



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The College Academy

High School M462

**549 Audubon Avenue
Manhattan
NY 10040**

Principal: Peter Sloman

Date of review: November 19, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Musa Ali Shama

The School Context

The College Academy is a high school with 505 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 9% Black, 89% Hispanic, 1% White, and 0% Asian students. The student body includes 44% English language learners and 24% special education students. Boys account for 62% of the students enrolled and girls account for 38%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 87.0%.

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	Proficient
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	Focus	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	Additional Findings	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	Celebration	Proficient
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	Additional Findings	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty have high expectations for students and communicate effectively with parents so that there is ongoing feedback to families to help them understand their child's progress in being college and career ready. In addition, administration has refined systems to ensure that faculty receives targeted support aligned to Danielson Framework for Teaching for improved.

Impact

The clear communication of high expectations result in teachers being well informed about the school leaders' instructional and professional expectations, resulting in a system of accountability for those expectations. Additionally, the efforts in developing partnerships with parents provides them with a clear understanding about how to support their children at home, thus supporting increased student progress.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal has scheduled weekly professional development aligned to his expectations with school wide goals. Professional development topics are developed based on classroom observations as well as teacher input and aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Teachers articulated the expectations around knowing their students, communicating with parents, and documenting anecdotal information on the school's student management system Skedula regarding student interactions. School leaders receive notifications on student or teacher concerns and follow up to provide targeted support.
- Parents affirmed that they receive clear information regarding their children's academic standing and progress. They highlighted the efforts of the parent coordinator, guidance counselors and materials translated into Spanish to support them in understanding the school's expectations.
- Parents praised the communications from teachers and identified the efforts of the school to prepare their children for college and careers. An English language learner (ELL) who participated in the student group meeting shared about his/her participation in a summer orientation program that helped her acclimate to the school as well as made her and her parents aware of the college application process and how the school was going to support her in the process. In addition, several of the students at the meeting had been on college trips and stated they were working with the college counselor on their college applications. One student highlighted his experience with a program called the Future Project that engaged students in career exploration and job shadowing experiences to connect students with potential career paths.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

There is a clear emphasis on the school's instructional focus and across classrooms teaching strategies reflect an articulated set of beliefs to consistently provide all students with challenging tasks. However, the high-quality supports and extensions were not evident across the vast majority of classes.

Impact

Teaching practices have led to students demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in student work products more often, and across classrooms all learners, including ELLs and student with disabilities, were engaged in appropriately challenging tasks. Teacher pedagogy is being refined to consistently provide multiple entry points, however, inconsistencies in teacher practice limit the numbers of students who are able to move to mastery of content.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's instructional focus is to engage students in literacy across subjects and grades, and having students demonstrate their content knowledge through writing. The principal cited strategies such as teachers incorporating academic vocabulary in lessons, reading, and writing prompts to engage students in writing in every lesson. Across classrooms these strategies, informed by Danielson Framework for Teaching and incorporating the instructional shifts, were observed. For example, in an Algebra class, students were required to read a word problem, solve the problem and then explain in writing how they solved the problem. In a bilingual Geometry class, the lesson included a warm-up vocabulary component that had students identify the function and meaning of each math-specific vocabulary word. In a grade 11 English class, students read a text, generated questions and were asked to write down a recall question and an inquiry question that they would discuss with their groups.
- To support ELLs and students with disabilities, teachers incorporate strategies in their teaching repertoire to support engaging students in challenging tasks that promote higher-order thinking skills. Observed in an earth science class, students were working collaboratively identifying the properties of metamorphic, sedimentary, and igneous rocks in a hands-on activity where they examined an assortment of rocks. They recorded their answers on a worksheet that the teacher strategically scaffolded in complexity and modeled answers with academic vocabulary to offer students a guide. In a ninth grade English Integrated Co-Teaching class, teachers grouped students to support each other in generating questions based on a text analysis. Teachers employed the strategies scripted in the lesson to engage students by posing questions aligned to Webb's Depth Knowledge (DOK) Levels 2 and 3 in order to promote higher-order thinking.
- Across classrooms, teachers implemented various strategies to engage all students in demonstrating higher-order thinking and to ensure all students were engaged in challenging tasks, however, high-quality supports and extensions were observed in 5 out of 7 classes. For example, in a history class, the teacher had a graphic organizer and a scaffolded reading, yet the lesson yielded few student responses as all students moved along the teacher-dominated lesson at the same pace.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teachers engage in professional collaborations to analyze student work and data to adjust curricula and inform instructional decisions. Teams are working to ensure that Common Core Learning Standards are embedded in curricula and that students are engaged in rigorous tasks and activities.

Impact

Inquiry-based teacher team work is building teacher capacity and fluency with Common Core Learning Standards, performance based assessments, and resulting in refined teacher practice and mindful adjustments to move groups of students towards goals.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet 3 days a week. In a team meeting that was observed, teachers were analyzing student assessment data from benchmark exams given in science for a group of students and developing next steps to better to support those students. Teachers stated that they discuss instructional strategies, curriculum modifications, and individual students in those teams to better support each other and their students.
- An example of interdisciplinary collaborative work they developed was a Social Studies, English and English as a Second Language project for the 10th grade where students read *The Things They Carried* and were also learning about the Vietnam War. Teachers shared resources, aligned Common Core Learning Standards in collaborative research and argumentative writing and developed scaffolds to support students in developing their argumentative essays.
- Teachers discussed the process of looking at student work to inform their goals that align to school wide goals and instructional focus. Teachers identified assessments that were analyzed that informed the work around incorporating specific literacy strategies to support students in meeting the college readiness index and being better prepared for college and careers. They cited examples of identifying Tier 1 and Tier 2 words that students were should know and developing interdisciplinary projects to reinforce writing skills.

Finding

Curricula and lesson plans reflected a clear alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards, and demonstrated purposeful decisions that emphasize rigorous habits and high-order skills across grades and subjects.

Impact

Across grades and subjects areas, curricula and tasks provided all learners with opportunities to engage in rigorous tasks that build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students, and these have resulted in an increase in student performance in the lowest third across all grades.

Supporting Evidence

- Unit maps of curricula and lesson plans that were reviewed align to Common Core Learning Standards, indicating the standards covered in each unit. The principal highlighted decisions made in teacher scheduling, per session allocation for teachers to meet for curriculum writing, and professional development to build coherence to incorporate the instructional shifts of building academic vocabulary, writing from sources, and infusing informational text to support literary text in English. In math, adjustments had been made in the algebra curriculum to support the Common Core and embed the shifts to promote coherence, deep understanding, and fluency.
- Incorporated into lesson plans were Webb's DOK questions to promote higher-order thinking. In addition, lesson plans collected also contained differentiated strategies for English language learners and, where present, students with disabilities, such as defined vocabulary terms and annotated texts.
- Curricula and lesson plans included Essential Questions (EQ) that served as guides in unit plans and lesson plans and supported the inquiry-based learning students were engaged in. A 10th grade English plan EQ was "How does literature help us understand ourselves and the world around us?" with the instructional objective of the lesson was having students make personal connections to the text they were reading. For example, students were asked to use the text to support their answer to the prompt "How are the roles of Dominican women of the 1960's different from the roles of women today?" and in an 11th grade English class, students engaged in a student-led text based discussion reading *Huckleberry Finn* that had the EQ of "How do we rebel against our society?" Lessons incorporated strategies for students to demonstrate their thinking through writing and student-to-student discussions.

Findings

Across the school, teachers utilize assessments and rubrics that are aligned to the school's curricula to monitor and determine student progress and adjust curricula and instruction accordingly.

Impact

The alignment of assessments and use of rubrics provides meaningful feedback to students and teachers regarding academic progress and student achievement that leads to refined curricula and tasks, increased student mastery and students meeting college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms and in hallways, student work displays all exhibited rubrics aligned to relevant Common Core Standards, and provided feedback to students for next steps to improve the work. Students interviewed consistently stated that their assignments always included a rubric. In addition, students stated that they had the opportunity to refine their work to resubmit for a higher grade after they incorporated teacher feedback. Students also spoke to self-assessing and discussing their progress with teachers in order to have a deeper understanding of what they had to do to achieve mastery.
- Teachers worked collaboratively to develop common assessments, and conducted item analysis to inform curricula refinements and adjustments. Teachers elaborated on their process of refining curricula and tasks based on the Measures of Student Learning baseline assessments. Teachers were able to identify groups of students that needed additional remediation based on analyzing assessment data in order to keep students on track for graduation as well as meet the college and career readiness index.
- The principal shared data analysis comparing groups of ELLs with other sub-groups in core content areas. He was able to drill down and identify students as well as teachers that needed additional support. The principal uses school-wide data to inform school wide goals and teacher goals, as well as provide teachers feedback on student progress and outcomes of instructional decisions.