

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**Village Academy**

**Middle School Q319**

**10-45 Nameoke Street  
Queens  
NY 11691**

**Principal: Doris Lee**

**Dates of review: May 5, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Jean McKeon**

## The School Context

Village Academy is a middle school with 328 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 71% Black, 24% Hispanic, 2% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 15% English language learners and 28% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-14 was 92.9%.

## School Quality Criteria

### Instructional Core

<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</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	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.	Additional Findings	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.	Celebration	Well Developed

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaboration that strengthens teacher instructional capacity and promotes the achievement of the school's goals, and the Common Core Learning Standards. Teacher teams systematically analyze classroom practice, assessment data, and student work for students they share or on whom they are focused.

### Impact

Structured professional collaborations result in school wide instructional coherence and increased student achievement for all learners. Teacher team work results in shared improvements in teacher practice as well as shared leadership so that teachers play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning.

### Supporting Evidence

- A school-wide professional learning plan details goals that support the instructional focus to improve teacher effectiveness and pedagogy in the areas of student engagement and questioning. The professional plan includes the foci for each learning opportunity including common planning, grade teams, Monday professional development, consultant work, inter-visitations, the Teacher Effectiveness Ambassador, and teacher data conferences. Monday professional learning is divided into four cycles. A professional cycle planning template was designed to detail the expected goals, benchmarks, and rationale for each cycle. During this visit, the first three planning templates were shared along with the meeting norms, agendas, reflections, and data.
- The peer instructional coach who is also a special education math teacher led the math department teacher team observed. During this meeting, a teacher shared a video of his teaching. Peer teachers give feedback on ways to improve the mini-lesson and explicit teaching, as each teacher shares a videoed lesson at least once a year. The meeting agenda included the debrief protocol to describe, analyze, and evaluate peer instruction, and the impact based on student outcomes. The teacher provided the lesson plan and background for the videoed lesson. As the video played the teachers recorded low-inference notes on a prepared graphic organizer with a focus on Danielson's component 3c, student engagement. The teachers then shared low inference feedback, which included "You made an instructional decision to allow this to be an explanatory lesson." The observed teacher shared that he relied only on the students that raised their hands and realizes he needs to cold call on more students. The peer teachers also evaluated the lesson plan and added that the teacher included the timing, student choice, and had strategies for students that needed extra support. The next steps for this meeting were to look at student work samples from this lesson.
- The school staff play a critical role in decision-making concerning curriculum, instruction, school climate, professional development, and school culture. The Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) consists of lead teachers in math teachers, literacy, humanities, science, and special education. The ILT facilitates common planning, vets common assessments and curriculum, analyzes student data, leads professional development, sends weekly update e-mails, facilitates inter-visitation, develops instructional documents with their teams, and ensures consistency and coherency across their subject and school wide. The ILT shared that this school year the team developed an English language arts data tracker similar to one used for math. This new tool analyzes assessment data broken disaggregated by genre and grade standards addressed. Each grade also has two team leaders who are members of the leadership cabinet that meets once a week around school culture and climate. Grade team leaders facilitate grade meetings and professional learning. They support meetings where their respective teams look at students across subject areas to gain a deeper understanding and specific needs. Grade leaders also facilitate grade-wide events.

## Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

### Findings

Teacher practice is centered around an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson's Framework for Teaching, and it meets the needs of most learners so that students produce meaningful work products.

### Impact

The school community shares a common belief around student learning creating coherence across classrooms where most students are actively engaged in their own learning. However, student work products and discussion that reflect high levels of thinking and participation was not consistently evident across the vast majority of classes.

### Supporting Evidence

- The Danielson Framework for Teaching, specifically Domain 3, increasing student engagement through questioning and discussion was evident in teacher practice and planning. Consistently across classrooms visited, students were engaged in real world 'Do Now' questions to motivate their interest or as a review of prior topics. Several of the Do Now's included extensions or bonus questions to ensure challenges for all learners. In one math class the bonus asked students to calculate sales tax related to the initial question. In another class, the Do Now was a quick-write on teen decision making with a bonus to include examples related to a celebrity teenager. In some classes visited, students were encouraged to discuss their Do Now responses with their table groups. However, some of the teachers utilized whole class share of the Do Now question, choosing one or two students to participate, limiting student-to-student discussion.
- The school leader stated that students are expected to discuss their thinking in partnerships or small groups throughout the lesson or during station teaching. Across classrooms, there was evidence of small group instruction. In one classroom observed, students worked in small groups on a math activity. The students were heterogeneously grouped and received leveled task sheets. A paraprofessional offered support to a group of English language learners. However, some groups observed shared limited conversations and their work products showed varying levels of understanding and completion. Student discussion and opportunities for deeper thinking were hindered.
- In most classrooms there was evidence of multiple entry points and scaffolds of support built into the lesson so that English language learners and students with disabilities could access the curricula materials and produce work products using varied scaffolds. Graphic organizers, leveled tasks, visual aids, and technology supported a variety of learners allowing them access and ensuring participation.

## Additional Findings

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.1 Curriculum**

**Rating:**

**Well Developed**

### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that all curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Academic tasks are planned and refined using student work.

### Impact

Curricular coherence and access across grades and subject areas promote college and career readiness for all learners and cognitively engage individuals, and relevant sub-groups of students.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school offers comprehensive Common Core aligned curricula in all subject areas that promote college and career readiness. Curriculum planning begins with pacing calendars for English language arts (ELA), math, humanities, and science, with each calendar including assessment dates. Each subject area has developed unit plans by grade, which follows a uniform architecture to ensure coherence across the school. The unit plans include an overview, essential questions, real world/career alignment, assessments, and integration of technology, vocabulary, supports, and extensions. Each unit is followed up with a module task that includes the rationale, student tasks with project phases, and a student writing checklist and rubric. Differentiation and access for students with disabilities and English language learners are detailed in the units. An example of supports seen in classrooms was students accessing NewsELA articles in Spanish. Several end-unit tasks are also translated in Spanish. An accelerated honors curriculum ensures that students are prepared for and take Regents' exams in eighth grade.
- The instructional shifts are strategically addressed in the curriculum. Teachers collaborate to continuously refine and update units of study and ensure they include real world situations applicable to their students. Curriculum and lesson plans include real world applications as exemplified by the grade 8 unit on Food Desserts where students made direct connection to nutritious food availability in Far Rockaway. This unit included math, science, and humanities connections. All subject area teachers are required to include close reading and incorporate texts from multiple sources. A social studies unit titled The Constitution in Practice includes specific academic vocabulary and emphasizes integration and evaluation of multiple sources of evidence. Two social studies units reviewed emphasized the use of text and real world evidence to write argumentative letters to support a claim.
- The school strategically planned foci is to build student vocabulary to provide them access to complex texts through the integration of the Word Generation vocabulary acquisition program across all subject areas and grade levels. Rigorous academic vocabulary is evident in unit plans, lesson plans, classroom environment, and in daily instruction in all content areas.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

Analysis of student work and a variety of student assessment data highlights students' progress towards learning goals and informs adjustments to curricula and instruction.

### Impact

The school's use of assessment analysis results in meaningful examination of teacher practice, refinement of curricula, and adjustments to instruction that increases student achievement.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school leader shared that a data-driven culture exists in this school community where a variety of assessment information is used to drive professional development, curriculum development, student programs, and budget decisions. Data talks occur consistently across vertical and horizontal grade team meetings. Data trends across the school are discussed and next steps established during instructional leadership team meetings. For example when the team identified that students were struggling with reading stamina and not being exposed to a variety of genres they developed a genre exposure unit. In this unit literacy strategic reading, humanities, and science teachers implemented ACT Now strategies (Annotate, Close Read, use Text-based evidence). Teachers developed materials for direction instruction on close reading, annotations, citing evidence based responses and implemented the strategies in daily lessons.
- The school uses common assessments school-wide to monitor progress and demonstrate mastery of standards. Benchmarks, unit pre- and post-assessments and tasks, weekly quizzes, and ongoing checks for understanding, are implemented and tracked. After analyzing the September math benchmark results, which included key standards and topics covered on the grade, the teachers adjusted the pacing calendar. Specifically, the data informed grade 7's decision to allow more time on number sense and less emphasis on expressions and equations. In September all students took the Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) Assessment to identify their reading levels. Based on the results students were placed in different strategic reading groups and curriculum was adjusted to meet the needs of these students based on their levels. After each benchmark exam teachers complete a data analysis action plan, which identifies student's strengths and gaps, outlining next steps for progress.
- Questions on assessments are identified by standards and tracked for individual, class, and grade mastery using a data tracker. A humanities teacher shared a pre-assessment given to students to gather data on their prior knowledge about culture and diversity. The assessment incorporated Common Core learning standards for writing in the content area and social studies content standards. The teacher stated that the information from this pre-assessment will help identify student's strengths and areas that require additional emphasis throughout the upcoming unit of study. The teacher also uses this data for heterogeneous and homogeneous grouping depending on the daily activities.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

The school has a culture of learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and their families, and provides supports to achieve those expectations.

### Impact

Consistent communications, ongoing professional learning, and feedback from school leaders, have resulted in teachers' awareness of the school's expectation and the implementation of these goals across all classrooms. The school has established numerous guidance supports and family activities to aide students' social and emotional growth.

### Supporting Evidence

- At the beginning of the school year, the school leaders provide all staff with a staff handbook that outlines the beliefs and expectations related to teaching and learning. School leaders communicate high expectations to staff using evidenced based Danielson observations as well as ongoing snapshot feedback through e-mail. In addition to the required measures of teacher practice, each teacher receives at least one weekly snapshot to ensure consistent effective instruction. Based on Advance, teacher observation data and school leaders' reflections, the school has developed a professional learning plan that addresses specific Danielson Framework for Teaching components. Teachers take ownership of their professional learning and have opportunities to present best practices, aligned to the school's instructional focus and goals.
- The school leader begins each school day with a morning assembly for students and staff. The school leader shared that these meetings reinforce the expectations for all constituents around respect, responsibility, and excellence towards a path to success. Video monitors in the hallways feature student activities, celebration, announcements, expectations, and other relevant school business.
- It is evident that the school leaders, teachers, and staff have established a culture for learning that communicates a unified set of high expectations for all students. Teachers provide effective feedback to students during classroom conversations, on rubrics, and in progress reports. Students know what they need to do to improve and feedback is student meaningful and actionable. Students stated they rubrics give them information on what they did right and we they still need to work on. Students like that some teachers share rubrics at the beginning of assignments so they know what is expected. A student stated that all teachers push students on the path to success and that she really feels teachers believe in the students.
- The school leaders, teachers, and the parent coordinator have open, ongoing communications with parents to support student's success. A monthly parent workshop calendar includes highlights such as the Too Important to Fail Boys/Girls Symposiums and parent stress management sessions. The school maintains ongoing parent communication through Engrade, Class Dojo, Global Connect, phone calls, and text messaging, so that parents can monitor and support student progress. The school is currently partnered with SFL Broadband to provide free internet services to over 50 families to support the partnership between home and school and offer student's internet accessibility at home.