

Quality Review Report

2017-2018

Academy Of American Studies

High school 30Q575

**28-04 41 Avenue
Queens
NY 11101**

Principal: William Bassell

**Dates of Review:
March 14, 2018 - March 15, 2018**

Lead Reviewer: Robin Posner

The Quality Review Report

The Quality Review is a two-day school visit by an experienced educator. During the review, the reviewer visits classrooms, talks with parents, students, teachers, and school leaders and uses a rubric to evaluate how well the school is organized to support student achievement.

The Quality Review Report provides a rating for all ten indicators of the Quality Review Rubric in three categories: Instructional Core, School Culture, and Systems for Improvement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Celebration** to highlight an area in which the school does well to support student learning and achievement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Focus** to highlight an area the school should work on to support student learning and achievement. The remaining indicators are identified as **Additional Finding**. This report presents written findings, impact, and site-specific supporting evidence for six indicators.

Information about the School

Academy Of American Studies serves students in grade 9 through grade 12. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at <http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm>.

School Quality Ratings

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area	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 Finding	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	Area of 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 Finding	Well Developed

School Quality Ratings continued

School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area	Rating
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults	Additional Finding	Proficient
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	Additional Finding	Well Developed
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area	Rating
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products	Additional Finding	Proficient
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community	Additional Finding	Proficient
4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection	Area of Celebration	Well Developed
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	Additional Finding	Proficient
5.1 Evaluate the quality of school- level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS	Additional Finding	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and teacher peers support teacher development through strategic supervisory and peer observation of instruction. Clear expectations and feedback to teachers are constructed using the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and are aligned with teachers' professional goals.

Impact

School leaders and teacher peers support teacher development and elevate school wide practices by sharing actionable feedback and next steps resulting from official observations and peer intervisitations.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders conduct frequent classroom observations that have been strategically planned so that each assistant principal has a grade or subject based focus. There are minimally four cycles a year and then a determination is made to support teachers who are struggling in a more high leverage way with more frequent observations. Additionally, teachers regularly conduct intervisitations for which they are strategic in the selection of each cycle's focus. Intervisitation logs reveal that teachers have observed each other to offer feedback and search for best-practices around the facilitation of the instructional focus for the year including using higher level thinking questions and teachers as facilitators. Teachers reported improvements in their ability to get more student-to-student discussion going in their classroom based on feedback given by supervisors.
- Feedback to teachers accurately captures their strengths and weaknesses and details next steps using the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, supporting the goals that teachers design coherent instruction and increase student engagement in their classrooms. For example, one observation report advises the teacher to build design tasks that require students to develop higher level questions for different stages of the lesson. This teacher is also advised to think about making metacognition visible through the prompts used to guide students. Feedback, resulting from a math lesson observation, advised the teacher to have students write descriptions of standard deviation and the z-score and to explain the benefits of both. Another teacher was advised to organize future lessons that involve multiple scaffolds and challenging tasks to further develop the understanding of each student.
- Teachers shared that the feedback received after formal and informal observations and intervisitations is always aligned to individual teacher goals. The in-person conversations always include discussion about whether a teacher is on track to meet individual goals and if they need to be adapted or expanded and what additional support a supervisor can provide to support individuals in meeting their goals for the year.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs. Teaching strategies provide multiple entry points into the curricula allowing most students to be engaged in appropriately challenging tasks.

Impact

Although students demonstrate higher-order thinking skills, teaching strategies did not provide strategic use of high quality supports and extensions for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- In a grade 11/12 math class, all students were engaged in interchanging between degree and radian measures of a triangle. Student engagement was supported by use of a graphic organizer on which student groups were to record their responses to the prompts being displayed on the white board. During a grade-nine English Language Arts (ELA) lesson, students were working in groups to discuss what the Fourth of July meant to Frederick Douglas. Students were asked to listen to an audio presentation of his speech and annotate a written version simultaneously. In a grade-nine global studies class, students were engaged in reviewing primary source documents about the impact of the Ming Dynasty on China. Students in all five leveled groups received work with leveled tasks. Additionally, the work in which they were engaged was designed, as one student reported while pointing to the board on which student self-assessments and goals were posted, “based on what we know we need.” However, there was no evidence in any of these classes of high quality supports and extensions for the various learners in the class.
- During a grade nine ELA lesson, students were engaged in conversation with their peers around the different benefits that come with annotating texts. One pair discussed how annotating helps develop people’s understanding of the text and by focusing students on important points. Another pair of students discussed how annotating texts helps students identify the facts and questions that lead to stronger inferences than if a student was to simply guess, without having taken notes and underlined strong passages. In a Regent’s chemistry class, students talked with partners over the different variables that would impact reaction rates to natural phenomena.
- During an earth science class, student groups were engaged in leveled work throughout the room. The lesson was designed to focus students on deepening their understanding of how the earth’s early atmosphere formed. In a Global Studies, students were also engaged in station learning. In this class, students were in groups based on data and were tasked with work designed to challenge students at their level. Students were all completing posters and at the end of the lesson, were charged with doing a gallery walk. One student would remain behind at the poster to share information with the other student groups. This person would rotate each time the groups rotated.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data from teacher created or state assessments.

Impact

Coherent curricula promote college and career readiness for all students. A diversity of learners have access to the curricula and tasks cognitively engage students.

Supporting Evidence

- Curricular documents across grades and content areas evidence consistent alignment with the Common Core and the integration of the math instructional shifts. For example, a trigonometry lesson plan begins with a brief discussion of arcs, radius and central angles in real life objects. Students were then guided through a mini-lesson on looking at solved problems and locating the students' mistakes in solving. In another unit, students are guided through an activity intended to deepen their understanding of triangles and determining their congruency by using a variety of methods.
- Curricular documents included assignments evidencing integration of the ELA instructional shifts. For example, a grade-nine unit includes multiple tasks for which students need to support answers to written questions with textual citations. The same is true for an advanced placement unit covering ethos, pathos and logos. A grade-nine unit requires that students find evidence from Antigone in support of their argument as to whether Antigone was a feminist play. Additionally, reading materials in that unit represent an equal amount of information and literary texts.
- Across grades and content areas, curricula are planned and refined so that diverse learners have access to challenging materials. Teachers differentiate instructional texts by chunking the text, and by inserting supports aligned for that section of text. These supports include vocabulary words, paraphrasing, vital textual statements, as well as leveled questions designed to increase in complexity and develop students' analysis of the text. Other examples of differentiated supports for students, include a global studies lesson plan that includes additional vocabulary supports for each of the three classes in which the lesson would be delivered, as well as a living environment unit supported by a transcript accompanying a video presentation and a user guide and leveled graphic organizers.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use and create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula and offer a clear portrait of student mastery. In addition, teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the varied use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

High quality assessment practices provide actionable and meaningful feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. Teachers' assessment practices result in effective instructional adjustments to meet all students' needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Students came to a quick consensus when reporting on the use of assessments and rubrics about written assignments and clarity around their attainment of mastery. After receiving rubrics with comments, that include written feedback with next steps from teachers, students then conference with teachers on the feedback and how it impacted their writing. Students were then given the opportunity to improve upon their writing by implementing the next steps detailed in the feedback and turn-in their assignments to their teachers. One student reported that he will, "use the feedback for other writing assignments." An example of teacher feedback on math work reads, "Show your work to display your ability to identify, classify and draw angles." Another example reads, "Be sure to properly label the degrees and use a straight edge."
- Across the school, students use checklists and rubrics as tools of self-assessment. Additionally, teachers have increased the value of rubrics by guiding students through the habit of annotating them before their use. In a grade-nine ELA class, students were asked to use a department developed rubric, alongside the state rubric to assess their responses. Also in-use across classes are self-assessment tools such as a writer's reflection worksheet. Additionally, self-assessment tools, such as a midyear self-evaluation of growth progress, where students compare their work on one piece of work from September to a current piece and write anecdotally about improvements, as well as what they've taken away from feedback and their own actionable next step(s).
- In Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classes, students were grouped based on assessment data along with data from teacher developed exit tickets. In a grade nine ELA class, students were grouped based on data resulting from an argumentative writing assignment administered earlier in the week.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to staff. Additionally, school leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness.

Impact

Staff maintains and benefits from a culture of mutual accountability around high expectations. Partnerships with families support students in their progress toward college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders share high expectations through a faculty handbook that details guidelines for all aspects of instruction including the schoolwide grading, homework and testing policies, indicators of a successful classroom, instructional planning, and student work portfolios. Memoranda detail high expectations around the value and format of student progress reports, interdisciplinary planning, teacher team responsibilities, different strategies that could be employed in the service of different students' needs, student-to-student discussion and a detailed guide for all faculty as to how to be an advisory teacher.
- Teachers hold each other accountable to high instructional expectations through their collaborative common planning sessions. Teachers spoke about relying on each other to give constructive criticism to each other when presenting problems of practice during planning sessions. Teams also assign different sections of unit and lesson plans to a variety of team members and must subsequently fulfil their responsibilities to each other in promptly attending to those tasks and bring the results of their work to the next planning session. Additionally, teachers hold each other accountable for their colleagues' professional learning in that all teachers have participated in the professional development committee process. This is used to determine which teachers will present best practices at whole faculty professional development sessions.
- Expectations are effectively communicated with families through the school's website, newsletters, at parent teacher association (PTA) meetings, text/email blasts and an online grade book system. One parent reported that she was able to help her daughter successfully complete a project because the teacher had posted, along with the assignment, the rubric that would be used to rate students' work products. All teachers send progress reports in the interim between official report cards and share students' progress on written class assignments, group work, long-term projects, attendance, and preparedness in general. One parent stated, and all present agreed, that, "We have access to the school leader and teachers at any time, in so many ways they're available to us. They promised a great and safe school and delivered that to us!"

Additional Finding

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 that promote achievement of school goals and implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Teacher teams consistently analyze data and student work for students they share.

Impact

Teachers' collaborations have strengthened their instructional capacity. Teacher team work typically results in progress toward goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers have strengthened their instructional capacity through team collaborations. In one case, a teacher reported that at a meeting, a colleague spoke about how she used self-reflection sheets to help students understand the expectations. This helped increase accountability for comments, as well as support student growth. In addition, teachers at this team meeting spoke about the importance of using a variety of rubrics and checklists, including peer evaluations rubrics. As a result of these conversations, a majority of teachers have implemented this practice, as evidenced by a variety of rubrics and formats observed on bulletin boards across the school.
- Teachers use intervisitations, as part of their formal and informal observation plans. Teachers conduct intervisitations and when sharing-out, discuss noticings of their own practices, as well as those of the teachers they are visiting. These teachers also spoke to conducting visits to see different strategies and how they take what they see and then, modify it for their own students. One teacher reported that "We're working on formulating hot questions and increasing rigor." Another teacher reported that, "The debriefing time after the intervisitations is just as important as the visit."
- The math teacher team reviewed student samples of an assignment requiring that students explain how they arrived at their solutions on an assessment. Teachers noticed that for the majority of the students, their writing has improved since the last cycle. When looking at one particular work product, a teacher asked if this work had been completed by a high-level student. The teacher who had brought this to the meeting replied "No, that is why this is such a pleasure! This student has clearly excelled." Another teacher added, "Most low performing students [had] improved. But some forgot to explain their formulas. We will need to push that for the next cycle."