

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Village Academy
Middle School Q319

10-45 NAMEOKE STREET
QUEENS
NY 11691

Principal: DORIS LEE

Dates of review: January 17-18, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Michele Lloyd-Bey

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Village Academy is a middle school with 160 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 70% Black, 25% Hispanic, 1% White, 3% Asian students and 1% other students. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 28% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 92%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and staff consistently communicate high expectations to all stakeholders that are supported by effective training and result in increased accountability and improved student achievement. (3.4)
 - School leaders schedule dedicated training days to communicate key elements of instruction, such as questioning and student engagement using a common teaching framework, to be implemented across the school. Teachers use the school's bulletin board rubric, which details the expected elements to be on display, to ensure student work pieces align with the school's instructional focus and expectations. These displays of work allow teachers and the administration to monitor the impact of professional development sessions, specifically instructional strategies, use of customized rubrics, and the alignment of Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) to the curriculum. Hence, there is a feeling of mutual responsibility and cooperation among all constituents so that the staff is accountable to each other and their students.
 - All students, especially students with disabilities and high-needs groups, receive ongoing guidance support throughout the day and are taught explicitly what respect, responsibility, and excellence looks like in every aspect of the school during assembly programs and advisories. Students who continually exceed the school's high expectations in academic performance, attendance and behavior are celebrated with their families joining in on activities such as trips, dances, mixers and luncheons. Consequently, there is a culture that supports achievement where based on data, student attendance has increased to 95%, and all grades, particularly grade 8 students, are making steady gains in literacy, math, and personal growth.
- The school has exemplary systems to generate and analyze pertinent data to obtain a clear picture of every student, including subgroups, which result in consistent improvement in academic performance in literacy and math. (2.1)
 - The leadership analyzes a wide range of data that includes the analysis of item skills based on State exams, benchmark writing, math samples, and Progress Reports. They created spreadsheets which identified the math and literacy performance of key subgroups. Their analysis of data led to their knowledge that students across the school lacked specific comprehension skills, such as inference, which was most lacking among English language learners. Hence, three "power" standards for each grade were identified for an intense instructional focus. Instruction is planned through the lens of the power standards and embedded in instructional programs such as tutorials and extended day activities. As a result, recent benchmark assessment results reveal that students are making suitable gains in comprehension skills, writing and problem solving in math.
 - Through consistent analysis of classroom weekly quizzes, the leadership has been able to sufficiently identify trends across the school such as the need to deepen students' understanding of inferential thinking. Based on the analysis of periodic assessment data, the school adjusted their practice in test administration to have students record their responses on computer generated answer documents so that timely assessment results enable teachers to make immediate adjustments to their instruction. Information gained from the analysis of classroom level data helps the school to identify the exact needs of students and result in focused teaching and instructional support. Extended day and Saturday academy result in exceptional

gains by all groups including subgroups that surpassed their benchmark performance on the fall interim assessments in both literacy and math.

- The school effectively aligns curricular to State standards and make purposeful decisions that result in progress for all students, including subgroups, towards meeting the school's goals. (1.1)
 - Curriculum maps are living documents and referred to during weekly planning meetings so that purposeful decisions, such as integrating power standards into literacy and math, support students in making progress in comprehension skills, specifically, context clues. Significant emphasis is placed on literacy, and analysis of summative and formative subgroup data reflect the school's purposeful decision to focus on key standards, listening and speaking, and integrate academic vocabulary in all subject areas. As a result, improved student writing that reflects the use of sophisticated words is evident in persuasive essays.
 - The school's curriculum provides rigorous instruction and enables students to demonstrate their skills in various types of writing and problem solving. Interdisciplinary connections are embedded in the curriculum and there is a conscientious plan for teachers to focus on higher order questioning, based on Depth of Knowledge, in all content areas. Teachers across the grades design their own math curriculum using specific problem solving units from New York City's math program to supplement the school's math curriculum. Consequently, the curriculum supports an interdisciplinary approach as well as the needs of subgroups and benchmark performance in math has tripled among students with disabilities and English language learners (ELLs).
- The principal's allocation of resources results in optimal organizational opportunities that foster purposeful teacher collaboration to ensure students produce meaningful work products. (1.3)
 - The school's budget, coupled with generosity of a local Councilman, helps support the school's technology focus through funds to purchase laptops, i-Pads, projectors and other various kinds of technology tools to engage students. Working individually and with small groups, students create wikis and blogs that represent their ideas on poster board presentations, Power points, and small and large group exhibitions in all subjects. Students have ample time to think through provocative themes, such as exploring topics on environmental and human conditions that align to the CCLS. Through effective planning, students across the grades create project-based research reports using technology and make real-world connections.
 - The leadership provides an instructional schedule that allows for grade and subject specific teacher teams to meet weekly. These sessions focus on professional development, review of student work, instructional planning time to identify research-based strategies, such as the workshop model, and peer editing strategies so that students improve in literacy and math. Teachers also plan effective, coherent units of study aligned to the CCLS, analyze data, review and adjust curriculum, and create common assessments. As a result, teacher teams share the responsibility for individual and groups of students.
- Teachers align assessments to goals in the curriculum and make adjustments to their instructional decisions that improve student outcomes. (2.2)
 - Teachers supplement their analyses of item skills from State tests and Acuity with frequent daily writing assignments and open ended math problems so that they can effectively monitor the steps students take to arrive at responses. Through the

analysis of assessment data results, grade 7 and 8 teachers decided that to better address the specific obstacles of ELL's writing, they needed to adjust their pacing to ensure they meet the instructional needs of other student groups demonstrating similar vocabulary challenges. As a result, work samples reflect vast improvement in students' use of academic vocabulary.

- Teacher teams analyze periodic and classroom level assessments to plan instruction and make adjustments. Utilizing a research-based technology program enables the school to create classroom assessments. Computer generated assessment results provide very specific information about the skill strengths and needs of students, and result in ELLs receiving double periods of technology each week to engage in differentiated computer-based programs that simulate math and literacy thinking, and improve students' performance.
- School leaders have effective strategies to support the observation of teachers and provide relevant feedback that result in consistency of professional growth and improved levels of student outcomes. (4.1)
 - The principal continually supports teaching staff based on the observation of pedagogy. New and untenured teachers make up the majority of the staff and receive additional guidance and support from the leadership based on their individualized professional development plan and identified needs captured through the classroom observation process. As a result, frequent cycles of observation, which includes the analysis of student work, provide focused, clear and concise immediate feedback with conversations regarding next steps for continued student improvement.
 - The leadership observes instruction using a research-based rubric that accurately captures teachers' practice in key areas, such as questioning. Feedback to teachers regarding questioning practices, such as essential, task and discussion questions, is immediately shared during one-to-one conferences, personal and school wide emails, and the utilization of the Cognitive Rigor Matrix. The matrix is used to assess the effectiveness of teacher questioning, to create individualized professional development for each teacher, and monitor professional growth. As a result, grade 8 ICT (Integrated Co-Teaching) students read various newspaper articles and engage in spirited small group discussions based on critical questions they create regarding the link between cell phone use and cancer.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine the goal setting process so that teachers set annual and interim learning goals that are measurable and differentiated to accelerate learning for all students. (3.2)
 - Teachers set goals for students at the classroom and team level. New goals are set following benchmark assessments, and shared with students. However, not all teachers analyze data to set well defined differentiated learning goals for students, thus limiting their ability to know what adjustments, such as additional supports and extensions in the curriculum are needed that will enable all students to benefit from instruction that is fully aligned to their individual needs.
 - The school has a teacher team designed to analyze and support the specific needs of subgroups. However, while the team analyzes data to identify strategies in order to adjust their instruction, they do not sufficiently set interim goals for targeted groups of students. As a result, the school lacks the knowledge of progress made by targeted groups of students.

- Strengthen the implementation of teaching strategies so that high levels of student thinking and robust discussion across classrooms lead to greater attention given to struggling students in order to accelerate their progress. (1.2)
 - There is a strong set of beliefs about how students learn best and it is articulated during team meetings and in classroom rituals and routines. However, instructional strategies that are strategically differentiated and push students' thinking so that rich discussions occur were observed primarily in accelerated classrooms. As a result, there are diminished opportunities for all students to engage in cognitively demanding work and accelerate their progress.
 - Teachers utilize diverse forms of differentiated strategies, such as questioning, to instruct and address the needs of all learners, including subgroups. However, students work independently in some classrooms while others work on activities in small groups. As a result, not all lessons are strategically differentiated with multiple supports and extensions thus hindering students from working to their fullest potential.
- Extend the effective manner in which students' progress is shared with students and their families to include greater emphasis on the Common Core Learning (CCL) tasks so that the families' capacity to support learning at home is increased. (2.4)
 - Parents appreciate the information shared in the school's progress reports, and the computer generated communication tools, such as E-Chalk and ARIS. The ongoing face to face conferences ensure reciprocal communication takes place constantly across the school so that students and their families are well aware of students' academic strengths and weaknesses. However, at this time, there is no formal process to engage families regarding their child's performance on CCL tasks, resulting in limited information to accelerate students' academic growth.
- Refine systems that regularly evaluate the effectiveness of teacher teams to enable all teams to share successes that result in leadership development and accelerated achievement for students. (5.4)
 - Teacher teams collaborate during vertical and horizontal configurations to regularly evaluate their pedagogy and student progress in writing and math. Instructional planning meetings, Monday's school wide data meetings, on-line postings of effective strategies and routine check-in visits by the leadership to observe teams' work ensures that there is sufficient evaluation of their progress towards meeting grade and subject specific goals. However, there is no system generating data to regularly evaluate the success of each teams' identified population and ensure that their strategies accelerate learning for all students, resulting in diminished capacity to ensure that all students' learning is accelerated.
 - Inquiry and department teams rotate facilitators and encourage growth in all members. Systems that regularly evaluate the school's leadership development opportunities and structures to support distributed leadership are embedded in team, grade and subject level planning meetings enabling faculty to have many forms of decision making opportunities. However, there is no formal system in place to capture the success of all team facilitators. As a result, information to ensure the development of future leaders in the school is limited. ACA

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Village Academy	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?			X	
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?			X	
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?			X	
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X	
Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?				X
2.2 Align assessments to curriculum, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use grading policies and tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends to inform instruction and curriculum?			X	
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students' progress toward school and class expectations?			X	
Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X	
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?		X		
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			X	
3.4 Communicate high expectations to staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?				X

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?			X	
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			X	
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?			X	
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, guidance/advisement support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?			X	

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?			X	
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X	
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?			X	
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?			X	

Quality Review Scoring Key

UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed
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