

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Women's Academy of Excellence

High School 282

**456 White Plains Road
Bronx
NY 10473**

Principal: Dr. Arnette Crocker

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Lead Reviewer: Claudette Essor

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Women's Academy of Excellence is a high school with 397 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 47% Black, 44% Hispanic, 4% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 17% special education students. Girls account for 100% of the students enrolled. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 76.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Curricula aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) consistently incorporate academic tasks that ensure all students have access to highly engaging learning activities across disciplines. (1.1)
 - Administrators, network specialists and teacher leaders, facilitate planning sessions that focus on using student work and data to craft tasks so that students' needs are addressed, thus allowing diverse learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities, to have full access to cognitively engaging curricula. Administrators promote the use of frameworks such as *Universal Design for Learning* and *Hess Rigor Matrix* to detail what is to be taught in every classroom, with emphasis on sequential movement along a continuum of skills that target student mastery of content and build college and career readiness skills. Thus, curriculum maps for all content areas show unit topics, big ideas, targeted standards, and skills, readings from complex texts, essential questions, embedded assessments, and tasks that reflect CCLS and the instructional shifts. For example, a unit task required students to integrate in-class learning and independent research to craft a critical lens essay, responding to the question, "Is justice truly blind?" Similarly, a task in another unit required students to respond to the essential question, "In what ways does a revolution transform a society?" An instructional handbook for each content area shows detailed CCLS aligned units and tasks, derived from revisions of past units and modifications of lessons by teacher teams, thus providing for coherence of curricula across disciplines. Curriculum units also show a deep focus on academic vocabulary, close reading, and extensive writing activities across content and grades, in alignment to CCLS. For example, a science unit task required students to complete a close read of science text and use science vocabulary to write a letter to a parent, describing vaccines and explaining their importance in protecting children from diseases. On the same note, a math task instructed students to use math vocabulary to create a rap song or poem about the properties of quadrilaterals. Thus all students, including students with disabilities and English language learners, have access to CCLS aligned curricula and tasks that are designed to transmit essential concepts in an engaging and coherent way across classrooms.
- Administrators use teacher time and hiring practices effectively, supporting instructional goals and building teacher capacity to promote instruction that leads to college and career readiness for all students. (1.3)
 - Strategic scheduling results in blocks of time for teacher teams, across grades and content areas, to engage in inquiry-based activities that lead to students gaining access to supports that they need to achieve learning goals. Department teams meet weekly on Wednesdays, grade teams meet bi-weekly on Mondays and /or Tuesdays, and there is weekly common planning on Thursdays and Fridays, leading to immersion of staff in collaborative reviews of student work and data to

enhance staff and student learning. Teams focus on using protocols to examine student work, identifying gaps in learning, and adjusting curriculum and instruction in order to improve student achievement. Meetings including teacher leaders from each grade, allow for vertical alignment of curricula. Grade team meetings include guidance counselors and the assistant principal who help to inform discussions of individual students' progress, using credit accumulation and attendance data to inform discussions of the performance of targeted students, especially English language learners and students with disabilities. The principal also promotes leadership throughout the school community, via staff and student participation in staffing decisions that help to build teacher capacity in delivering high quality instruction for all students. This is evidenced by the promotion of several teachers to leadership positions across the school and the inclusion of selected teachers and students on an interview committee, which allows them to collaborate with administrators to interview prospective teachers, view demonstration lessons by each, and approve hiring decisions. As a result, staffing and scheduling decisions lead to students receiving additional supports and interventions from teachers who embrace accountability for and share ownership of initiatives that target improved academic achievement by all students.

- A variety of professional collaborations across grades and subjects align teamwork with instructional goals to strengthen teacher delivery of instruction, leading to growth in student progress towards learning goals. (4.2)
 - Teachers are grouped in interdisciplinary teams to promote focused inquiry-based discussions of students' needs and successes across disciplines, with specific focus on the students in the "lowest third". At meetings, team members examine student work and data to develop Common Core aligned tasks with multiple access points for all learners. They create and revise curriculum maps, building horizontal and vertical coherence in relation to what students need to know and be able to do in order to make progress towards learning goals. Teams discuss targeted students, patterns and trends in learning related to a given unit, topic or assessment, enabling teachers to determine next steps, as they take turns sharing ideas for improvement in their practice and strategies for accelerating students' mastery of learning goals. Teams also use a school-based rubric to drive ongoing alignment of curricula and tasks to CCLS and other applicable content standards, as they evaluate curriculum materials and identify resources to support the school's instructional goals. Teachers collaborate regularly with school leaders who attend team meetings, offering help in decision making related to the content and scheduling of varied professional development activities. Specifically, the assistant principal works directly with the teams to coordinate professional development related to the needs of English language learners and students with disabilities. Thus via collaborative planning, all teachers are engaged in activities that enable them to improve their practice, with positive impact on student performance, as evidenced by data from unit assessments that show growth in independent reading levels for many students, and data for the January 2014 English language arts Regents assessment showing 20 of 25 students earning a passing score.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen teacher pedagogy to ensure instruction that consistently incorporates multiple entry points and questioning strategies that lead to high quality student work and peer-to-peer discussions across classrooms. (1.2)
 - Lessons show a focus on questioning to support whole class, individual, and small group discussion of topics, with some teachers providing prompts for questioning that engage students in higher order thinking. Thus in some classrooms, teachers assign rigorous CCLS aligned tasks that evoke discussions, as students quote evidence from multiple texts to support claims or validate responses to questions. For example, in an English classroom, the teachers asked students to cite textual evidence from a variety of sources to support their opinions about materials read, leading to a highly engaging discussion among each group of students. However, other teachers do not use strategic questioning to ensure participation of all learners in discussions and students are not routinely invited to comment on responses given by their peers. For the most part, lessons are teacher dominated, with students quietly listening to the teacher or to responses from the few peers who are called upon. Further, in a few classrooms, lessons do not demonstrate sufficient multiple entry points to meet students' diverse needs, with limited reading, writing and speaking opportunities for students, including English language learners and students with disabilities. Some tasks are of low demand, with students reading excerpts of texts to answer a few low-level questions, copying diagrams, or the teacher's notes from the board. Hence, student work products, viewed in classrooms and work folders, do not consistently reflect high levels of thinking, evidencing missed opportunities to deepen learning by all students.
- Refine assessment practices so that they consistently communicate accurate feedback on student progress, to staff and students, resulting in effective adjustments to curriculum and instruction aligned to students' needs. (2.2)
 - At the start of the school year, teachers administered a baseline assessment in English language arts and math to students in all grades. In addition, for students in grades 10 through 12, teachers administered a Regents based assessment. Teachers reported that they engaged in item analyses of the results to measure student proficiency and determine their next steps for revising instructional plans to improve individual student achievement. For example, teachers used data from the mock Regents assessments to create profiles of individual students' strengths and areas of needs, thus informing next steps in preparing students for the January 2014 Regents exams. Unit assessments within content areas, coupled with teachers sharing a common grading policy and collaboratively developing rubrics within each content area, facilitate the sharing of feedback about students' performance in skill areas measured by the assessments. Staff and students share feedback on assessments, via proficiency reports, individual conferences, color-coded data tracking logs, and academic probation sheets, and some teachers assess learning through exit slips and students' journal writing across the curriculum. However, the format, quality, and quantity of

feedback on assessments varies across disciplines, with some samples of student writing showing checkmarks with comments, including next steps, others showing number grades only, or just a check mark or performance level score with rubric-based comments on post-its. In addition, although all teachers use and guide students in using a variety of rubrics to engage in peer- and self-assessment, teacher practice during instruction, at times showed missed opportunities to engage in ongoing assessment of individual student learning. As a result, feedback is not always actionable and assessments do not consistently yield accurate data to inform adjustments to instruction, so that all students' needs are addressed sufficiently.

- Expand structures for monitoring and evaluation of school performance trends, in order to accelerate data driven changes in school culture and instructional practices, so that there is mastery of CCLS goals. (5.1)
 - All staff members are supported in evaluating their instructional practices to identify adjustments to be made in response to students' learning needs, such as modifying pacing of lessons, placing additional emphasis on writing and language development, and varying classroom management routines and strategies. For example, collaborative sessions on the effectiveness of instructional practices take place during teacher team meetings and other professional development sessions, promoting teachers' understanding of how to align their practices to CCLS expectations in order to improve student achievement. In addition, during formal and informal observations, school leaders and teachers engage in conversations on lesson delivery and instructional impact, further informing awareness of the effectiveness of specific instructional practices. In relation to other expectations, the school utilizes student attendance and suspension rate data to track student behaviors and apply supports as needed primarily for targeted students. However, structures for assessing the effectiveness of feedback in improving instruction by selected teachers and student outcomes relative to CCLS are not yet evident. Thus, schoolwide systems to monitor and measure the effectiveness of interventions designed by the teams and implemented at the classroom level are not yet fully developed. Further, as evidenced by interviews of members of each constituent of the school community, broad initiatives already in place to improve the school as a whole and school culture in particular, do not include regular monitoring of data via collaborative meetings involving all stakeholders in further developing and sharing new initiatives that focus on the expectations of the school. For example, School Survey data and interviews of some members of the school community illuminate areas of high need, such as ineffective parent communication and engagement, and safety and student behavior management concerns, but interviews of other members of the school community indicate limited awareness of or involvement in plans being developed by administrators for improvement in these aspects of school performance. As a result, efforts to engage all stakeholders, especially parents, in partnerships that lead to the addition of systems and structures to improve school culture are limited, hindering rapid growth in staff and student learning, particularly in relation to CCLS.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Women's Academy of Excellence					UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score						X		
Instructional Core								
<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?							X	
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?						X		
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?						X		
School Culture								
<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?						X		
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations?						X		
Systems for Improvement								
<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?							X	
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?						X		
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?							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	
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?						X		
Quality Review Scoring Key								
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed	