Quality Review Report

2019-2020

Academy for New Americans
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 30Q235
30-14 30 Street
Queens
NY 11102

Principal: Betty Cartagena

Dates of Review:
November 13, 2019 - November 14, 2019

Lead Reviewer: Elsa Kortright-Torres
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

Academy for New Americans 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

### Instructional Core

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to State standards and/or content standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by State standards and the Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</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>
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</tbody>
</table>
## School Culture

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<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>Area of Celebration</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>
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## Systems for Improvement

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

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<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate schoolwide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
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<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>Area of Focus</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 State standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Findings

The Crisis Prevention, Intervention (CPI), and Pupil Attendance Team, along with a youth development program, are in place to support Multi-Lingual Learners (MLLs) and newcomers. The school community strategically aligns professional development (PD) and student learning experiences.

Impact

Attendance improvement and social-emotional learning supports have resulted in academic and personal success. Family outreach, effective professional development (PD), and extra-curricular activities for students has resulted in the adoption of effective academic and personal behaviors.

Supporting Evidence

- The CPI and Pupil Attendance Team, which is comprised of the guidance counselor, school leader, teachers, support staff and parent coordinator, coordinate interventions for students who are at risk or have attendance issues. The team meets monthly and communicates on a regular basis to monitor each student's academic progress and attendance. During meetings, the team analyzes school data such as the Online Occurrence Report System (OORS), attendance and anecdotal data. Calling parents as well conducting home visits for students that are chronically absent or late has been effective. Personalized action plans for chronically absent students, such as frequent communication with parents and keeping anecdotal records, have also been effective. Records show that there are five students out of the school's total enrollment of 82 students that are chronically absent. Incentives and recognition for perfect attendance have motivated students to be on time and come to school. In a principal newsletter, it states that more than half of the school's enrollment had perfect attendance for the month. Parents shared that the school emphasizes good attendance and they can seek help to get resources as needed. Parents, teachers, and school leaders reported that students have a positive outlook, are motivated to learn, and have aspirations to go to college and achieve success.

- The school community strategically aligns PD to support students' needs. For example, the school analyzed the New York City Department of Education School Quality Survey data in which 100 percent of the students participated. To increase the percentage of students' positive responses to the supportive environment area of the survey, the school decided to implement de-escalation training for the staff and focus on Danielson's Framework for Teaching effective classroom environment practices. A review of PD documents shows that teachers participated in PD related topics such as crisis intervention and de-escalation. Teachers shared that the training has equipped them with the necessary skills to handle students who are emotionally fragile. Students shared that they have at least one adult that they trust and can go to when they feel upset. The OORS show that there have not been any serious incidents since the start of the year.

- The school community ensures that learning experiences and supports result in effective academic and personal behaviors. The youth development program provides lessons on life skills, such as on communication and making decisions, that have impacted students' advocating for themselves in classrooms and making positive and healthy decisions, thus resulting in academic success. For instance, students shared that they ask for help when they need it even if they cannot speak English and are not afraid to face the challenges of being immigrants. Students are also provided with mentoring and counseling services. After-school programs expose students to art, remedial and enrichment classes and sports. Students reported that programs such as these help them acclimate to a new culture, understand their assignments better, communicate, and advocate for themselves. One student shared, “When I don’t understand, I ask my teacher to show me because I always want to get a four.”
Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based collaborations that promote achievement of school goals. Distributed leadership structures are in place.

Impact

While teacher teams commonly plan and modify instruction and share best practices in order to support the achievement of school goals, there is not yet consistent growth for targeted student subgroups. Teacher voice drives decisions about professional learning for the staff, selection of appropriate resources for students, field trips, and strategies to improve literacy across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers meet at least once a week to plan lessons and units, analyze student data, and share best practices. An English Language Arts (ELA) teacher team observed discussed the grade-six narrative unit results. The discussion focused on noticings such as students not following directions and not having a strong native language foundation. They also noticed that the student copied the task instead of completing the requirements of the task. The teachers decided to start with the MLLs that are at levels emergent and entering according to the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT). As their next steps, they will conduct targeted lessons on capitalization, punctuation, and sentence structure. The teachers proceeded to discuss other student needs such as in grade eight not being able to cite textual evidence. Though there was a robust discussion about students' lack of writing skills and areas in need of attention as a grade, there was no evidence that the team identified a problem of practice based on student data and progress monitoring to follow for groups of students.

- A review of teacher team minutes revealed that the majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations. In a science teacher team meeting notes, teachers discussed two students that are not making adequate progress. The teachers decided that the students could benefit from smaller differentiated tasks. A math team meeting notes revealed the use of data from student work to identify common mistakes such as multiplying the exponents rather than adding and misunderstandings about not applying the power of each factor. The teachers decided to create a task that would reinforce the topic for targeted students, review the exponent laws with them, and monitor their progress. Though there is evidence that there are structured team meetings in place, these have yet to evidence a cycle of action planning resulting in strengthening teacher practice and increased student achievement for all learners.

- Distributive leadership structures are in place such as having teachers facilitate teacher team meetings and PD sessions. Teachers also serve on a leadership capacity in the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT). Teachers expressed having a voice in the selection of materials and strategies appropriate for students such as the implementation of the Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR), a research-based instructional strategy to teach reading comprehension in the content areas through small group instruction and scaffolds. Teachers received training and incorporated the strategies in their units and lesson plans. Students shared that they are able to understand complex text because of the strategies taught such as previewing the text, chunking the text, identify the main idea, and summarizing. CSR strategies were evident in ELA and English as a New Language (ENL) classes, though this decision has yet to play an integral role in ensuring that it is utilized throughout all subject areas such as science and social studies and thus affect student learning across the school.
**Quality Indicator:**

| 1.1 Curriculum | Rating: Well Developed |

**Findings**

Across grades and subjects, rigorous habits and higher-order skills are emphasized for all students, including MLLs and students with disabilities. Curricula and academic tasks purposefully integrate real-life applications and are aligned to the state Standards.

**Impact**

Emphasis on rigorous habits and higher-order skills require that all students demonstrate their thinking. Coherence across grades and subject areas promotes college and career readiness for all students.

**Supporting Evidence**

- A review of curriculum documents revealed coherence across grades and subject areas that promote college and career readiness. For example, in an eighth-grade unit plan on equations in one variable, students are tasked with solving multi-step equations and study the meaning of equivalence, multiplication, subtraction, division, and addition properties of equality. In addition, the students learn about the difference between properties as a trait of matter in science as opposed to property in math. Units and lesson plans include activities to learn academic vocabulary and to answer questions at different levels of Webb’s Depth of Knowledge (DOK) independently, in groups, and as a class. In a grade-six ELA unit plan, students are charged with conducting a close read of a story, making inferences, generating questions about the text, and participating in group and class discussions. Using a reading comprehension strategy, social studies and English units reveal an emphasis on improving vocabulary and reading comprehension. Units and lessons are aligned to the state Standards requiring students to justify their understanding using textual evidence.

- In a science unit on rocks and minerals, seventh graders explain the difference between atmosphere, hydrosphere, and lithosphere. Students are expected to use these terms when conducting lab work and writing their conclusions. Students are required to cite evidence to explain the difference between mechanical and chemical weathering. In a social studies unit plan on slavery, students analyze primary sources to understand and evaluate various types of slave resistance. Using the four-corner strategy (strongly agree to strongly disagree) students take a stance about slavery resistance. They are expected to present and defend their views using artifacts, written documents, works of art, photographs, charts, and graphs. In all units and lessons reviewed, students are tasked with working in groups, independently or in partnerships with many opportunities to engage in discussion, collaboration, and exploration. Examples such as these, promote college and career readiness as they emphasize academic vocabulary and opportunities to evaluate, synthesize, and present arguments using evidence.

- Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are emphasized in curriculum documents. Students demonstrate their thinking in various ways. Using a protocol for learning new academic vocabulary, students make their thinking visible. Students define in their own words, provide examples, non-examples, and illustrate the vocabulary term. This is used in all subject areas and across grades. Curriculum documents also include language objectives to help students acquire new knowledge and vocabulary for the purpose of English language acquisition. In addition, curriculum documents include questions that teachers will ask to increase the level of student discussions in classrooms. Questioning, academic vocabulary, and using evidence to support and demonstrate thinking is evident in all curricula. For example, in a grade-seven math unit plan, the teacher plans on having translated tasks in different languages as well as various ways of presenting new concepts such as providing online tools, a mathematics glossary, and multiple tools to explain their thinking using technology.
## Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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### Findings

Teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs that students learn best through approaches that emphasize academic vocabulary, discussions, and meeting social-emotional needs. Students are engaged in discussions with a high degree of thinking and participation.

### Impact

In all classrooms students are supported and display enthusiasm for learning. Additionally, student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

### Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teachers are positive and are aware of students’ needs. In an eighth-grade math classroom, students worked on solving equations. Students were allowed to turn and talk and help each other as the teacher went around helping individual students and always reminding students of the tools to help them such as a checklist, visuals, and bolded keywords. There was also a graphic organizer to define key vocabulary terms. A whole group share out was conducted after students worked on the problem. The teacher acknowledged students’ responses and responded with respect. In an ELA classroom for seventh and eighth graders with similar skill levels as determined by the NYSESLAT, students conducted a close read of a story in which the character experiences the challenges of immigration. Students relied on each other using the CSR strategy. Each student had a role with their task to complete a learning log as part of the strategy. Students discussed which words were difficult to understand and what to do about it. The teacher clarified and supported students by providing them with graphic organizers and drawing their attention to how the character of the story felt and how they felt when they arrived in this country. One student responded that like the character in the book, she felt nervous because of the different language, people, and school from her own country. Conversations between students and teachers and students are always related to their own lives with acknowledgment from teachers about how students feel to support them.

- In a grade-eight social studies classroom, students conducted research about passive and active resistance as they studied slavery. The teacher met with individual students and groups of students to answer questions and guide the research process. She helped students by providing proper supports and scaffolds and emphasizing whether their sources were considered primary or secondary. One student struggled with the definition of a word on the text. The teacher provided examples for the student in his native language. In a grade-seven science class, students used a balance, rulers, wooden blocks, and other materials as they conducted a laboratory experiment on how to calculate density. Visuals with step by step instructions were provided. One student who recently arrived had translated documents and was seated next to a student who spoke his native language. The teacher checked in on the student and helped him begin. Across classrooms, students are supported with a positive attitude from each other and teachers alike.

- Across classrooms, student work products and discussions reflect high levels of participation. Students were observed taking initiative to discuss and participate in groups, partnerships, and as a whole class. In an ELA seventh-grade class for ENL students, students engaged in creating a plot diagram in their groups. They shared ideas and substantiated their thinking with evidence from the text. In a technology class, students learn to use Microsoft Word and were tasked with writing their own poems and engaged in discussions about topics they were interested in such as pets, themselves, and countries. Students were highly engaged in researching using online sites and were observed using scaffolds such as graphic organizers to plan their draft, online translations, and checklists.
Findings
Across classrooms, teachers use and create content, unit-specific rubrics, and checklists that are aligned to the curricula. Teachers consistently use questioning, conferring, student reflections and discussions to check for understanding.

Impact
Consistent use of rubric-aligned glows and grows provides students with actionable feedback on their performance. Teachers make effective adjustments to instruction to meet the needs of all students in the form of questions, conferencing, and discussions.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, a review of student work products in portfolios and on bulletin boards reveals the use of rubrics and checklists to provide actionable feedback for students. Rubrics are introduced to students before any assignments so that students are aware of the criteria for success. For example, on a class assignment, students were provided with the rubric for the successful completion of a plot diagram after reading a story. On a grade-eight poetry assignment, students were provided with feedback about following directions for a bio poem, content, language, and presentation. Students received glows and next steps. In a science assignment about the Paleolithic era, the students received actionable feedback in their native language. When asked, one student explained that he had to study the topic and then write about it and include lots of details. The teacher’s feedback helped him organize his thinking and complete the assignment.

- Students' work products show that students receive actionable feedback on a regular basis. In a math assignment about the properties of integer exponents, the students were graded on their explanation, mechanics, and understanding of the concepts. An example of actionable feedback in math is that the student did a good job completing the table, however, they needed to find the miles per gallon in the task. In a science magnetism and gravity rubric, a student received a level two, and the teacher wrote that to receive a higher grade all the work needed to be completed. On another student's work, the teacher wrote that the student wrote everything in their own words but needed more detail and to proofread. Across classrooms, students are also provided with checklists to solve problems and write paragraphs that are taped on their desks. Students also have rubrics to gauge progress when working in groups. Students used a three-point rubric to rate their group on participation, support, and problem-solving. In a social studies research activity about a country, the teacher used a checklist and wrote feedback that the student did a good job writing but had some grammar errors and had to be more specific with the information about the country’s climate. All these examples demonstrate that teachers provide feedback that is aligned to the Standards and highlights next steps for students.

- Teachers across classrooms used various ways to check for understanding. For instance, in an ELA class, the teacher circulated and conferred with students to check for understanding as they worked on the CSR strategy. The teacher paused to clarify a misconception about the clunk or having difficulty with understanding the text. The teacher clarified that when you know what it is or what the author is saying you move on and it is no longer a clunk. In another class during a buoyancy experiment, the teacher asked how a boat is able to float in water and the students were not able to answer. The teacher reminded students about the water and oil experiment. The students were then able to explain their thinking based on what they know about density. Examples such as these illustrate that teachers check for understanding on a regular basis and make effective adjustments to maximize student learning.
Findings
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations for staff and provide training. Additionally, school leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness to families.

Impact
Teachers benefit from a culture of mutual accountability of high expectations around common planning and PD facilitation. Strong communication through letters, phone calls, workshops, and online platforms empower families to academically support their students' progress toward college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders share high expectations through a faculty handbook that details guidelines for all aspects of instruction including the grading, homework and testing policies, student achievement data, and the instructional focus of the school. Memorandum detail high expectations around the value and format of student progress reports, unit and lesson planning and teacher team responsibilities. Included in the handbook are templates to use for unit and lesson planning along with a lesson plan rubric so that there is coherence of curricular documents and an emphasis on English proficiency and the academic achievement of all students. Additionally, included in the handbook are resources for teachers to use for discussions through a tiered approach to designing questions. Furthermore, the faculty handbook reminds teachers of the school’s mission to provide a positive environment by including resources and the Danielson’s Framework for Teaching components of an effective classroom environment.

- Teachers hold each other accountable to high instructional expectations through their collaborative common planning sessions. Teachers spoke about relying on each other to bring student work products, share resources, and contribute ideas to meet the needs of all students. Teachers also hold school leaders accountable for providing the necessary PD around social-emotional learning and restorative practices. Teachers shared that they appreciate the open door policy to request support, materials, and resources as needed. In addition, they all rely on each other to share information about students’ personal situations that affect behavior and learning. Staff members facilitate PD on de-escalation and this has been very useful in dealing with at-risk students and promoting a positive school environment.

- Expectations are effectively communicated with families through newsletters, calendars, parent-teacher association meetings, and an online grade book system. Parents receive ongoing communication regarding their children’s progress via emails, texts, and phone calls. Parents are invited to attend workshops throughout the year on topics such as cyberbullying, college and career readiness, and understanding the New York State Assessments. One parent reported that these workshops are helpful as they are offered often and in their native language. For example, parents took part in a workshop about the process for applying to specialized high schools. One parent shared and others agreed that this information helped her to prepare her child to attend a science and math high school because her son wants to be a doctor. Another parent has plans for her daughter to attend a fashion design school. One parent added, “The school supports us because there is balance between education and the challenges that our children face as immigrants.” All teachers send progress reports between official report cards that share goals that their children have created, their progress toward achieving their goals and other information such as attendance and assignment completion. Parents shared and all agreed that the school is committed to helping their children succeed in a new country and to be college and career ready.