



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Women's Academy of Excellence

High School X282

**456 White Plains Road
Bronx
NY 10473**

Principal: Arnette Crocker, Ed.D.

**Date of review: May 19, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Heidi Pierovich**

The School Context

Women's Academy of Excellence is a high school with 340 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 50% Black, 40% Hispanic, 3% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 21% special education students. Boys account for 0% of the students enrolled and girls account for 100%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 79.4%.

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations and distributed leadership structures are in place.

Impact

Teacher collaborations promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards, strengthening the instructional capacity of teachers so that teachers have built leadership capacity and have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers spoke of the distributed leadership opportunities available at the school, including professional learning communities, department and grade team leaders, and professional development committee. Teachers stated that they are able to contribute to the revisions to Common Core aligned curricula and instruction as well as to professional development. The professional development committee is composed of teachers who design and deliver the sessions. During the meeting teachers shared that collaborating on teacher teams, whether grade level or subject teams, has helped them grow as teachers as they learn from each other in this collegial and trusting environment. Teachers shared that in the beginning of the school year they reviewed each other's curricula using the school-wide rubric.
- In one teacher team meeting, teachers followed the tuning protocol for looking at student work to determine suggested next curricula and instructional steps for the presenting teacher. For example, the presenting teacher provided three levels of student work as the team leader facilitated the protocol, focusing the teachers on determining what student were and were not able to do in the task. To this end teachers then discerned the next steps instructionally with a focus on vocabulary.
- Teachers discussed the most recent data they are tracking for student course completion and Regents data. Teachers increased the number of students they are tracking, from the cohort of the lowest third to include students in the middle who are on the cusp of the next level, which includes students with disabilities. As a result, they have determined that out of the 30 students listed in the yellow category, 18 students, or 55%, moved to the green group, where students earned 16 or more credits and of the 34 students listed in the red group, only 4 students, or 12%, were moved to the yellow group of students. Of the yellow group of 30 students, 25 are long-term absentees.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to the curricula and beginning to reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best and teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact

Although teaching practices are informed by the Danielson Framework and the instructional shifts, the inconsistency of multiple entry points leads to uneven engagement in appropriately challenging tasks and higher-order thinking skills were inconsistently demonstrated in all student work products.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's belief is that students learn best through hands-on tasks in groups or pairs, through rich discussion learning from each other. The principal said teachers introduce a concept and "chunk it" so students can break it down and connect to world, self, or interdisciplinary. However these beliefs were inconsistently observed across classes. In a chemistry class, students selected two of three multiple-choice Regents-based questions for Do Now. Although the teacher called out three minutes left, he continued monitoring after the seven-minute activity extended over 13 minutes. After collecting the papers, he reviewed, asking students to explain answers. Yet, all asked were not able to explain why. Similarly in a twelfth grade Advanced Placement (AP) Statistics class, as some students were solving a problem not all were engaged, with some copying, not completing the task, or with her head down. The teacher requested volunteers to the board, yet neglected to ask them to justify their answers, as planned, and instead dominated discussion.
- In some classes, students worked in pairs or groups but were inconsistently provided multiple entry points, 'chunked' material, or engaged all learners. In an algebra class, heterogeneous groups rotated stations working on parts problems with a step-by-step strategy. All students engaged, collaborated, solved problems, shared out whole class, and completed a reflection using a "stop light" familiar routine. In a grade 11 Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) English language arts (ELA) class, both general and special education students in heterogeneous groups based on readiness, interests, and learning styles viewed a trailer for *The Great Gatsby* to discuss the setting prior to reading non-fiction articles. Teachers gave students different cards of question writer, summarizer, story mapper, and vocabulary finder. Although most engaged, a few had difficulty starting or chose not to. Further in a grade 10 ELA class with many English language learners (ELLs), the teacher explicated lines of Whitman's poem *The Artilleryman's Vision*, modeling use of the graphic organizer to show tone. Without 'chunks', scaffolds or entry points, ELLs struggled beyond productivity to read and make meaning of vocabulary and wartime allusions.
- Although students discussed at some level in groups, students inconsistently discussed whole class. In a grade 11 US history class, students in mixed groups charted and presented regarding courts' decisions. After two groups presented, the third spoke, then asked the teacher several follow-up questions for extra credit. However the whole group discussion remained between a few students and the teacher. Although, in a 12:1:1 special education living environment class, students stood wearing letters from the chain deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) as the teacher moved students to 'experience' properties of inversion, substitution, and translocation, few answered the teacher's verbal fill-in questions. This resulted in teacher dominating and no student-student discussion.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curricula	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards, instructional shifts, and content standards, as well as make purposeful decisions. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

Faculty and school leaders build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students, so that a diversity of learners, including ELLs and students with disabilities, have access to the curricula and tasks and are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of curricular planning documents demonstrates that teachers create their curricula from EngageNY, the Common Core Learning Standards, and modify the previous year's scope and sequence annually. Teachers use EngageNY for math as recommended from the Association of Math Assistant Principals (AMAPS) and implement the New York City Scope and Sequence for social studies. Staff members who teach Regents-based classes use that assessment and an item analysis as a basis for unit maps.
- Teachers have adopted an agreed-upon lesson plan template that includes the content and Common Core Learning Standards, instructional shifts, learning outcome, aim, essential question, potential misunderstandings, evidence of data, vocabulary, universal design for learning strategies, college and career readiness skills, as well as the activities, such as do now, mini lesson, procedures, assessment, homework, and reflection. While the majority of teachers include the above components in their lessons, there are a few teachers whose plans include details for delineating groups of students at different levels, in-depth scaffolds for ELLs and students with disabilities. A review of curricular documents show that there are curriculum maps that include unit rationale, content topics, Common Core and core standards, skills, summative assessments, and a scope and sequence. Some maps include the essential questions, key learning objectives, sequence of key learning activities, key texts used, assessments, and modifications for ELLs and students with disabilities.
- Teachers revise curricula based on students' work and data. For example, a geometry triangle proof lesson shows that evidence of baseline data demonstrates that 27 of 29 students who took the assessment got 0% correct so the teacher revised and retaught the lesson on triangles through a mock trial and the average mean score increased to 75 with only 10 students failing. Similarly, in a grade 11 US history class, the lesson on changes in American foreign policy had only 60% passing. After revising the lesson, students retook the assessment and 85% passed. Other documentation showed increase in students' work samples based on revisions in subsequent lesson plans across the classes. Teachers use a school-based curriculum rubric to support and provide feedback to peers on their curriculum. The school-based curriculum rubric includes indicators of integration of the Common Core, rigor and higher-order skills, planning and revisions, and pedagogy.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are loosely aligned with the school's curricula. Teachers' assessment practices across classes inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

Assessments provide limited feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. Teachers inconsistently make effective adjustments to meet students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Although some teachers moved from group to group across classrooms, checking for understanding inconsistently resulted in effective adjustments to curricula. For example in an algebra class, the teacher moved from group to group, and determined that students needed additional time on a portion of the solution. She extended time for this and was able to pace the rest of the lesson so that there was ample time to summarize and for students to reflect. Yet in a chemistry class, the teacher moved from table to table, monitoring student progress toward completion of the Do Now activity that was posted to last seven minutes. The teacher rotated to each table more than once, resulting in expanding the activity to over 13 minutes, without regrouping students or bringing the class together as a whole for input.
- Feedback on student work from bulletin boards inside and outside classrooms, in notebooks and portfolios ranged from rubrics, scores, checkmarks, positive reinforcement, to actionable feedback. Some posted work had scores and positive reinforcement such as "18/20," "Great Work!", while others were positive but without actionable feedback, "Eye-catching with much relevant information. You seem to understand the Cold War era with your information and art work." Other work included varying student reflections, "I understand the concepts of organic chemistry," to actionable "I did very well on my exam and I need to remember next time to count the carbon in a hydrocarbon accurately." Others had glows and grows without providing next steps, "glows-excellent information and recording of her life, accuracy of events, beautiful visually. Grows-continue to seek excellence" and "Experimental design is well-developed. Next step-presentation of data can be improved." On others, teachers provided actionable feedback, "You solved the problem using the three methods but you need to label your lines next time" and "Computations are correct but next time make sure you indicate money to the cents" and "You are so creative using the math vocabulary. There is limited use of mathematical calculations in your story. It would have been great if you continued your story with more chapters that showcase your understanding mathematically" and "Glows: you completed some research, grows: The dates must be accurate, the information provided is not clear, and check resources carefully." Students agreed, "Some papers have teacher reflections," providing students with limited actionable feedback.
- Teachers create assessments based on curricula using rubrics. Some rubrics reviewed are aligned to the Regents with a portion of those also aligned to the Common Core. However a review of documents showed a few rubrics are aligned to projects without alignment to the Common Core. Although the grading policy is provided in the scholar handbook, the grading scale of 55-100 aligns to a letter grade with pluses. The grade alignment to the rubric scale is not always listed on the assignment rubric.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations aligned with the Danielson Framework for Teaching to the entire staff. School leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations and offer ongoing feedback to families connected to a path to college and career readiness.

Impact

Administration provides training and has a system of accountability for those expectations. Staff and school leaders help families understand student progress toward those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders send the *WAE Weekly Focus*, a newsletter that focuses on weekly professional learning community meetings, professional development, exams, and reminders about Danielson Framework for Teaching focus areas of using questioning and discussion techniques, rubrics, and using data in instruction. Additionally, reminders about implementing the Citywide Instructional Expectations and submitting the blackboard configurations to administration weekly to uphold expectations. A review of teacher observations showed a focus on using rigorous questioning and discussion and tiered activities, with some references to support and professional development. The teacher-led professional development committee created a survey to support colleagues and determine areas of need. Teachers help to create and deliver professional development.
- Parents receive four progress reports and four report cards. Additionally, through Pupil Path, families can assess a cloud-based teacher grade book. Both students and families stated they consistently check on progress toward credit completion and graduation expectations. Parents agreed teachers consistently communicate through emails, phone calls, and Pupil Path. Additionally, the parent coordinator sends a newsletter to keep families informed of events and workshops. Agendas from parent/teacher conferences demonstrate training for families for Pupil Path. The school outlines expectations in the Parent and Scholar Handbooks and through the school beliefs pride, excellence, ambition responsibility, leadership, and sisterhood (PEARLS). Parents stated the school provides workshops for students going off to college, focusing on budgeting and healthy cooking.
- Students and parents spoke to the support for college and career readiness that starts in the freshman year and builds up in the junior and senior years with all grades attending college tours. During junior and senior weekly town hall meetings, students focus on graduation and college readiness with exposure to career readiness. Agendas and counselors work with students are used to create individualized action plans toward graduation. In junior town hall meeting agendas, students focus on taking the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), completing college essays, and attending college fairs. Seniors attend multiple college fairs and tours, scholarship and financial aid workshops, and prepare college applications. The school celebrates college by posting college acceptance letters on a bulletin board. Although College Now classes at Lehman College are provided, less than ten students attend even though approximately 26 students will be attending Touro College for Pharmacology. Parents were encouraged to attend workshops regarding college funding, provided by the school counselor and New York Urban League, however turn out was low, with less than five attending the New York Urban League session. However, one parent stated that although she was unable to attend workshops, the counselor had supported her navigation of the college application and financing processes so she could support her child.