Quality Review Report

2017-2018

Accion Academy

Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 12X341

1825 Prospect Avenue
Bronx
NY 10457

Principal: Rajendra Jimenez Jailall

Dates of Review:
May 10, 2018 - May 11, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Elsa Kortright-Torres

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

Accion Academy serves students in grade 6 through grade 8. 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		
To what extent does the school...	**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	**Area of Celebration**	**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**	**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 Finding**	**Proficient**

School Quality Ratings continued

School Culture

To what extent does the school...	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**	**Developing**
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**	**Proficient**

Systems for Improvement

To what extent does the school...	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**	**Developing**
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	**Additional Finding**	**Proficient**
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**	**Developing**
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**	**Developing**

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and tasks are planned by using Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles and refined using student work.

Impact

Activities expand vocabulary, promote college, and career readiness through real-life applications and provide students with access to curricula and tasks that are cognitively engaging.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of curricular documents revealed coherence and alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards, instructional shifts, and UDL principles such as multiple ways of expression, engagement, and representation. For example, a grade eight English lesson plan, states that students will analyze different texts to understand various perspectives and belief systems that drive the role of government in the lives of its citizens. The lesson plan calls for students to engage in a debate after reading a text related to urban planner Robert Moses and examining the author's perspective. Students will learn academic vocabulary such as perspective, compensation, development, and seize by watching a Flocabulary video. Students will annotate, summarize, and argue opposing views with textual evidence. In a grade seven social studies lesson plan, the standards listed are determining central idea of primary and secondary sources and integrating visual information such as charts, maps, and graphs. Students are tasked with reading and analyzing a primary source, the warrior Tecumseh's speech, to explain that as American settlers moved west, conflicts arose with American Indian tribes.

- In a math lesson plan for sixth grade, students will write and evaluate exponential expressions. Students will develop their fluency by practicing the use of different exponents and will learn the difference between verbal and numerical expression. A Flocabulary video will introduce students to new vocabulary. Students will work with a partner and will complete a 3-2-1 chart. Similarly, in a science lesson plan, the students will understand how human actions have directly caused global warming and its negative consequences through identifying cause and effect relationships and explaining how carbon dioxide traps heat in the atmosphere. Students will be watching a Flocabulary video about earth and the environment. Students will also write about their feelings after watching *The Inconvenient Truth* trailer. Questions to prompt student discussion are clearly listed such as "Should the U.S. Government be as concerned about climate change as they are toward other threats such as national security?" Students will design a group poster about renewable and non-renewable sources of energy. Activities such as these connect to real-life situations and promote college and career readiness skills such as critical thinking.

- Access to rigorous tasks for all learners is ensured by using UDL principles and performance tasks. For example, through a thematic approach, teachers plan lessons that are connected to themes throughout the year. Lesson plans are integrated through all the content areas. For example, for the theme of life, teachers created lesson plans to help students learn how to conduct research and sharpen their interpersonal and communication skills as well as to encourage personal growth and metacognition. For example, in mathematics students will solve problems involving decimals within the context of financial literacy and inflation. In English, students will investigate the positive and negative effects of competitive sports in adolescents. Students will write argumentative essays by reading and annotating articles as well as write a literary essay about how characters react to conflict. Rigor in curricula promote higher order skills for all learners. Rigorous tasks are ensured for all learners by integrating real life applications.

Quality Indicator:	**1.2 Pedagogy**	**Rating:**	**Developing**

Findings

Teaching practices are beginning to reflect a set of beliefs that students learn best when they are engaged in student-centered conversations, work in small groups, and teachers use a workshop model. Student discussions inconsistently reflect high levels of student participation.

Impact

Teaching practices are informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and the instructional shifts. While students share work with partners, there are limited opportunities to engage in appropriately challenging tasks, take ownership of learning, or demonstrate higher-order thinking in their work products.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, instructional practices are rooted in the Danielson *Framework for Teaching.* For example, in a grade eight classroom, the teacher directed students to share out about the role of the government in the lives of its citizens. He asked questions such as "What is the role of government?" Students were called to respond. The teacher modeled accountable talk by asking if the class agrees that everyone should pay income taxes. Then he offered an opportunity to turn and talk about the essential question. Some students dominated the discussion in each group. In another classroom, a teacher provided a stand and talk opportunity. A video was presented to the class. The teacher continued with the lesson. Though there was an opportunity to stand and talk as well as a video to address different learning styles, there were minimal opportunities for student-led discussions and the use of accountable talk.

- During a lesson on climate change, the teacher posted the do now, "What human activity would make it a primary or secondary ecological succession?" The teacher led students through the discussion and then presented a video. The teacher circulated to check students' completion of the do now. After the video, the students were tasked with drawing or writing about what they saw in the video. A student wrote that he saw the earth being ruined. Students were directed to turn and talk about their answer. In another classroom, the teacher attempted to confer with a group of students while another adult in the room worked with a different group using a different graphic organizer. Students were charged with writing about whether straws should be banned after reading an article. The lesson objective was to write a counterclaim and justify it by citing textual evidence. Though teachers planned lessons that are informed by a core set of beliefs, the execution of the lessons are beginning to reflect effective use of the workshop model, student-led discussions with accountable talk, and productive group work.

- Across classrooms, student work products and discussions reflect uneven levels of student thinking participation. For example, in a grade eight classroom, students were lectured about the Pythagorean theorem. The teacher asked questions such as "What is the hypotenuse?" The objective of the lesson was posted on a dry-erase board and asked students to use the Pythagorean theorem to determine if a triangle is a right triangle. The teacher led the class through a series of questions and problems. There were no opportunities for group work or conferring with students. In another classroom, the teacher had students put sticky notes on their text to find transitional words or phrases. While students were complying with the teacher's instructions in both of these classrooms, student work products, thinking, and participation in group work were limited.

Quality Indicator:	**2.2 Assessment**	**Rating:**	**Proficient**

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics and checklists aligned with the school's curricula to inform feedback to students. School leaders use common assessments to determine student progress toward goals.

Impact

Students utilize teachers' actionable feedback and use assessment tools in order to increase their achievement. Diagnostic adaptive assessments and running records inform adjustments to curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics along with written feedback about what students do well and what they can do to improve. In addition, students write a reflection of their future steps. For example, in an English Language Arts (ELA) class, the teacher wrote on a student feedback sheet along with the rubric, that the student did a great job on pulling great details and using inferences to dig into and explain all the details. As far as next steps, the teacher wrote that the student must annotate both the questions as well as the text to better understand the question and use transitions at the start of every paragraph. In a math classroom, feedback to students was noted on work posted in the form of questions so students reflect on their work. For example, in a student's explanation of how points in a circle relate to the reflection of the overall circle, the teacher asked the student to be clearer in his explanation and consider what happens when points reflect and to notice the coordinate plane. In addition, the teacher provided additional feedback such as what the student did well, how he can improve, and peer feedback in the form of a glow and grow. A two-point rubric was used for this assignment.

- Across classrooms, students receive actionable feedback that is specific to let students know what their next steps should be. For example, a grade eight student received actionable feedback in her science writing. The feedback stated that she used at least two examples to support her claim and made an inference, however, she can improve her writing by addressing the theory of evolution further by citing evidence of DNA comparisons in her last paragraph. The student responded that next time, she will show the connection of life and creatures to a specific breed. Another grade seven student reported doing better with her grammar after the teacher pointed out that she did great a job explaining the details and supporting her claim but that she needed to be careful with her grammar.

- The school uses *iReady* as common assessments to track student progress in ELA and math. Teachers and school leaders use the data generated from diagnostic to make instructional decisions. For example, in ELA, the analysis of the data revealed that students had difficulty citing resources, so teachers created lessons to teach students to annotate. In math, inquiry work was conducted to analyze the data from *iReady* and teachers noted that an area of challenge for students was to correctly understand the question, therefore, teachers created lessons to teach students the **s**tudy the problem, **o**rganize the facts, **l**ine up the plan, **v**erify the plan with action, and **e**xamine your results, through the SOLVE strategy. In addition to using *iReady,* teachers monitor student progress in reading by using the Teachers College (TC) workshop model, running records and writing rubrics aligned to state assessments. Teachers monitor progress toward proficiency in ELA and math by analyzing data results and categorizing students in need of additional supports based on the results of common assessments and progress made toward benchmark goals.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

School leaders consistently convey high expectations to staff through ongoing feedback and professional learning aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Teacher teams establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations for all students.

Impact

Ongoing communication and support by school leaders around classroom visits support teachers' understanding and awareness of expectations around teaching and learning. Teacher teams work toward ensuring that students are provided with a clear picture of their progress by using data binders for each student.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders consistently convey and nurture a culture of high expectations with teachers by providing clear expectations aligned to Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and unpacking the different domains of the framework. For example, school leaders offered guidelines on effective lesson planning and provided support to teachers in creating lessons that reflect UDL principles. There are professional learning sessions designed specifically to train teachers on the different components of a lesson plan. Termed Lesson Plan Clinics are scheduled four times a year when the faculty use a Tuning Protocol to align learning targets to activities to ensure clarity for student on what they are learning and why. There are also communications to ensure accountability for school expectations from school leaders through classroom observation reports and ACCION Announcements published on a weekly basis.

- During the school year, there are a number of professional learning sessions and intervisitation opportunities for teachers to engage in an environment of high expectations. In the professional development plan for the school, there are sessions geared to support the instructional focus of the school. For example, data decision-making and analyzing student work to inform instruction are highlighted with specific skills that teachers are tasked with, such as creating action plans for after analyzing State data. In addition, professional learning relative to how to teach annotation, the workshop model and how to provide effective feedback to students was planned for and executed. Teachers are encouraged to visit each other and have professional dialogues with a specific focus such as lesson planning and accountable talk. School leaders practice transparency of professional responsibilities via the use of the ACCION Announcements. For example, they report daily expectations, the skill of the week, and happenings during the week, such as professional learning and consultant visits.

- Students are made aware of their progress toward achieving goals and their next level by use of a data binder for each student. Students reported that their data binders help them get a clear picture of their progress. For example, one student reported understanding her progress in reading by analyzing her *iReady* report with her teacher. Another grade eight student reported that he scored at a seventh-grade level in reading and that his goal is to reach a mid-eighth-grade level. Teachers encourage students to use *iReady* daily to improve their scores by completing lessons specifically designed to address areas of challenge for students. In addition, students understand that teachers are preparing them for high school and beyond by assigning tasks that are rigorous. For example, one student reported having to write a research paper about Robert Moses using MLA format. Students reported growth in reading, such as going from one reading level to the next, because of the feedback they receive from their teachers and their data binders.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

School leaders support teacher development with frequent classroom observation cycles. Prompt written feedback captures teachers' strengths, challenges, and next steps using the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*.

Impact

Formal and informal classroom visits grounded in observations and the analysis of student work result in written feedback for teachers that make clear the expectations for teacher practice and the supports available to help teachers meet them, thus encouraging professional growth and reflection.

Supporting Evidence

- There are frequent cycles of teacher observation that support the development of teachers, including those new to the profession. For example, TC consultants conduct classroom observations to support teachers with the implementation of the workshop model. Consultants make recommendations, such as how to manage the class when conferring with student groups. In addition, school leaders follow up with the recommendations of the consultants by having professional learning sessions that address areas of challenge such as having structured conferences with actionable feedback and data-driven grouping based on student work. School leaders visit classrooms and offer immediate feedback through emails and by meeting individually with teachers. For example, in one email, the school leader listed glows, wonderings, and next steps. In another email, the school leader provided feedback specifically about having a learning objective that is visible to students and measurable through student work.

- School leaders provide feedback to teachers that accurately captures strengths, challenges, and next steps. For example, a teacher received feedback in the observation report that there should be more structures to challenge students to have more meaningful discussions by adding accountable talk and substantiating their claims with evidence. The teacher received an effective rating; however, after implementing more questions to facilitate student discussions and demonstrate their thinking, the teacher received a highly effective rating in a follow-up observation as it was noted during the lesson that students were having student-led discussions in their groups. The teacher was provided with resources such as an internet link, Webb's *Depth of Knowledge*, and a reminder to use the strategies presented at a professional learning session. Another teacher received feedback to address challenges such as engaging students in learning. The school leader suggested explicit modeling, developing small group differentiated tasks, and providing feedback that is actionable. The teacher received a developing rating, however, the rating increased to effective in a follow-up observation by incorporating group discussion and a video to activate student learning.

- A review of observation reports evidence feedback that articulates clear expectations and support for teacher development. All observation reports provide teachers with resources to tap into such as meeting with consultants or mentors, websites, strategies introduced at professional learning sessions, and meeting with school leaders frequently to review lesson plans. A teacher reported feeling supported in providing effective feedback to students in their writing. The school leader met with the teacher and went over student work with the teacher to offer specific feedback that the teacher would be able to provide for the students. Another teacher was provided with feedback regarding the use of accountable talk and having student-led discussions. The school leader provided a handout on the lesson plan essentials and accountable talk stems. One teacher reported and all agreed that they receive a lot of feedback both verbally and in writing to support them.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development	Rating:	Developing

Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations. Distributive leadership structures are developing.

Impact

Teacher teams' use of an inquiry approach is developing across the teams. Teacher voice has begun to shape schoolwide initiatives, though structures that support teacher leadership capacity have yet to be enacted.

Supporting Evidence

- A team of teachers met to discuss student progress in annotating text to prepare students for the English state exam. The facilitator used the Atlas protocol and questions about the correct use of the protocol were asked which interrupted the process of conducting inquiry. After examining student work, the discussion unraveled as different suggestions and findings were shared. The group discussed that the students need to have a planning page and that English Language Learners and the lowest achieving students will need to have more scaffolds. The meeting ended when the presenting teacher offered to bring sample of students' planning page and the task to the next meeting.

- Teacher teams consist of cabinet and attendance teams. Due to the small size of the school, teachers conduct item analysis for their own students; however, as a faculty, action plans are developed for addressing students' areas of need. For example, after analyzing the results of the state and diagnostic ELA exam, teachers noticed that students struggled with unpacking various questions and sub-questions to answer the question as a whole. The faculty developed an action plan to create lessons to help students annotate text effectively and use the annotations as reminders to address all parts of the question in their writing.

- School leaders facilitate professional collaborations at faculty meetings where student data is analyzed. For example, according to student performance on *iReady* diagnostics and running records, teachers have identified students that were close to achieving proficiency and those that achieved proficiency by a small margin. Teachers are aware that these students need additional interventions. Cabinet and attendance team meetings occur with school leaders to discuss guidance, attendance interventions, and future events. However, there is yet to have teacher teams engaged in inquiry work in an ongoing basis that result in strengthening teacher capacity.

- Teachers are encouraged to assume leadership roles. For example, teachers have attended professional learning sessions outside of school and have turnkeyed the training for the other teachers. One teacher attended professional learning with a school leader on analyzing student work and using a particular tool. The teacher expressed interest in sharing the information with her colleagues and was able to do it. Other staff members have taken leadership roles such as bringing mental health awareness to the school by meeting with and collaborating with an outside consultant. Another professional development session was planned and executed by teachers on the use of accountable talk to engage students in meaningful discussions. While teachers reported and all agreed that their voices are respected and appreciated, structures, such as having common planning time or vertical teams, have yet to be embedded in the school's schedule.