



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning**

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

New American Academy

Elementary K770

**60 East 94th Street
Brooklyn
NY 11212**

Principal: Jessica Saratovsky

**Date of review: March 5, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Kristine Mustillo**

The School Context

New American Academy is an elementary school with 288 students from Pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 73% Black, 12% Hispanic, 13% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 18% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 93.0%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
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	Additional Findings	Well Developed
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	Additional Findings	Proficient
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	Focus	Proficient
School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	Additional Findings	Well Developed
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	Celebration	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

All staff are engaged in professional learning collaborations that are teacher led and focused on continually growing practices to meet the needs of a diverse population of learners.

Impact

The work of teacher teams has resulted in strengthened instructional practice and coherence and led to improvement in the achievement of all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- The school operates on a career ladder system for teachers through an open classroom model. There is one classroom on each grade level that serves approximately sixty students. Each classroom has a master, partner, associate and apprentice teacher. Master teachers serve as the instructional cabinet and lead all teacher teams. The instructional cabinet meets weekly to discuss teacher team learnings and school-wide issues.
- Teacher teams meet 90 minutes daily. Teachers use one designated meeting each week for curriculum planning, lesson planning, looking at student data, looking at student work, and examining instructional practice. Teachers combine their work with Meyers-Briggs to strengthen instructional planning. For example, teachers noted that the extroverts in their class needed an opportunity to talk first before writing and the introverts needed to write first before speaking and so groups are homogenous at the start of many literacy lessons and then move to heterogeneous groupings for sharing.
- Teacher teams are involved in all aspects of school-wide decision making from scheduling to instruction. A second grade team first began the shift to Engage NY modules in math because they were more successful at differentiating the problems and students were having more success tackling them. After sharing this information, more grades began utilizing the modules within their math units.
- Teachers provide all professional development within the school. While master teachers lead their team, teachers can share practices or lead and participate in inter-visitations through self-selection or with the guidance of observational feedback. Teachers participate in collegial lesson plan reviews using guidelines from the National Board of Teaching Standards to push teacher thinking.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

School-wide, teachers use common assessments aligned to the curricula to determine student progress towards goals and make adjustments to curricula and instruction. The school recognizes that evaluating student success within groups and determining causal factors in uneven student growth are areas in need of additional focus.

Impact

Formative and summative assessment data provide teachers with actionable feedback and inform instructional decisions.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use Fountas and Pinnell reading inventories school-wide to provide targeted reading instruction to students during literacy and intervention blocks. At each assessment students are placed into reading bands and required skills associated with that band are identified to plan for small group instruction. Students who are identified as being on the cusp of an advanced level receive targeted reading instruction in order to advance. The school shows most growth in moving students from “below” to “approaching.”
- On-demand writing baselines are given at the beginning of each literacy unit to determine whole group, small group and individual strategies to be embedded throughout daily instruction. Teachers utilize CCLS aligned rubrics to gain information and give feedback to students around instructional strengths and next steps. In kindergarten, teachers noticed students struggling with sentence structure and oral expression in relation to writing and comprehension. Students were then pulled for small group instruction to focus on skill development. Models of sentence structure, thinking aloud, and student-student talk were implemented into the literacy block during shared and guided reading and writing.
- NYC performance tasks for math and pre- and post-unit assessments are used to determine math groups. Throughout each math module teachers utilize baseline, mid-line and end of unit check-ins.
- Teachers loop each year with their class, which allows students to be well known in terms of academic and personal behaviors. Teachers not only keep data binders to track student growth in academic and personal areas, but engage in conversations with students and their families over the course of years and develop a comprehensive understanding of student needs and strengths.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

School leaders and faculty align curricula to Common Core Standards and strategically integrate instructional shifts emphasizing academic tasks that require rigorous higher order thinking.

Impact

All learners are engaged in interdisciplinary units of study within a coherent curriculum that promotes acquisition of college and career skills and provides students opportunities to interact with a variety of content and demonstrate their understanding in a variety of ways.

Supporting Evidence

- From pre-kindergarten through grade 5 students work in exploring the same thematic units through an inter-disciplinary, project-based curriculum that progressively includes rigorous academic and personal skills and behaviors across grades. For example, within a transportation unit, students in pre-kindergarten completed graphs on the way they traveled to school each morning, created drawings and art projects related to boats, trains, airplanes and cars and read books related to transportation. While in the upper grades, students study transportation through social studies as it relates the impact it has on the development of civilizations and through science as it relates to bodily systems transporting and transmitting to support functioning.
- The school utilizes a workshop model approach across content. The school has adopted Ready Gen which it supports with Teacher College Reading and Writing to strengthen the writing component.
- The school has adopted Go Math which it supplements using Engage NY and exemplars to provide a comprehensive curriculum that includes computation fluency and accuracy as well as application and problem solving experiences.
- The school implements the work of Meyers Briggs to understand the learning profiles of each student. The school engages in HEART work: Humility, Empowerment Aspiration Responsibility and Teamwork. These two pieces enable teachers to support the personal as well as academic behaviors associated with College and Career Readiness within the curriculum. Teachers utilize this information along with performance data to plan for student groups, especially in discussion opportunities and collaborative group work.
- Curriculum compacting allows teachers to spend more time in interdisciplinary project-based learning activities that support collaboration and application of higher order skills to real world experiences. Teachers spoke to this largely in conversation around multi-disciplinary units that involve science, writing and art. Students who may not need mini-lessons in developing introductions or organization have opportunities to expand their research around content and create additional writing, diagrams, or art constructions based on a high interest topic.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms teaching strategies provide scaffolds so that all learners can access and engage in higher order thinking tasks and discussions.

Impact

Work products and student discussion show high levels of thinking and participation. Student ownership and strategic extensions and supports are strengthening.

Supporting Evidence

- The school utilizes an open classroom concept with three to four teachers in a class of approximately sixty students. Students are grouped homogeneously for English language arts and mathematics and heterogeneously around interdisciplinary studies. Classrooms are structured so there are three lessons occurring at each time.
- In a third grade classroom, students in literacy worked to understand the point of view of the characters in Paul Bunyan using text-based evidence to support their thinking. During this time the master teacher pulled small groups of students for guided instruction.
- In a grade four-five bridge class students were working in groups of four with each pair debating whether or not junk food commercials should be banned from television networks that cater to school-aged children. Students had collected notes from videos and magazine articles about the effects of junk food on weight and overall health. Students had talking points and there were opportunities to question their peers. There was evidence that students had also participated in this process discussing school cell phone policies.
- During a first grade math class students worked in pairs to measure objects using strings and cubes prior to engaging with a word problem that asked them to compare objects to one another using centimeter cubes.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The school has established a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations to staff and families toward students achieving college and career readiness.

Impact

Structures for daily communication and collaboration result in mutual accountability for student achievement and school improvement.

Supporting Evidence

- All new teachers attend a five week training program in the summer. One week is spent at Harvard studying Meyer-Briggs and reflective practice. One week is spent on how to communicate HEART values through routines and curriculum. A third week is curriculum and lesson planning. The final two weeks are social-emotional learning and classroom set-up. This training establishes clear expectations. Master Teachers then facilitate team sessions throughout the year that focus not only on instructional and curricula improvement, but also on how each team member communicates as a thinker or a feeler to support school health.
- The school-year begins with norming exercises around the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Teachers meet initially with their master teacher and the principal to establish goals for the school year. Teachers meet one on one with the principal mid-year to discuss progress and in a final session with the principal and their master teacher to reflect on the year. Teachers participate in daily meetings with their master teacher and are regularly videotaped for instructional study.
- Parents receive regular information around curriculum expectations and student progress through weekly newsletters and progress reports. Every Friday the principal hosts a parent forum which is an opportunity for parents to ask questions and share information. The principal is leading a book study for parents around, "How to Talk so that Kids will Listen, How to Listen so that Kids will Talk."
- The school has an open door policy for parents meaning that parents can take part in classroom learning any day, at any time. Parents have received training in guided reading strategies and lead small group reading sessions each morning. There are curriculum celebrations at the end of each interdisciplinary unit of study where students discuss their process and their learning with their parents.