Quality Review Report

2019-2020

York Early College Academy
Secondary School 28Q284
108-35 167 Street
Queens
NY 11433

Principal: Noah Angeles

Dates of Review:
January 8, 2020 - January 9, 2020

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

York Early College Academy 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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to State 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 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>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>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Quality Ratings continued

### School Culture

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<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>
</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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<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>
</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>
</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>
</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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings

School leaders and staff use a parent handbook and special family events to effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness. School staff establish a culture for learning that systematically communicates a unified set of high expectations for all students through college awareness lessons.

Impact

School leaders and staff successfully partner with families to support their children’s progress toward meeting high expectations. Practices enable all students to own their educational experiences and prepare for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- Each year, school leadership issues a parent and student handbook that outlines academic expectations regarding homework, the schoolwide grading policy, and the use of an online academic reporting system. In addition, school leadership sends letters to families of eighth-grade students about the academic expectations needed to succeed in the high school. For example, one letter focused on the promotional requirements for high school and academic credit allocations. The letter also stated how the school would support incoming ninth-grade students that do not achieve proficiency rates on both the Earth Science and Algebra I Regents exams. Also, school leaders and staff inform families of events such as College Awareness Day, in which alumni return to the school to speak about their college experiences and how the school helped prepare them. During a meeting, parents all agreed that the school is singularly focused on preparing students for college. Several parents have children who are alumni, and the parents stated how the school prepared them for college. For example, one parent discussed how teachers and school leadership helped her child obtain a college scholarship. Consequently, school leaders and staff partner with families to effectively communicate expectations to prepare their children for colleges and careers.

- School leadership plans for students in all grades to visit college campuses, such as Brown University and the Culinary Institute of America. Through the school’s association with York College, students have the opportunity to attend a college fair that invites schools such as Harvard University as well as schools associated with the City University of New York system. After each college visit, school leadership sends out a college and career exploration survey to determine students’ impressions of the college, how the visit informed their future career interests, and if they would be interested in attending the college. School leadership use the survey results to develop their college advisement plan and plan future college trips. During a meeting, all students agreed that school leadership and teachers emphasize attending college and provide support in preparing students for this goal. For example, one student stated how her interest in the legal profession and environmental issues informed her teacher’s guidance in researching a career path in environmental law.

- In collaboration with York College, twelfth-grade students take college courses exclusively on the College’s campus. During a presentation, these students spoke about how their experiences taking college courses had changed their personal behaviors to maximize their academic performance. For instance, one student stated that her college professors all have different teaching styles that do not necessarily align with her learning style. Consequently, the student realized the importance of self-advocacy in which she makes clear her needs and seeks out the support necessary for success. During the meeting, all students spoke about how the college experiences their high school affords them have changed their approaches to school, making their studying and time management more efficient. Thus, students take ownership of their personal and academic behaviors to maximize their preparedness for colleges and careers.
Area of Focus

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

Findings

Teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula, as evident in student discussions. Across classrooms, student work products reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact

Although teaching strategies provide multiple entry points for groups of students, they have yet to be strategically placed to offer high-quality supports and extensions. While student work products and discussions reflect high levels of thinking and participation, teaching practices that lead to student ownership are not evident in all classes.

Supporting Evidence

- In a seventh-grade math class, students were learning how to apply the properties of operation to solve two-step equations in different circumstances. All student partnerships were presented with a math word problem centered on students’ traveling on a bus, in which they were to discuss how to find a solution using a problem-solving protocol for equations. Next, students formed heterogeneous learning groups and worked in stations to solve, with justification, additional word problems differentiated by each partnership’s reading level. Students had resources such as calculators, the word-problem protocol, and exemplars to facilitate their learning. In a tenth-grade math class, student groups discussed and worked on math problems that were differentiated and aligned to each group’s proficiency level. Certain groups were provided supports, including written explanations of the remainder theorem and the factor theorem, to facilitate student discussion and learning. A review of classroom practices, such as those outlined above, shows that teachers employ various resources and use different instructional strategies to provide students with multiple entry points into lessons. However, there is little evidence of high-quality extensions to challenge students who have exceeded proficiency levels.

- In a sixth-grade integrated co-teaching (ICT) humanities class, students were learning to identify important information and annotate text using the Sumerian Epic of Gilgamesh. Student groups discussed and annotated different portions of the poem, with a focus on areas such as academic vocabulary and comparing and contrasting the characters Gilgamesh and Enkidu. At one point, one of the teachers stopped the class to ask probing questions, such as about the meaning of polytheism and the poem’s connection to Mesopotamia. In an eighth-grade Earth Science class, students were tasked with explaining how air masses form, predicting changes to air masses and explaining how global winds influence weather patterns. Student partnerships engaged in discussions on different themes, such as the effect that the geographical regions of North America have on the air masses. Tasks were differentiated according to students’ proficiency levels. During the lesson, the teacher checked in on groups and asked probing questions to facilitate student discussion. Classroom practices, then, reveal a focus on student discussion to make high levels of thinking evident. However, pedagogical practices did not provide opportunities for students to take ownership of their learning.

- In an eleventh-grade political science lesson, all students were fully engaged in a debate on the effects of lowering the legal age to purchase and drink alcohol. Two students presented their research-based positions on the topic while individual students asked questions, such as how would lowering the alcohol age effect the economy. A review of classroom practices shows an emphasis on student participation, as seen in this and other classes. However, activities and strategies allowing students to take ownership of their learning were not evident in the vast majority of classrooms.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

School leaders and teacher teams ensure that curricula are strategically aligned to State standards by creating school-specific units and lesson plans. Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are emphasized in curricular and academic tasks.

Impact

Alignment to State standards has resulted in curricular coherence and promotion of college and career readiness for all students. Emphasis on rigorous habits and higher-order skills requires that all students demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- In a ninth-grade, three-week Geometry unit plan, students are expected to learn about triangle congruence and analyze geometric shapes using reasoning and justification skills, proving two triangles are congruent. The unit plan is disaggregated into essential questions and key performance skills aligned with State high school Geometry standards related to understanding congruence in rigid motions, experimenting with transformation in a plane, and using problem-solving skills. The plan also outlines potential student misconceptions and how to address them and includes a series of assessments. In an English Language Arts (ELA) unit plan spanning three weeks, students are analyzing the play *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry and exploring the meaning of the American dream. The unit plan emphasizes a series of essential questions, concepts students are expected to learn, and key performance skills to be used, such as citing text-based evidence. Concepts underpinning the plan are aligned to ELA State standards related to determining central ideas or themes in a text, making logical inferences, and analyzing how word choices shape meaning or tone. The plan also outlines key vocabulary and suggested learning activities. These units, and others like them, are indicative of curricula reflecting State standards. Indeed, in reviewing teacher team notes and modifications to curricula, it is evident that teachers make strategic changes to units and lesson plans to ensure alignment to State standards, resulting in curricular coherence across grades and subject areas.

- Unit plans are designed with an emphasis on rigorous habits and higher order-skills. In a seven-week history unit, students are learning about the American Revolution through the study of the book *My Brother Sam is Dead* by Christopher and James Lincoln Collier. The plan outlines student group activities, such as creating a colonial newspaper focused on the First Continental Congress and writing an argumentative essay in support of Colonial loyalists or patriots. Group activities are differentiated, using tools such as Webb’s *Depth of Knowledge*. In a five-week math unit, students are learning how to use quadratic equations to solve complex mathematical problems. The plan focuses on student group activities, such as math stations in which tasks are differentiated based on groups’ math proficiency levels. A review of unit plans demonstrates a focus on coherently embedding tasks for all learners that are rigorous and require higher-order skills.

- Lesson plans employ rigorous tasks that allow students to demonstrate their thinking. In a social studies lesson plan, student groups are tasked with studying the *Epic of Gilgamesh* to gather important information about the Sumerians. The plan calls for groups to analyze, discuss, and annotate a portion of the text, with question prompts differentiated according to the results of recent formative assessments. A review of other lesson plans across grades and content areas demonstrates a similar focus on developing rigorous habits in student activities that allow students to show their thinking.
### Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Findings

Teachers use rubrics aligned with the school’s curricula that offer a clear portrait of student mastery. Teachers use assessment data to create content-specific, re-teach action plans that provide a clear picture of student progress towards goals across grades and subjects.

### Impact

High quality assessment practices provide actionable and meaningful feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. Increased success for all students has resulted in a schoolwide increase in student mastery.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and staff use content and task-aligned rubrics to provide students with clear, meaningful feedback for improvement. In an Advanced Placement World History class assignment, students were tasked with writing an essay analyzing the political centralization in Russia between 900 and 1800 of the Common Era (C.E.). Using a four-point essay question rubric, student performance was assessed under various categories, such as thesis and claim, evidence, and analysis and reasoning. Direct feedback on students’ strengths and areas of need was also provided. In one example, the teacher identified the area of need for a student centered on analysis and reasoning. As a next step, it was recommended that the student further develop analysis and reasoning by using the evidence gathered to explain how and why political centralization took place in Russia. During a meeting, all students confirmed that they receive detailed and meaningful feedback from teachers.

- In an algebra assignment, students were expected to solve polynomial equations and compare the solving of the equations between using a difference of squares and a difference of cubes. Using a four-point math problem-solving rubric, students were assessed in areas such as mathematical concepts and explanation. In one example of feedback, the teacher wrote that the student needed to keep track of sign changes when solving with differences of cubes. As part of the feedback, the teacher provided an example for the student to analyze. A review of other work products demonstrated similar feedback that offered meaningful next steps directly aligned with content-specific rubrics, thus providing students a clear portrait of their performance and of mastery.

- Teachers use formative assessment data to formulate their own content-specific, re-teach action plans which are aligned to State standards and target students' learning gaps. For example, one teacher’s analysis of ELA assessment data indicated student learning gaps in these areas: citing textual evidence to support analysis and make inferences; determining the meaning of words and phrases within a text; and understanding how an author develops point-of-view. To address these gaps, the teacher made curricular adjustments by devising a plan to deploy various instructional strategies and resources, such as using an about/point graphic organizer and a carousel brainstorming strategy. In a ninth-grade ELA class, formative assessment data indicated learning gaps centered on identifying the central idea of a short story, essay structure, and how characters change over the course of a story. In response, the teacher devised an action plan that integrated strategies such as the reciprocal teaching strategy protocol to revise student writing. A review of re-teach action plans and lesson plans shows that formative assessments are used to consistently identify learning gaps and revise curricula in order to increase student mastery.
### Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

#### Findings

School leaders and teacher peers strategically use effective feedback and next steps from classroom observations to support teacher development, as evident in the tiered observation process. Clear expectations and feedback to teachers about their practice are provided using the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*.

#### Impact

School leaders and teacher peers elevate schoolwide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection. Feedback articulates clear expectations for teacher practice, supports teacher development, and aligns with professional goals for teachers.

#### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders use the *Advance* observation process in order to evaluate teacher performance, determine schoolwide areas of need, and plan professional development (PD) sessions. The frequency of observations is based on teacher preference determined during the Initial Planning Conference (IPC). Prior to the IPC, new teachers are surveyed regarding their personal learning styles, which helps inform the type of support they will receive. School leadership, which consists of one principal and two assistant principals, observe teachers based on the academic departments they supervise. In collaboration with school leaders, teachers develop professional goals aligned with the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* during the IPC. In addition, school leaders have developed a three-tiered observation system based on their previous year’s observation data, in which teacher support is tailored and differentiated. For example, teachers most in need of support receive non-evaluative coaching visits centered on their instructional needs, and then they are given detailed, actionable feedback. Thus, the observation process has the effect of elevating teachers’ instructional practices by providing tailored support and also informs the school’s PD plan.

- In a non-evaluative observation report, a teacher was given detailed feedback regarding assessment protocols. Specifically, the school leader supported the teacher’s development by explaining how to use the success criteria. This schoolwide assessment protocol facilitates student peer- and self-assessments while also offering the teacher opportunities to assess student learning. In a subsequent observation report, the school leader complimented the teacher for effectively implementing the success criteria to allow students to self-assess. As a next step, it was suggested that the teacher use the think-pair-share questioning strategy when students are working in stations as another way to assess students’ understanding. The focus on assessment protocols aligned with the teacher’s professional goal, which is to further refine his system of student assessment. A review of observation report data shows that teachers’ instructional practices have improved, as measured in *Advance*.

- In a non-evaluative report, a teacher was given feedback stating that student texts should be made available during a read-aloud to provide support and facilitate student engagement. In a subsequent observation report, the teacher was complimented for providing supports to enhance peer questioning, leading to students’ being highly engaged in the lesson. As a next step, it was recommended that the teacher employ additional small group work to further enhance student engagement. During this process, feedback from leaders was aligned to the teacher’s professional goal of increasing student engagement. During a meeting, teachers agreed that the observation process is an integral element of their professional development.
Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: | 4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development | Rating: | Well Developed |

Findings

All teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations. Distributed leadership structures are embedded within the school community, as evident in the classroom intervisitation process.

Impact

Collaborations within professional teams have strengthened teacher instructional capacity schoolwide, and data reveal increases in student achievement. Teachers build leadership capacity and have a voice in key decisions.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers are engaged in professional collaborations focused on academic skills that promote the adoption and implementation of best instructional practices schoolwide. In a questioning and discussion inquiry team meeting, the focus was on planning questions to foster meaningful student-led discussions centered on the results of a recent watercolor painting project. The meeting began with the team leaders reviewing the school’s vision statement and success criteria. Next, the art teacher shared assessment data and work products which encompassed, in part, analysis of student-generated questions and discussions during a gallery walk. Using a student work assessment protocol, team members provided feedback, including the use of a pair-share protocol and the incorporation of academic vocabulary during discussions and within student work. Team members then discussed the implications of their analysis across content areas, including implementing gallery walks in all departments and revising exit slips. A review of teacher team minutes revealed that consistent, ongoing analysis of student work enhances teaching capacity and builds schoolwide instructional coherence.

- All teachers use the inquiry process to foster increased student achievement. In an assessment inquiry group meeting, team members were analyzing student work from an Earth Science laboratory assignment in which students used photographs and text to determine the stages in the life cycle of a star. Using a student-work assessment protocol, team members provided feedback on the efficacy of strategies implemented during the inquiry cycle. For example, team members found that revising and targeting questions throughout the assignments focused on pertinent information, resulting in an increase of students’ understanding. In a ninth-grade inquiry team meeting, team members were analyzing student work across content areas, breaking down tasks and student work products to determine the efficacy of strategies that focused on building academic vocabulary. Team members found that the implemented strategy did increase use of academic vocabulary in final work products. A review of team minutes and notes showed that the inquiry process results in overall increased student achievement, as evident in formative assessment data.

- Distributed leadership structures are evident in the skills-specific inquiry teams, which are comprised of a teacher leader and teachers across content areas. In addition, grade-level teams meet regularly to conduct class intervisitations to enhance teaching practices and build instructional coherence. Teachers also play a pivotal role in devising and implementing PD sessions for colleagues, such as a series of workshops centered on student engagement. In reviewing inquiry meeting agendas and minutes, it is evident that leadership practices are embedded so that all teachers pay an integral role in adjusting curricula and instruction. In a teacher meeting, all agreed that they are given opportunities to contribute and share their leadership capabilities, which has had a positive effect on student learning.