



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

John Adams

High School Q480

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

Principal: Daniel Scanlon

**Dates of Review: February 3, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Miatheresa Pate**

The School Context

John Adams is a high school with 2,628 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 24% Black, 38% Hispanic, 3% White, and 26% Asian students. The student body includes 20% English language learners and 8% special education students. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 81.0%.

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	Developing
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	Developing
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	Proficient

Area of Celebration

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

All teachers are engaged in inquiry-based professional collaborations aligned to school goals and opportunities are embedded to empower them to assume leadership roles that directly impact key decisions across the school.

Impact

The work of teacher team has positively impacted student achievement and also resulted in teachers having built leadership capacity and a voice in key decisions.

Supporting Evidence

- During the observation of a math and literacy teacher team, teachers were guided by a teacher developed agenda and teacher facilitator. Teachers made reference to the school's instructional focus and used a looking at a student work protocol. Throughout the meeting, the teachers engaged in a two four step processes which consisted of celebration, attendance inquiry, a targeted student case study, and the development of goals/next steps for the student from the case study. The second four step process consisted of a recap of assessment results, semester focus review on the scope and sequence, action planning, and implementation/strengthening instructional practice next steps. The end of meeting resulted in teachers coming to a consensus as to the new strategy to be used school wide. This agreed upon strategy will be shared with administration as part of their team practice.
- The administration reports that distributive leadership is vital and has empowered lead teachers, coaches, mentors. For instance, teachers are a part the School Improvement Teacher Development program (SAM) and the School Learning Community (SLC). These two groups design school-wide teacher professional development, serve as program directors and have spearheaded the implementation of new instructional strategies used school-wide such as Writing is Thinking through Strategic Inquiry (WITSI).
- The administration reported that the math department grade leaders examine curriculum to determine aspects that need to be modified. To accomplish this task, grade leaders developed and use a monthly diagnostic sheet actively. The diagnostic sheet assists teachers to analyze various assessments, analyze patterns of strengths and weakness in student work, identify possible detractors in student thinking, and isolate strategies for re-teaching.
- The teacher leadership team uses a Tracking our Leading of Inquiry Common Planning Teams document which assists teacher leaders in developing learning targets for the colleagues they support, action steps for those goals, and documenting evidence that support their impact. Furthermore, teachers engage in peer lesson plan evaluations. During this process teachers review their colleague's lesson plans using a rubric that assesses alignment to: objectives (AIM), activities, assessment, Common Core Standards meaningfulness/interest level to students, and suggestive feedback. Feedback to students read, "Next time put questions into Cornell note taking format..."

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points and student discussions reflect uneven levels of higher order to promote student thinking and participation.

Impact

Inconsistent teaching strategies limit students' ability to navigate challenging tasks which support the engagement of all students in high levels of thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- In classrooms visited, some teachers were observed using strategies to provide multiple entry points such as teacher modeling and visual aids via the smart board to engage students in high levels of thinking and participation. For instance, in two classrooms, students were observed working independently and others in groups engaged in the use of smart board, using highlights to annotate and graphic organizer handouts. However, the practice was not consistent across classrooms.
- School leaders reported that teachers use Norm Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK) to create higher-order questions that promote high levels of student thinking, participation, and discussions. In a Global History eleventh-grade class, learners were asked to analyze and discuss documents on Bartolome de las Casas' struggle against the Encomienda system and Mohandas Gandhi's struggle against British imperialism in India. As students discussed their annotations and notes gathered using the Cornell note-taking strategy with their peers, the teacher used prompting as a strategy to support higher level thinking. The teacher said, "I like your main idea, but I don't see any supporting details. You must support your claim with solid evidence". This strategy resulted in students were observed discussing document-based questions, main idea, and supporting evidence with their peers. These types of high level student discussions were not consistently observed across classrooms visited.
- The administration noted that teachers' lessons include the use of DOK and other strategies such as sentence starters, front loading of vocabulary, connection to real the world in application, and Socratic Seminar. Across classrooms visited, some of these strategies were observed such as front loading vocabulary. However, in the 12 classrooms visited, the use of Socratic Seminar elements was inconsistently observed.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Teachers are in the process of developing assessments and rubrics to align to the school's curricula. Across classrooms, teachers' assessment practices inconsistently provide ongoing checks for understanding, student self-assessments, and actionable feedback.

Impact

The school's assessment practices result in missed opportunities for all learners to be fully informed of their feedback. Adjustment of assessment practices to meet all student learning needs is uneven.

Supporting Evidence

- Students receive limited feedback on assessments as well as other work products. A review of student work products on classroom bulletin boards and assessments in portfolios, from the previous semester, revealed that students receive comments such as "you provided sound facts and examples", "your well-developed essay included relevant facts and details" as well as "super", "excellent", and "great job". Furthermore, one student said, "Some of my teachers give me feedback through PupilPath but not all my teachers give feedback to help me improve my scores."
- While students indicated the receiving of verbal and written feedback, one student expressed that "teachers at our school should take the first step in giving feedback not student asking for feedback...another student stated sometimes we need the feedback so we can determine what's next". In a history classroom the teacher used various starter prompts to determine student understanding of content. However, in the twelve classrooms observed, less than half consistently provided evidence of teachers checking for understanding, students self-assessing their work products, or the use of teachers taking formative assessment notes to record student progress and adjust the lesson based on data collected.
- The school uses rubrics such as performance assessment text analysis, group presentation rubrics, student academic vocabulary usage rubrics speaking and listening rubrics and class discussion rubrics for group tasks and think-pair-share activities. Furthermore, the school has a grading policy that provides a grade conversion chart and in detail, explains the school-wide grading system.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders incorporate various trainings to consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff. School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations to families that connect to a path of college and career readiness for students.

Impact

The communication of high expectations has resulted in a system of accountability for staff and the provision of feedback to families that support student progress towards those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- The school conveys high school graduation and college expectations to parents through venues such as college fairs, Project Graduation Night, English as a Second Language (ESL) college night, and parent workshops on high school graduation requirements, college financial aid planning, and the college application process such as developing their college essay and determining the a right college that meets their individual needs.
- Administration communicates high expectations which are evidenced through verbal and written structures such as the staff handbook and weekly updates to faculty. The administration revealed that observation feedback is verbal and written to include instructional areas of improvement. A review of the instructional support plan further revealed several opportunities for teachers to engage in better understanding the Danielson framework and participate in professional learning sessions that focus on specific components of the framework. Furthermore, the school has a detailed professional development calendar which provides instructional support services.
- The school has a website that ensures staff; student and families are made aware of the expectations and held accountable. For instance, on the public website teachers and students can post “RACK’EM UP” accommodations around raising the expectation bar for excellence at the school. The RACK’EM UP is a critical component of the school’s culture and all staff is required to engage in the implementation of the program. Administrators monitor the system and provide memos related to this expectation. Additionally, the website provides information and updates around teaching and learning support links.

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school leaders and teachers ensure curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards integrate the instructional shifts. Academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

The school's curricular decisions have built coherence and tasks that promote college and career readiness. Furthermore, all students, including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities have access to cognitively engaging tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- Across subjects, teachers use Engage NY to plan units of study that are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards. School leaders and teachers attended summer training in Albany on the Common Core Learning Standards, Engage NY, and tasks that promote college and career readiness. A review of units of study revealed integration of the instructional shifts and tasks that enhance students skill sets needed for college and career. For example, an 11th grade lesson plan required students to analyze using Cornell notes the following question, "Why might Shakespeare, according to Virginia Woolf in "A Room of One's Own," have had a multitude of opportunities for writing success?". The review of a science unit plan revealed a task that required students to construct an informational brochure about DNA based on research using the internet, textbooks, reference books etc.
- A review of lesson plans in science and math revealed scaffolds are built into the lesson for ELLs and students with disabilities. For instance, a social studies lesson plan required students to interpret and develop generalizations on the impact of the industrial revolution on Britain and China via written text. Added modifications were noted in the plan to help students deal with text complexity through the use of graphic organizers and sentence starters.
- Unit plans included tiered tasks for a diversity of learners. For example, in a math plan, the teacher refined the task into different levels based on students' ability levels. In addition, in social studies, the teacher plans reflected a range of texts to allow students to draw conclusions.