



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

Academy for Careers in Television and Film

High School Q301

**1-50 51st Avenue
Queens
NY 11101**

Principal: Edgar Rodriguez

**Date of review: November 17, 2015
Lead Reviewer: AJ Hepworth**

The School Context

Academy for Careers in Television and Film is a high school with 544 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 6% Asian, 16% Black, 54% Hispanic, and 20% White students. The student body includes 2% English Language Learners and 19% students with disabilities. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 94.1%.

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	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	Well Developed
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	Well Developed
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	Well Developed
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	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff and provide training while promoting college and career readiness through a successful partnership with families. Teacher teams and staff established a culture for learning that systematically communicates a unified set of high expectations for all students.

Impact

A culture of mutual accountability among staff ensures families can support their student's progress toward college and career readiness, where students receive effective feedback, supports to own their educational experience, and are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders stated that the school was founded on the premise that education needs to be extremely challenging and requires intentional professional development. Professional development “looks different as the year goes on” for teacher and department teams who use their common planning time to coordinate agendas. A goal for the current year is to take discussions beyond the logistics and planning ‘with an eye for school development” through focused intervisitations around questioning, discussion, and student engagement. A chemistry teacher shared that the impact of intervisitations has been they have more buy-in to the protocol and invest in the direct feedback from the observer based on their own questioning.
- Several times a year, the student leads parent-teacher conferences between the student, the advisor and parent. This has strategically increased parent involvement and strengthened the bond between school and home. Experienced staff reported students writing a specific narrative with all their current data on achievement and presenting it as the most significant impact teachers have seen throughout their career for learning. In 2014-2015, 100% of all students with disabilities graduated. Additionally, since students lead their personal conference, the child and parents are fully aware of the progress towards graduation. If any further communication is necessary for parents to help their child make progress, they noted that they are able to contact their child's advisor via email, cell phone, or text.
- All grades 9-12, students interviewed reported that the school is preparing them for college and career readiness by assigning a specific advisor during all four years of their high school experience. All students meet their advisor every day of the week in the middle of the day for one period with a small group of other students. The advisor confers with the student(s) about the timeline towards graduation, credit classes necessary for graduation, and strategies to improve their grades, including specific strategies for SAT prep and college essay writing. Additionally, students who are not achieving mastery are required to attend one of the robust daily in-school tutoring sessions, in either the morning or afternoon. Students shared if their schedule does not permit them to attend the tutorial session of their teacher, they are welcomed into any other session.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching strategies strategically provide multiple entry points and high quality supports into the curricula shown in student work products.

Impact

Students are fully engaged in appropriately challenging tasks, demonstrate higher-order thinking skills, and demonstrate ownership of their thinking through participation and work products, although deep extensions for high quality supports were not present in all classes.

Supporting Evidence

- Students in an English class were engaged in a small group rich-discussion where the teacher frequently challenged them by extending the conversation with tiered questions based on their independent dialogue. Questions included: “What is redemption?”; “Why is it significant that Sohrab saved Amir from Assef?” and “Has Amir achieved redemption?” All groups provided evidence to support their claims through analysis of the artifacts, although the amount of evidence they provided to extend their higher order thinking using the artifacts varied for groups of learners.
- In an algebra class, students identified as having achieved mastery and speak the native language at home are purposefully paired with beginner English Language Learners. The teacher stated she does this to help classmates develop a “solid mathematical understanding [because they] sometimes get confused by specific language.” The teacher also makes it a point to check in with this pair more frequently during independent practice time. Some of the students who shared this extension to learning noted that it helped them “...better prepare for the SAT because it is changing the way I think and I can help students.”
- In the film production class, there is assignment of very specific roles to students in the crew to support the film development. One student with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is in charge of wardrobes to leverage his specific, personal interest in clothing and dress. His ownership of this role has improved the student’s focus and engagement and provided successful opportunities for him to share out with his classmates. It was not clear if each role was as strategically assigned, although each student rotates through all crew positions by the end of the course. Students that choose to self-select out of “directing” on the first and second cycles of shooting are informed that they would receive guidance and direction from the teacher and student teacher assistants to solidify their skills in other positions and progressively gain more confidence to be able to direct in future units.
- In a math class, students participated in a task of constructing a city on large grid paper. Small groups of two students discussed how they wanted to design the city using their shared knowledge of transversals, parallel lines, slopes and the y-intercept. Some groups extended the task challenge to include unique layouts requiring higher levels of mathematical understandings beyond the lesson goals such as the location of the y-intercept, slopes selected, and use of color; while most groups satisfied the rubric criteria exclusively.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula align with Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data across grades and content areas.

Impact

Coherence across grades and subject areas promote college and career readiness and groups of students including the lowest- and highest-achieving have access to the curricula and tasks that are cognitively engaging.

Supporting Evidence

- Since the school's inception 8 years ago, staff developed consistency regarding the standards and what is necessary to be college and career ready using the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and instructional shifts by department. The school uses New York City Department of Education curriculum maps, *EngageNY*, Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessments, and knowledge from attendance at workshops to modify and create a challenging curriculum and inform teachers of best practices across grades. As such, all classes have a common curriculum map template incorporating Common Core and skills alignment. Additionally, staff participates in professional organizations to collect and share curricular resources with their department such as Math for America.
- Curriculum maps and lesson plans include scaffolds designed to provide access to differentiated tasks for all learners. An English unit references supports, such as graphic organizers with sentence starters, to be phased out over time with student mastery. In addition, students have a choice of topic for writing assignments when analyzing literary elements from a novel or excerpt. Exemplars at low, medium, and high levels according to a rubric-based assignment provide students with a template to model expectations of quality work. In earth science unit plans, differentiation includes, providing visuals such as PowerPoint and video clips, lecture, discussion, reading, hands-on labs and activities for different learners. Grades for formative assessments are on a scale based on the student's progress from their prior level of proficiency.
- All courses taught in the school have curriculum maps. Curriculum maps include examples for students to access exemplars (high, medium, and low) along with reflections documents that serve as the guide for curricular revisions throughout the year. Additionally, all courses offered have a website containing a course syllabus, calendar, unit descriptions, and curricular documents for use in or out of the classroom to support each lesson. Documents such as homework, which students refer to as "home learning," are also found on the course websites.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics and grading that align with the school's curricula to offer a clear portrait of student mastery and show progress towards goals for all students across grades and subjects.

Impact

Common assessments provide teachers and students with actionable and meaningful feedback to adjust curricula and instructional decisions so that all students, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities can demonstrate increased mastery.

Supporting Evidence

- In an English class, students selected one character based on racism and sexism in *The Color Purple*. They must answer one of two questions about how has either racism or sexism affected the character's life. To guide their work, the students refer to a rubric using a five-point scale defining all elements that are essential for mastery. Department and teacher teams collectively develop rubrics that align to the mastery of standards. In film production classes, rubrics align to the curricula for students' knowledge of rigorous expectations, performance with speaking and listening skills, unit skills, professionalism, and teamwork. Additionally, all lessons which require students to engage in discussions of free responses, measure clear expectations for students as they explain, identify, agree, disagree, and/or justify a response.
- Students receive feedback formally and informally from their teachers that is actionable through post-it notes attached to their documents, emails, advisory meetings, rubrics and mock end-of-year assessments, which are administered in all courses that end in a State exam. Teachers analyze the mock exams and students are made aware of their areas where mastery has not been achieved using a mastery-based assessment system (MBA). The MBA ensures that students understand what they do well and what they need to improve. Students report that teachers require them to check regularly on an online student management system to monitor their progress. Students must attend a tutoring session if they do not achieve mastery.
- A majority of the feedback students receive occurs in Google Docs where teachers and students have online access to student work. Students receive comments on their writing based on the provided rubric. Specific feedback uses the rubric language or online track changes. In an Advanced Placement History class, students receive pop quizzes to inform the teacher and student of adjustments to instruction that may be necessary. The use of technology to drive live item analysis, such as through clickers, is being used more to make timely instructional adjustments.
- Teachers manage student levels of mastery in all content areas and communicate them to students. Teachers maintain spreadsheets of all formative and summative assessments by assignment and the level of student mastery on each topic/standard. Students have full understanding of their mastery level through communications with the teacher and their in-house online progress report.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured collaborations that have strengthened teacher instructional capacity through the systematic analysis of key elements in teacher work including practice, assessment data, and student work.

Impact

School wide coherence of instruction has increased academic achievement for all learners and improved shared teacher practices and mastery of goals.

Supporting Evidence

- A grade-level team meeting previously reviewed Document-Based Question (DBQ) thesis statements where students had to promote claims for a sub-argument. The teachers noted that some students were able to make general references to the fall of Rome in their sub-argument while others were very specific in their use of evidence. Based on these prior observations and discussions, teachers developed a strategy where students would use text-based evidence to fill-in boxes labeled “What?” and “So What?” to help all students, especially those that struggled. Teachers noticed that although this was the first time the students used the new strategy in a homework assignment; several students were able to make low-inferences directly from the text while other more advanced students were more successful and may be able to move onto another step using the strategy. Teachers shared they felt this new strategy was useful in improving their practice and will use it strategically in the future with selected students when citing documents or writing PERSIG (Political, Economic, Religious, Social, Intellectual, and Government) essays.
- Teachers shared that their involvement in teacher teams has been a systematic opportunity for them to reach out to their colleagues and have conversations based on student work. They often generate new practices to help targeted students at these meetings. Review of essays and claims after several specific strategies are implemented yielded higher levels of inferential and critical thinking especially amongst grade 10 and 11 students. Practices developed primarily for students with disabilities, have served well in promoting learning for all students, including advanced learners, according to teachers.
- Teachers in the film department improve their own teaching practices through regular meetings where they analyze student work, identify exemplars, and develop instructional and curricular next steps. The identified exemplars are selected to be shown at the “best of” series display.