities that they can choose from to address the needs of diverse learners, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities. For example, the map outlines activities that focus on ELLs’ listening and speaking skills in order to build their English language proficiency. The map also outlines a series of enrichment activities, such as research projects and math games, for students performing at higher proficiency rates. Overall, curriculum maps across content areas enable teachers to plan activities that address all learners.

- Diverse learners are cognitively engaged through differentiated groupings and tasks evident in lesson plans. In a first-grade science lesson plan, students would study the inventions of Alexander Graham Bell to understand how great ideas change the way we live. Students are to be homogenously grouped using writing assessment scores. ELLs are to be provided with leveled prompts and pertinent vocabulary to aid in their comprehension. In a second-grade ELA lesson plan, students would be tasked with learning about story elements, such as plot and theme. The plan calls for students to be grouped based on a recently administered skill-based literacy assessment. Differentiated group activities include paired reading of leveled texts. ELLs and students with disabilities would be provided with scaffolds, such as picture cards and close sentences, to facilitate their understanding of the assigned texts. A review of lesson plans indicates that formative assessment tools are used to design differentiated groupings and tasks to enable students to access the content.
Additional Finding

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

Across classrooms, teachers use assessments that are aligned with the school’s curricula. Teachers’ assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

Actionable feedback in the form of comments and next steps is provided to students regarding their achievement. Teachers make effective adjustments to meet all students’ learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- The school employs a comments and next steps model of assessment and feedback, in which work products are rated using a rubric and students are made aware of their progress and the steps needed to improve. In a second-grade ELA assignment, students used Venn diagrams to write a compare and contrast essay based on a reading of the book, *Birds and Bats*. Essays were rated in alignment with a four-point rubric, and one comment and one next step provided as feedback. A comment to one student stated that he did a good job in comparing and contrasting birds and bats. As a next step, it was suggested that the student write in complete sentences. In an eighth-grade ELA class, students created a brochure to convince prospective parents why they should choose to send their child to a fictional camp. The work was rated using a four-point scale that assessed items such as written content and word choice. A comment was made to a student, indicating that she did a great job incorporating content into the brochure. As a next step, it was suggested that the student make explicit the benefits of the camp to help convince readers of the brochure.

- In a first-grade math assignment, students created a subtraction number story. The assignment was rated using a four-point rubric used to assess such areas as solving word problems and applying the concepts of subtraction. For one student, the teacher commented that he successfully used appropriate math vocabulary and he wrote the correct subtraction number sentence. As a next step, the teacher suggested that he pay more attention to the spacing between words when writing. A review of student work products demonstrated that actionable feedback is consistently provided to facilitate students’ understanding. During a student meeting, all agreed that teachers provide them with comments and next steps that help them improve.

- Across classrooms, checks for understanding are conducted to inform lesson adjustments and address any student misconceptions. In a fourth-grade math class, students worked in groups to develop their knowledge of geometric shapes in order to design a city. The teacher checked in on the progress of each group. Based on misconceptions surfaced during her check-ins, the teacher paused the lesson to review the steps they learned in order to compare and contrast quadrangles. In a sixth-grade ELA class, student groups were developing DBQ essays that connected ancient Chinese inventions to today’s society. As students worked, the teacher checked in on their progress. The teacher noted that some groups completed the task, necessitating an adjustment to the lesson so that those students would engage in peer editing of their essays using a peer assessment checklist to provide next steps. As students worked, they referenced a DBQ scoring rubric to assess their own progress.
Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator:  | 4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision | Rating: Proficient |

Findings

School leaders support teacher development with frequent classroom observation cycles, which promote alignment to the SEEALL philosophy. Written feedback captures teachers’ strengths, challenges, and next steps using the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Impact

Formal and informal classroom visits result in written feedback for teachers that makes clear the expectations for teacher practice and the supports available to help teachers meet them, but is not aligned with teachers’ Initial Planning Conference (IPC) goals.

Supporting Evidence

- School leadership, consisting of the principal and three assistant principals, support teacher development through the Advance observation process. School leaders collaborate to identify teachers’ strengths, and next steps. The frequency of teacher observations is based on each teacher’s preference, which is established during the Initial Planning Conference (IPC). The IPC is also an opportunity for school leaders and teachers to establish teachers’ professional goals. All assistant principals observe teachers under their respective areas of supervision. The principal observes all untenured teachers, along with other teachers as needed. This process ensures that all teachers receive feedback that enables them to improve. It also builds schoolwide coherence in teaching practices.

- School leaders use classroom observations to ensure alignment between teaching practices and the SEEALL philosophy of engaging students in small group activities that promote discussion and leadership. In an observation report, an assistant principal commended a third-grade teacher for designing engaging student activities that provided several opportunities for student-to-student discourse. It was also noted that the students were struggling to understand the essential question of the lesson that was centered on the connection between nature and human beings. As a next step, it was recommended that the teacher design probing questions that would help students to connect their personal experiences to the content being taught. Although the feedback provided gave a clear picture of the teacher’s strengths, challenges, and needed next steps, it did not clearly align with the teacher’s IPC goals, which included providing more feedback to students, improving pedagogical skills, and collaborating more closely with colleagues. A review of observation feedback and teachers’ goals showed a lack of clear alignment between the two.

- In an observation report, a second-grade teacher was complimented for working hard to prepare and deliver quality instruction, which included organizing student groups that enabled students to receive more individualized attention based on their academic needs. Two areas were cited as next steps the teacher could take to improve her instructional practice. First, it was suggested that the teacher employ the turn-and-talk strategy to facilitate discussion that would enable her to check for students’ understanding of the material. Second, it was suggested that the teacher design whole class or small group responses to the assignments to make student understanding visible and facilitate a check of student mastery of the topic before moving on to the next area of study. Overall, post-observation feedback enables teachers to understand their strengths and challenges to improve their instructional practices. In a teacher meeting, all agreed that the school leaders provide useful feedback, both through the Advance observation process and through informal, non-evaluative observations.
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>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings

All teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations that promote the school’s focus on teaching the foundational skills to build academic vocabulary. Distributed leadership structures are embedded within the school community.

Impact

Collaborations within professional teams strengthen teacher instructional capacity and coherence schoolwide, while data reveal increases in student achievement. Teachers build leadership capacity and have a voice in key decisions, evident in the grade and department teams.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers are engaged in professional collaborations that focus on best practices in the teaching of academic vocabulary. In a first-grade teacher team meeting, members analyzed data centered on phonemic awareness. A review of recent assessment data demonstrated to the team that first-grade students overall were struggling with tenses, subject/verb agreement, and –ed endings in their reading and writing. Further analysis revealed that 80 percent of ELLs were demonstrating lower proficiency rates when compared to expected benchmarks. Next, team members discussed the possible reasons for the data, including the fact that ELLs’ native languages have a different phonemic and grammatical framework. The discussion pivoted to possible interventions teachers could incorporate in their teaching. The team agreed to implement modifications to their lesson plans that include spiraling content, so that students are exposed to a concept multiple times in a unit, incorporating clapping routines to help students remember phonemic rules, and increasing instructional time. Team members agreed to make adjustments to their lesson plans to address the issues discussed. If successful, these modifications would be introduced into curricular documents during the June planning meeting.

- Teacher teams engage in cycles of learning, informed by formative student performance data. In a middle school math department inquiry meeting, teachers discussed the results of the most recent inquiry cycle that focused on having students incorporate content vocabulary into their math work products. Teachers modified their practices, which included updating bulletin boards and word walls across content areas with math vocabulary, making math vocabulary words accessible at student tables during group work, and rewriting math word problems to include target math vocabulary. In a middle school science inquiry team meeting, teachers discussed changes to the science curriculum to embed science vocabulary through research projects and design unit activities that are shorter in duration and more focused on the use of science words. Based on the analysis of formative assessments, teachers agreed to continue to develop activities that focus on science vocabulary acquisition, including end-of-unit projects and extended essays. A review of teacher-team minutes schoolwide revealed that teachers use the inquiry process to regularly revise their planning, thereby promoting increased student progress and mastery.

- Teacher teams are comprised of grade-level inquiry teams in the elementary school and department inquiry teams in the middle school. Teachers lead the modification of curricula based on their inquiry work. In addition, vertical teacher teams focus on academic and social-emotional issues that are key in meeting schoolwide goals. Teachers agreed that they play a key role in school leadership’s decision-making process.