Quality Review Report

2018-2019

Village Academy
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 27Q319
10-45 Nameoke Street
Queens
NY 11691

Principal: Doris Lee

Dates of Review:
March 14, 2019 - March 15, 2019

Lead Reviewer: Sonja Webber-Bey
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

Village 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>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school…</td>
<td></td>
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</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>Area of Celebration</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

<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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

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<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>Proficient</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

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

Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure culturally-relevant curricula are purposefully aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (Common Core) and strategically integrates the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using data.

Impact

Strategic decisions about curricula and tasks result in coherence across grades and subjects, and promote college and career readiness for all students. A diversity of learners including individual, lowest- and highest-achieving students, English Language Learners (ELLs), and students with disabilities, have access to the curricula and tasks that promote cognitive engagement.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers can articulate how they ensure curricula are aligned to the Common Core and other content standards, and how the instructional shifts are integrated. Literacy and social studies are merged into humanities classes in which students learn about geography, politics, culture, and social justice issues around the world and locally. Humanities teachers collaborate to provide a variety of non-fiction text, perspectives, and ideas on each topic, and develop Common Core-aligned questions and tasks. Also, reading teachers strategically plan lessons on the close reading of novels to improve students’ literature skills. As part of the reading curricula, students must complete twenty-five book reviews for the year. A book review rubric guides the expectations for the review, which needs to include text-based evidence. Using web-based sites, such as Stem-scopes and Newsla, math and science teachers create culturally-relevant word problems, and create supports for reading scientific social justice articles related to students’ communities and cultures. A resource binder of articles aligned to both the State exams in English Language Arts (ELA) and science, and Algebra for All resources, supports all teachers in instructional planning that builds coherence across grades and subject areas thus, contributing to college and career readiness for all students. The humanities team met in September 2018 to set and review expectations for the school year. A chart showing units of study for each of the middle school grades was distributed, a weekly schedule for Word Generation topics was agreed upon, access to standards-driven Test Ready lesson plans was made available, and a prototype for planning units and an instructional schedule was shared.

- Staff re-alignment of a vocabulary enrichment program, Word Generation, strategically integrates vocabulary into the school’s culturally-relevant instructional units, spans key words across the subject areas exposing students to current real-world controversial topics. Across grades, curricular coherence builds by units each having an identified section describing its real-world application and career alignment.

- Teachers on the Strategic Reading team analyze Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) data after benchmark assessments, then adjust tasks for a variety of reading programs such as, Strategic Adolescent Reading Intervention (STARI), Rewards program, and Book Club so that each individual student and groups of students, including lowest- and highest-achieving students, have access to the curricula and tasks. A school excel spreadsheet identifies groups of students and their needs which leads to planning that reflects tiered-level reading groups for all students. Lesson plans are further refined with language objectives and discussion protocols which add additional support for ELLs and students with disabilities as well. Also, across all subjects and grades, teachers use students’ reading levels to select multi-levels of text to provide access to unit themes and research sources.
Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 1.2 Pedagogy | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies consistently provide culturally-relevant materials with scaffolds in both English and different native languages, and through multiple entry points which engage students in an active, productive learning struggle of discussion and work products.

Impact

Although teaching strategies consistently engage students, there are missed opportunities to provide strategic high-quality supports and extensions so that all learners are appropriately challenged and have occasions to demonstrate higher-order thinking and assume ownership of their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, instructional groups are organized and teachers create ways for students to access the content or task. For example, in a sixth-grade math class, the teacher presented slides on a smartboard. Each slide was split in two parts containing information or directions in English and Spanish. For small-group discussion, ELLs sat together in two different groups to discuss and generate listings of classroom objects that represented geometrical shapes noticed in a stained-glass window display. English speakers met and discussed their findings in three other groups. All responses later shared with the whole class were stated in English. Then, a two-question call and response activity eliciting prior knowledge about perimeter and area was conducted. When a diagram and a question asking students to find the area of a rectangle was shown, there also appeared a section with extension questions available for students. Students at-large were consistently provided with entry points into the curricula, however, the lesson lacked strategic data-based assignments of the high-quality supports and extensions. Although students were provided native language translated versions of the questions as part of the lesson, they still struggled with understanding the math concept.

- In a sixth-grade Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) science class, small groups of students created charts classifying a set of photo cards into groups, with one chart being labeled “producers” and the other “consumers.” The students then had to discuss their reasoning for grouping the cards and choose three of the cards to form a simple food chain. In one group that struggled to choose cards, the teacher prompted their discussion by saying, “Talk to him.” One of the students then pointed to an information sheet of animal diets on his desk, and read aloud a text reference for his choice of a card. There were some supports, like vocabulary definition lists and visual classification charts, for students to access the curricula; however, they were not strategically assigned for specific students based on their needs.

- In an eighth-grade ICT humanities class, the classroom teachers provided multiple entry points into the reading of a text selection. Three students needing Individualized Education Program (IEP) modification support were assigned to one teacher who conducted a read aloud of the assigned pages. Several ELLs, who are at different English language stages, were each ‘bridged’ with an English-speaking partner. Beginner ELLs had a bilingual student assigned to their group for translations and support. The remaining students read the text independently. This lesson provided multiple supports that allowed high levels of participation and student thinking; however, opportunities for student ownership of their learning was not introduced.
Findings

Across subject areas and grades, teachers create rubric-based assessment tasks aligned to the school’s curricula, and use common assessments to determine student progress towards goals and grade-level standards.

Impact

Students receive actionable feedback that gives next steps for further achievement. Faculty adjusts curricula and instruction using assessment results.

Supporting Evidence

- Standards-based rubrics are used across classrooms. Teachers highlight or circle areas of a rubric that identify strengths in student work, and attach the rubrics to completed assignments. Students reported on different kinds of rubrics. They vary between two point and four point levels, depending on subjects. An eighth grader shared that rubrics tell what standard a student mastered, and what else could be included in your work. Another student agreed, stating, “In ELA, there are standards written on rubrics. I look at level four to see what I want to include”. Additionally, evidence of the use of rubrics by teachers and students across grades and subjects was prominently displayed on hallway bulletin boards and inside classroom displays.

- Across classrooms, written teacher comments are attached to completed tasks in the form of glows and grows, and strengths and next steps. For example, a humanities teacher wrote to an eighth grader, “Glow: Great opening and thorough stating of your claim and clear reasons in support of why guns should be illegal. I like your usage of Word Generation vocabulary. Additionally, your evidence selected thoroughly supported your claim. Grow: Next time be sure to use multiple texts to provide your evidence. Although you did provide relevant data, there were some texts not mentioned in your responses.” A seventh-grade student received the following comments from his math teacher, “You showed a good understanding of unit rates, creating tables and graphs. Next step, include more mathematical procedure and vocabulary in your explanations.” This practice of including next steps is providing students with actionable feedback with which they can improve work products.

- The school uses Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) and iReady diagnostic exams to establish benchmarks of student achievement three times per school year. Results are used to place students in appropriate reading and math groups. Student assignment to groups is adjusted after the winter benchmark. Teachers collaborate on standards-based tasks and administer weekly content quizzes. During a seventh-grade math teacher team meeting, teachers analyzed student responses from a recent weekly quiz, identifying specific questions that challenged a large number of students, and entered data into a progress tracker. For a grade group of 103 students, there was a mean of 61.1 percent correct on the constructed responses, and 59.38 percent correct on the multiple-choice responses, totaling an average of 62.14 percent exam results. Teaching strategies such as attention to details like labeling quantities was entered into the tracker for an identified 30 percent of near-proficient students preparing for upcoming State tests. Also identified were class trends, amount of times teachers could pull small-target groups, and creation of stations for specific mathematical practice. The school’s unit plan template utilized across grades and subjects includes a component for adjustments. As teacher teams analyze data, scaffolds are added based on student needs, tiered reading materials are organized, and additional websites and videos located to support those ELLs and students with disabilities that would benefit from supplementary sources.
Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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Findings
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations and provide relevant training to the faculty. Expectations connected to college and career readiness are effectively communicated with ongoing feedback to families by the entire staff.

Impact
School leaders foster a culture in which accountability for school expectations is reciprocal between constituents. Communications create a successful partnership with parents that has deepened their understanding of college and career readiness expectations for their children and empowered them to support their children in meeting or exceeding the expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and faculty mutually heightened expectations for instruction that are culturally relevant thus, providing a curriculum that centralizes, rather than marginalizes, the complete experience of urban youth. Through a video clip viewing, which outlined a perspective on culture through an iceberg analogy, staff identified areas of awareness beyond language, music, food and dress to underlying causes that have an impact on their students’ sense of self. Such areas include religion, worldview, power relationships, respect for authority, concepts of justice, concepts of time, decision-making models, and how emotions are managed.

- School leaders set clear expectations through verbal and written structures such as weekly Monday meetings agendas, weekly emails from subject teams, grade teams, and school leaders, and instructional foci discussions aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Across the school, hallway class bulletin board displays that are updated monthly as guided by staff handbook details. As displays change, teachers receive individual emails from a school leader specifying if the student work products were displayed in a timely fashion, strengths or challenges articulating the appropriateness of teacher feedback to students, and next steps, if any, for the current bulletin board, plus next steps, if any, for future bulletin boards. Each academic department team also receives an email that identifies three areas with specific feedback (academic language usage, teacher feedback to students, creative/attractive presentation of work). The bulletin board expectations listing is redistributed and teachers are encouraged to visit colleagues’ boards to view exemplary practices. In addition, team study groups, meetings and planning sessions ensure all stakeholders are reflecting mutual accountability for the high expectations.

- Staff members provide ongoing communication to families about promotion, graduation, and college and career readiness. Effective forms of communication include PupilPath accounts, which provide grades and offer messaging avenues, text messaging, phone blasts, phone calls, progress letters, assessment dates, individual letters, and Tuesday conferences with subject teachers. There are intake-family meetings once students are registered, parent articulation workshops, specialized high school preparation forums, student-parent college trips, and a College and Career Day. This year, school leaders effectively partnered with families to revise its vision statement. In a meeting on October 10, 2018, family representatives at the School Leadership Team (SLT) participated in further discussion about the school’s involvement with the District Charter Collaborative for the second year. The next phase of parent participation will engage the school in ongoing racial equity discussions and activities, in particular, inequities affecting Black and Latino students, as they comprise 95 percent of the school’s demographic body.
Additional Finding

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

Findings
School leaders and teacher peers use low-inference and focused observations, in frequent cycles, that are aligned to the school’s vision and mission to support teacher development. Written feedback from school leaders accurately captures teachers’ strengths, challenges, and next steps using the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Impact
School leaders prioritize strategies that promote professional growth, articulate clear expectations for teacher practice and reflection, and use analysis of learning outcomes to elevate schoolwide instructional practices.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders conduct frequent classroom observations and provide feedback utilizing the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Next steps are included at the close of the observation reports. For example, in an observation report, next steps included developing lesson questions in advance to increase the rigor of questioning and to pose more open-ended questions. Additionally, the principal shared a protocol strategy for establishing expectations for student discussion so that all student voices are heard. In a follow-up observation, the same teacher was given feedback commending his effective use of a discussion protocol, which allowed students to work on their own first, and then enter into a class discussion, which either confirmed or confronted their thinking. Another report included advice to a teacher on using a monitoring tool which had been introduced to staff for guiding students toward positive academic behaviors. Examples of this tool were evident across classrooms.

- The school has incorporated several fellows from the Department of Education’s NYC Teaching Academy. Staff mentor teachers are assigned to support them in planning, following a sequence of objectives and standards, aligning curricular resources, and developing their teaching capacity. In a seventh-grade ICT math classroom, two teaching fellows worked side-by-side with the classroom co-teachers. As small groups of students rotated at intervals around the room to complete word problems, each fellow remained at one location to give students guided instruction based on student needs. During preparation periods, mentors lead coaching conversations, listening to self-reflections and giving feedback.

- School leaders conduct learning target walkthroughs focused on an initiative to have learning objectives written in student-friendly “I can” statements. After each walkthrough, an email is sent to each teacher identifying the learning target(s) viewed, connecting them to specific Common Core Learning Standards, stating instructional challenges to be aware of and detailing next steps aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching that would support their development. For example, an eighth-grade math teacher received next steps towards having students engaged in meaningful discussion during every math class, which is aligned to the questioning and discussion component in the Danielson Framework for Teaching instructional domain, and is a school goal for improvement according to the current Advance Subcomponent Ratings Data.
**Additional Finding**

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<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 collaborate in inquiry-based, structured professional teams. Leadership is distributed across the staff and structures are embedded to ensure ongoing consultation.

**Impact**

Team collaborations have strengthened the instructional capacity of teachers and promoted the implementation of the Common Core and instructional shifts thus, sustaining schoolwide instructional coherence and increased achievement of all learners. Effective teacher leadership and integral roles in which staff participates in key decisions, affect student learning across the school.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The vast majority of teachers collaborate in professional teams on collaborative vocabulary development across subject areas, needs-based strategic reading for all learners, building culturally relevant connections. These instructional practices promote the Common Core, and allow team to engage in the monitoring of students during real-time independent practice. Teams meet in 90-minute sessions to develop and refine curricula. On Monday afternoons, there are after-school sessions in which teams share best practices, review research, and meet in study groups. Review of progress monitoring benchmarks and common assessments for the ongoing school year show improved outcomes for all learners. For example, *iReady* assessments for reading and math have shown student performance increases this year. The number of students reading on grade level improved six percentage points from 2017-2018, and the number of students performing grade level math improved seven percentage points from 2017-2018.

- School leaders and teacher leaders including department leads, grade leads, and mentor teachers are able to identify distributive leadership structures that are deeply rooted in the school’s day-to-day operations. This school year, school leaders hired ten new teachers to fill vacancies, almost one third of the entire pedagogy. Each new teacher is part of one of the core subject area teacher teams, humanities, science or math, and systematically participates in discussions of key elements of teaching that have an impact on the students they share. For example, teachers reported to school leaders that the *Ready* books were not engaging their students, and students were asking to read more novels. This played an integral role in a decision to focus on novels and the connections between them, thus affecting student learning across the school.

- School leaders routinely administer Google surveys after each schoolwide professional development (PD) session. Information on how teachers are spending their time in teams and for planning is also collected, and along with the PD reflections, which are analyzed during Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) meetings. Subject-team leaders share team progress towards shared goals, identify potential areas of growth, and acknowledge target areas where support is needed. All teachers reported having committed to the school, which they feel, has a welcoming environment. Members of the math team shared that after deciding to construct a project incorporating commercial aspects of the Rockaways, a student asked, “Why didn’t her neighborhood have a smoothie restaurant?” The teachers added that the staff is vested in this culturally-relevant curriculum and the students are excited. “The staff is excited, our school is a family focused on improving student learning.”