



# Quality Review Report

## 2015-2016

**Academy for Conservation and the Environment**

**High School K637**

**6565 Flatlands Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11236**

**Principal: Eugene Mazzola**

**Date of review: December 15, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Michele Ashley**

## The School Context

Academy for Conservation and the Environment is a high school with 302 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 4% Asian, 82% Black, 11% Hispanic, and 3% White students. The student body includes 10% English Language Learners and 19% students with disabilities. Boys account for 60% of the students enrolled and girls account for 40%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 84.6%.

## School Quality Criteria

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

## Area of Celebration

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

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations, provide training to the entire staff and partner with families to communicate high expectations connected to a path of college and career readiness.

### Impact

Clear and consistent articulation of high expectations for teaching and learning has resulted in a culture of mutual accountability. Successful partnerships with families and ongoing school support have resulted in student progress toward grade level and graduation expectations.

### Supporting Evidence

- School Leaders communicate high expectations to the entire staff via a staff handbook, school website, Sunday Assistant Principal News and Monday professional development sessions. The professional development calendar is aligned to domain three of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and the school's instructional focus on productive engagement. Topics include, critical thinking, problem solving, student to student questioning and real world application. Teachers clearly articulate the instructional focus and share how each component translates in the classroom. Shared expectations for classroom practices include Think, Pair, Share, Turn and Talk, No Opt Out, and student collaboration.
- All teachers participate in weekly Learning Rounds. Leaders and teachers observe classrooms and provide support aligned to the instructional focus. Teachers share observed evidence of critical thinking, problem solving, and student generated questions or real world application. Teachers record "possible suggestions for improvement" and their own "take-away areas of improvement." Teachers shared that the Principal modeled the Learning Round protocol using an instructional video. One teacher noted, "We observed the video together and shared what we would have done differently."
- Parents shared that there is two way communication and they always receive a response to any questions or concerns. The school communicates with families in a variety of ways including: email, phone, a reminder application, and phone blasts. Families receive consistent feedback on their child's progress through Jupiter Grades and progress reports every 14 days. Families actively track progress toward graduation in a Graduation Passport document beginning in grade 9. Parent Association members fundraise and organized workshops for families on college academic and financial expectations, money management, job applications and community opportunities.
- One parent noted that college readiness began for her daughter within the first month of school; advanced placement classes, regents preparation, college trips and exposure to Academy for Conservation and the Environment (ACE) graduates as role models had her daughter on track for college from the moment she arrived. This parent plans to continue supporting ACE students and families even after her daughter graduates. Another parent noted that teachers at ACE helped her understand the complexity of the Common Core Learning Standards and deal with her son in a different way. She learned to listen to him, understand his learning style and "see him for who he is."

## Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

### Findings

Across classrooms scaffolds and strategies including questioning and prompts for student discussion inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curriculum.

### Impact

Students have yet to demonstrate higher order thinking and high levels of engagement in discussions and work products.

### Supporting Evidence

- During classroom visits students answered basic computational questions and answered Webb's *Depth of Knowledge* level 2 questions based on observation and prediction.
- In one classroom students calculated mean, median and mode and then listened as classmates demonstrated the same problems on the blackboard. In another classroom there was minimal opportunity to demonstrate higher order thinking in a small group activity. Students made basic observations and simple predictions without an opportunity to hypothesize, connect to big ideas or prior knowledge of the content.
- During a whole group discussion very few students responded to classmate responses with "I disagree" and "In my defense," however most student responses were in direct response to teacher questions and directed to the teacher.
- During classroom visits: two out of five groups did not begin small group discussion without teacher prompting, five out of eight partner groups did not engage in the teacher prompted discussion and at least one student assigned to each small group did not engage in the discussion. In one class there were "student teachers" assigned to support groups, however, students in one group repeatedly deferred to the student teacher for the correct answers.
- Across classrooms student work products reflect Webb's *Depth of Knowledge* level 1 and 2 and uneven levels of participation. In a grade 11 and 12 classroom students produced drawings of their observations of potatoes immersed in differing levels of sugar and salt. In a grade 9 classroom, students in a group waited for the teacher and group leader to determine the solution to a special case compound inequality and did not attempt to solve it on their own.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts so that rigorous habits and higher order thinking skills are embedded in a coherent way across grades and subjects.

### Impact

Strategic alignment of the Common Core Learning Standards, content standards and instructional shifts has resulted in curricular coherence across grades and content areas promoting college and career readiness for all students so that all learners including ELL's and SWDs must demonstrate their thinking.

### Supporting Evidence

- Curriculum is developed based on a school wide curriculum template which organizes all curricula according to the same components. These components include: essential questions, big ideas, learning outcomes, prior knowledge, Common Core Learning Standards, higher order thinking questions and resources. Content team leaders collect and review curriculum maps and unit plans four times a year.
- To ensure curriculum coherence and alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards and the school's instructional focus curriculum units and maps are assessed quarterly using an instructional materials checklist. All curriculum are reviewed for alignment to: ACE core beliefs, alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards, promotion of Instructional shifts in literacy and mathematics, quality of assessment and student evidence, quality and utility as an instructional resource and accessibility and responsiveness.
- As a school wide practice every content area has selected a power standard. For example: The power standard for English is "develop claim(s) and counterclaims and citing supporting textual evidence." Power standards for art, English, math, physical education, science and social studies are identified in the vast majority of lesson plans reviewed.
- The vast majority of lesson plans identify essential questions, enduring understandings, higher order thinking questions and include planned scaffolds to support ELLs and SWDs in the demonstration of their thinking. In an English lesson plan ELL modifications included seating students with a partner and the use of translation software. A history lesson plan included guided notes for students with accommodations.
- Across grades and content areas the curriculum includes higher order thinking questions and content specific vocabulary. An algebra curriculum map includes the questions "How can we create new expressions for quantities using expressions for previously found quantities?" and "How is commuting to school each day like the commutative property of addition?"

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

Across classrooms, teachers create and use common assessments, rubrics and grading policies aligned with the school's curricula and utilize data to determine student progress toward goals.

### Impact

Actionable feedback and adjustments to curricula and instruction leads to enhanced student performance.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers calculate student grades utilizing a school wide grading policy. All grades are formulated based on the following percentages: High stakes assessments 40%, projects 20%, classroom productivity 25% and homework 15%. Across grades and subjects students were able to explain their grades and how they might make improvements based on teacher feedback.
- Across grades and content areas teachers have created assessments and rubrics that provide students with actionable feedback. A student made revisions to her work using an Organizational Checklist that resulted in improvement from developing to proficient performance in English. Two students made revisions to math journal entries based on feedback on a four-point journal entry rubric. Student performance improved from 3.0 to 3.5 and 3.5 to 4.0. Science students also improved their performance after receiving teacher feedback on a lab report.
- Team leaders use student data to make adjustments to curriculum maps and unit plans on a quarterly basis. This year teachers made enhancements to the structure of unit plans across content areas to include key components. Additional categories include big Ideas, prior knowledge, vocabulary and higher order questions. The math content team made adjustments to the format of a math assessment. In order to obtain more actionable feedback on their students' performance the assessment was redesigned to include a written component that requires students to explain their thinking.
- Inquiry teams use data from student work to make instructional adjustments. After a review of student work which did not provide adequate evidence or include counter claims the upper grade Inquiry Team decided to make adjustments to the types of questions used to prompt students to produce claims and counterclaims.
- The assessment calendar was adjusted this year to include common unit assessments in all content areas. Content teams analyzed assessment data to look for trends in misconception. Based on this analysis teams selected a content power standard for each subject. There is a plan to reassess power standards after each administration of the common unit assessments.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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**Findings**

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured inquiry teams that promote the achievement of the school’s goals which are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and Instructional Shifts. Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for targeted students.

**Impact**

Teacher teams have enhanced the instructional capacity of teachers resulting in improved teacher practice and progress for groups of students.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teachers are engaged in grade level, content and inquiry teams. The inquiry teams are divided into cross content lower (grade 9 and 10) and upper (grade 11 and 12) teams. The lower grade team is focused on “organization” and the upper grade team is focused on “evidence.” The teams meet weekly, with an assigned team leader, and written agenda. The agenda includes the grade level focus, combined teamwork and plans for the next meeting.
- The upper grade team utilized a “looking at student work” protocol and inquiry rubrics focused on “evidence” and “citing sources” to support their work. Teachers graded student work individually and then came to consensus on the grade, areas for improvement and next steps for each student. A next step for one student was to use the evidence checklist to help push her thinking.
- Upper grade inquiry teachers also identified an area for instructional improvement. They agreed that students do not fully support their claims with adequate sources or include a counterclaim. They noted that in order to get more thorough answers from students they should consider altering questions to specifically ask for both a claim and counterclaim. One teacher stated, “If we want counterclaims and multiple sources we have to put it in the assignment.” As a team they agreed to adjust their questions and prompts to align with their performance expectations.
- Teachers state that inquiry teamwork has led to the development of many new teacher practices. Strategies that began in inquiry have become grade level or school wide strategies. Some of these include: annotation protocols, citation, turn and talk protocols and evidence checklists. One teacher notes that during the inquiry cycle they implement strategies for small groups of inquiry students that, if successful, can be implemented for all students. Another teacher added that incorporating the language from inquiry developed rubrics into her feedback has led to student progress. Teachers also noted that the use of rubrics has resulted in improvement in writing for inquiry students. Specifically, the evidence checklist has led to improved student performance on the evidence rubric and more elaboration in student writing.