



**Department of  
Education**

*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

**Quality Review  
Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning  
2013-2014**

# **Quality Review Report 2013-2014**

**John Adams**

**High School 480**

**101-01 Rockaway Boulevard  
Ozone Park  
NY 11417**

**Principal: Daniel Scanlon**

**Dates of Review: April 29 – May 1 - 2, 2014**

**Lead Reviewer: Tamika Matheson**

## **Part 1: The school context**

### **Information about the school**

John Adams is a high school with 2,744 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 25% Black, 38% Hispanic, 3% White, and 25% Asian students. The student body includes 18% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 79.0%.

### **Overall Evaluation**

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Common Core aligned curricula is strategically designed to target the needs of diverse populations and emphasize rigorous habits, creating instructional coherence across grades and subject areas. (1.1 )
  - Last year, administrators and faculty determined that students were having reading comprehension issues, struggled with rigorous text, and encountered difficulty with distinguishing between the main idea and supporting evidence, based on examination of student work, scholarship reports, and Regents item analysis data. Subsequently, the school embarked on implementing initiatives to address these academic challenges. For example, a cohort of 18 teachers enrolled in the Scaffolded Apprenticeship Model (SAM) program, offered in collaboration with CUNY/Baruch College, which focuses on teacher leadership and school improvement, in order to engage in inquiry processes to surface learning gaps and identify instructional systems “which result in those gaps”. As a result staff were involved in the development and implementation of evidence-based cycles to change the identified obstacles. SAM teachers targeted select students from Cohort O and Cohort P and refined academic tasks to encompass instructional shifts to support student needs. As a result, pass rates for students who repeatedly failed the Integrated Algebra Regents increased from 59% to 71.4% in January 2014. Additionally, ninth grade English Language Arts (ELA) teachers adjusted the grade ELA curriculum to include Dr. Judith Hochman writing strategies, such as having students write sentences using conjunctions *but*, *because*, and *so*, to extend their writing. For example, “The Industrial Revolution began in Europe *but/because/so...*” Additionally, curriculum maps and class visits reflect the use of academic tasks, higher-order skills, and cognitive engagement to promote learning, for a variety of learners including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs) as observed during class visits to a Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE) class and an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class. As a result, ELL students and SWD are graduating at higher rates than ELL and SWD in the school’s peer group. Furthermore, the school revised and created curricula maps for every course. Assistant principals continue work with key people to insert calendar of lessons, lesson plans, samples of student work, and sample resources in curriculum maps. As a result, academic tasks require all students, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, to annotate text, to write extended responses, to identify the main idea, and use textual evidence. Thus, the school implemented a coherent plan to engage faculty in curricula development to promote student access to content, student achievement, and college and career readiness.
- Teacher practice across classrooms reflect a shared set of beliefs about how students learn best, and create opportunities for all learners to access and engage in appropriate academic tasks to promote higher order thinking. (1.2)
  - Across classrooms instructional practices are aligned to the identified academic needs of students, instructional shifts, and Danielson

Framework. Evidence of common practices such as text annotation, silent debate rubric, use of graphic organizers, Cornell note-taking, and turn-and-talk, were observed during class visits and reflected in lesson plans. Furthermore, the school embraces instructional protocols such as the use of common lesson plan headings/template, the availability of lesson plans in posted folders located in the front of classrooms, and the availability of daily lesson resources such as class assignments and homework posted in labeled folders “Here’s what you missed…” for easy student access to promote collaboration and transparency among all constituencies. Furthermore, the school’s instructional focus Domain 3c “Student Engagement” is an “umbrella for effective instruction,” and informs the school’s approach to professional development. During a teacher team meeting special education teachers discussed how they use literacy strategies from professional development sessions based on the research of Judith Hochman on writing and Robert Marzano on vocabulary to develop skills and scaffold student learning. For example, one teacher described how “students write sentences and are required to verbalize the sentences to include vocabulary.” Another teacher stated, “I’m doing a lot of work on annotating. I’m getting feedback about what they [students] don’t understand. I’m helping them not to highlight everything, but to discern important information.” Additionally, ninth grade teachers discussed how they design lessons together, and use rubrics to analyze and norm looking at student work. Administrators and the UFT Teacher Center specialist turnkey professional development strategies at the campus and annex to ensure coherent instructional beliefs and practices across the school. Subsequently, students during the large group meeting referenced instructional strategies and practices employed by teachers to foster learning. For example, Cornell note-taking, rubrics, teacher feedback, graphic organizers, and opportunities to revise and resubmit assignments. As a result, class visits and student work products such as DNA models in science, argumentative essays inclusive of claims and counter-claims, an Indus River Valley group project, and small learning community Medical and Fitness Careers Academy Lamaze project, reflected the use of rubrics to augment learning, higher-order thinking skills, and opportunities to incorporate teacher feedback to revise and improve student work, resulting in overall positively impacting student learning as evidenced by student work products.

- Varied assessment tools aligned to the school’s curricula are employed across classrooms to provide actionable feedback to students and to inform instructional decisions that positively impact student achievement. (2.2)
  - Across content areas and grades students and teachers report the use of rubrics, the administration of monthly department assessments, and communication of grading policies, to set clear academic expectations and provide feedback to students and teachers. For example, displayed student work throughout the school was accompanied by rubrics such as a math discussion rubric, art rubric, and silent debate rubric. Additionally, teachers discuss student data during team meetings and are held accountable for monitoring student progress and achievement. For example, ELA teachers opted to administer a mock MOSL exam to students to “check-in” on student acquisition of select skills such as main idea. Furthermore, monthly assessments are administered in all Regents courses, inclusive of freshman English 1 and English 2. Assistant

principals and teacher teams create monthly assessments aligned to curricula, and exams are cumulative and parallel with the syllabi so that teachers frequently check student progress and provide students with feedback. Resources such as Wizard Testmaker, Regents' item analysis data, and student work, are used to inform assessment design and adjust lesson plans and unit plans. For example, students responding incorrectly on social studies' multiple-choice questions prompted teachers to examine vocabulary practices. The faculty began to incorporate Robert Marzano's vocabulary strategies coupled by the efforts of SAM's teachers using Hochman writing strategies. As a result, pass rates for targeted students taking the United States History Regents increased from 23% to 40% and pass rates for targeted students taking the Global History Regents increased from 30% to 54.5%, with an average score increase of 11.8 points, both in January of 2014. Thus, instructional decisions at the school and team level lead to curricula adjustments, meaningful feedback to students and improved student achievement.

- The school has created a safe environment and culture of trust that is conducive to learning and fosters the academic and personal growth of students and adults. (1.4)
  - The 2012-2013 Quality Review identified school culture as an area for improvement by citing the need to strengthen school culture and "classroom routines that foster student voice and adoption of academic and personal behaviors aligned with college and career readiness for all students." In response, the school implemented several initiatives to address school and classroom culture, routines, and the social-emotional needs of students. For example, the school adopted Personal Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), improved communication, coordinated guidance services and referral systems, embarked on beautification projects, and strengthened its small learning communities (SLC). The staff participated in PBIS training over the last two years to shift school culture. This year, the school implemented "Rack-em Ups" as a result of PBIS training. Rack-em Ups is system to identify, publicly acknowledge, reward, and celebrate, positive student and adult behaviors. Students receive notifications, positive reinforcement, and prizes, for random acts of kindness. Conversely, students demonstrating negative behavior receive guidance or dean referrals coupled with corrective behavior options and/or guidance services. Furthermore, PBIS signage such as "Raise the Bar" provides students with examples of "Universal Behaviors" such as "Say hello, Use clean language, Respect personal space and other peoples' belongings." Additionally, appropriate actions and conduct to "Be Welcoming, Be Mindful and Be the Solution" associated with "Classroom Behaviors, Cafeteria Behaviors, Gymnasium Behaviors and Hallway Behaviors" inform and guide behavior. School administration and staff consistently communicate academic and behavioral expectations to students via signage, classroom routines, and the use of TV monitors strategically located throughout the school. Small Learning Communities also track "Rack-em Ups" accumulation, display student names on school monitors, and hold SLC celebrations to strengthen school culture.
  - The school is divided into several SLCs: 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Jumpstart; Environmental, Science, Investigative Institute/Stem; Law and International Studies; Media and Fine Arts Academy; Medical and Fitness

Careers Academy; Newcomers Institute; Queens Business Institute and Senior Academy. Each SLC, having a director, counselors, and designated space branded by student-created murals and signage, promotes positive school culture and behaviors. This year, students in their respective SLCs received colored lanyard to distinguish SLC affiliation, and planners to promote organization skills. During the student group meetings students discussed activities and events related to their respective SLC, and how it built community and encouraged students “to get to know other students in the SLC.” The school has leveraged its Network and technological resources to create a Google platform to manage guidance services and interventions. For example, a student referral or detention submission in the Google platform triggers an email to the AP, SLC director, and counselor assigned to the student. Additionally, the student receives a hard copy with a recommendation. Furthermore, APs routinely look at Online Occurrence Reporting System (OORS) data, hourly analysis, and the number and location of incidents, to monitor and address safety concerns in a timely manner, and safety issues are routinely discussed during scheduled monthly safety meetings. The principal also stated that at the beginning of the year, he met with the level 3 school safety officer to discuss School Safety Agents interaction with students. The principal also shared how via informal conversations with students in the cafeteria and in the local park students complained of a “jail-like” environment as a result of scanning procedures. In response to student feedback, the school removed negative “Do Not...” signage, added positive murals near the scanning area and “pipes in music” into the scanning area during morning entry. Additionally, individuals were strategically assigned to monitor morning entry to welcome and greet students while they wait to be scanned. One staff member uses an instructional strategy learned during a professional development session to create a rhyme for morning entry procedures. The rhyme informs students of entry protocols such as “...take out your keys, take off your belts...” As a result of the implementation of the above changes student perspective has shifted as reflected by a second student survey where students rated the welcoming environment at 7.0, up from 4.5.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Enhance the engagement of the cabinet and teacher leaders in professional development activities, and strengthen the use of Danielson to promote professional growth and elevate school-wide instructional practices. (4.1)
  - The school uses the Danielson Framework to engage teachers in frequent cycles of observation and professional conversations on pedagogical practices and student learning. Administrators and teachers consider the Framework to be a useful tool for coaching and strengthening instruction. Initially, the administrative cabinet comprised of eleven Assistant Principals (APs) and the UFT Teacher Center specialist engaged in professional development to unpack and norm Danielson. Subsequently, APs rendered similar activities to support teacher understanding of Danielson. Professional development activities included discussions about expectations, Danielson domains, student data and examples of student work products. Additionally, the UFT teacher center specialist participates in cabinet meetings and team meetings to support teacher needs, and liaise with teachers at the school’s annex.

Furthermore, the school established model classrooms, uses Advance data to inform professional development decisions and implement strategies to address the needs of a variety of learners. However, the uneven implementation of the administrators' Danielson aligned recommendations hampers teacher professional growth and teacher practice hindering improved student performance and outcomes across all ability levels.

- Strengthen systems to capture school improvement efforts, the effectiveness of instructional decisions, professional development, and the use of resources, to track progress toward achieving school wide goals. (5.1)
  - School leadership aligns resources to positively affect student behavior, and provides time for teachers to engage in collaborative activities and other professional development opportunities to shift instructional practices aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and citywide instructional expectations. Furthermore, the school implemented a distributive leadership structure to foster building teacher leadership capacity such as the SAMs program. While leadership has focused on a multitude of school improvement efforts to improve student achievement and school culture, it has yet to implement a system to consistently monitor, track and make timely adjustments. As a result, attempts to accelerate and expand programs and initiatives to the vast majority of classes are hindered.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name:	UD	D	P	WD			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>				
<b>Instructional Core</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
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?			<b>X</b>				
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?			<b>X</b>				
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?			<b>X</b>				
<b>School Culture</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				<b>X</b>			
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations?			<b>X</b>				
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
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?			<b>X</b>				
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?			<b>X</b>				
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?			<b>X</b>				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			<b>X</b>				
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?			<b>X</b>				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>