

# Quality Review Report

## 2016-2017

**Women's Academy of Excellence**

**High School 08X282**

**456 White Plains Rd.  
Bronx  
NY 10473**

**Principal: Arnette Crocker**

**Dates of Review:  
October 27, 2016 - October 28, 2016**

**Lead Reviewer: Clarence Williams**

# 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

Women's Academy of Excellence 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.	<b>Additional Finding</b>	<b>Proficient</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 Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	<b>Additional Finding</b>	<b>Proficient</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 Finding</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## 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?	<b>Additional Finding</b>	<b>Proficient</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>Area of Focus</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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?	<b>Additional Finding</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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?	<b>Additional Finding</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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?	<b>Additional Finding</b>	<b>Proficient</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>Area of Celebration</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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?	<b>Additional Finding</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership and Development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

Most teachers are engaged in organized, inquiry-based collaborations that promote the realization of school goals and the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. Teacher teams regularly examine assessment data and student work for students on whom they are focused.

### Impact

Teacher teams reinforce instructional practices that result in improved pedagogy and progress toward goals for students.

### Supporting Evidence

- At an eleventh grade teacher team meeting with a designated note taker, time keeper and facilitator, teachers were discussing student work and the instructional shift five: writing from sources in order to write an argumentative essay. They began the meeting by looking at an argumentative essay written by a student. They discussed re-teaching the format of the essay and addressing language barriers by continuing to have directions written in the native language of the student. They further stated that group discussions, initiated by turn and talk were helpful in developing argumentative statements. Next steps included creating a list of students with low writing levels based on assessments, and to brainstorm at grade team and department meeting to discuss best instructional practices that worked to improve student writing.
- During the teacher interview, teachers stated that teams used baseline assessments during meetings to look at the needs of English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities. They stated that during grade-level team meetings, teachers looked at student deficiencies across grades. For example, grade nine was identified as a focus group that required intervention. They stated that they were able to look at the gaps and focus on the causes. They noted that literacy was a major area of concern and decided to use the annotation and Frayer models, a graphic organizer designed to build vocabulary and equal access to the curriculum for grade nine students including ELLs and students with disabilities. They decided that at the end of the cycle they will make modifications. These models were observed in most classes.
- The principal stated that all grade teams including content area teams, participate in an action plan for literacy across all contents. The action plan includes goals, a timeline, action steps, the person/s responsible, resources and evidence of success. Action steps included sharing effective strategies in faculty meetings, and identifying the lower quartile of students, English Language Learners (ELL) and students with disabilities. The literacy team and teacher team members across all grades will be responsible. The evidence of success will be in grade team minutes, faculty agendas and monthly reflection and assessments. This was evident in grade team minutes and teacher discussions that reflected working with the lower quartile students, students with disabilities and English Language Learners.

## Area of Focus

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

School leaders communicate high expectations to the entire staff. Teacher teams and staff communicate high expectations for all students; however, it is not consistently reflected in documents or articulated.

### Impact

School leaders are developing a system of accountability for high expectations. Feedback and guidance/ advisement supports are developing the level of detail and clarity needed to help prepare students for the next level.

### Supporting Evidence

- The principal uses a weekly newsletter entitled WAE Weekly Focus to share high expectations with staff. A September 19 newsletter that states that all teachers must have bulletin boards updated, are required to teach bell-to-bell, and unit plans are due the first day of every month. Although the newsletter lists grade-level and common-planning dates, there is little evidence of a system of accountability for these expectations. In addition, there is no follow up when professional development is conducted to hold teachers accountable.
- The principal stated that a high expectation for the staff for the current year is to ensure that all teachers have observations which consist of instructional walkthroughs, informal observations and formal observations. However, the principal has not yet conducted formal observations or provided evidence of instructional walkthroughs; however, did provide some samples of informal observations that have been conducted, and noted that formal observations are currently being scheduled.
- Staff and students use *The Pearls of Wisdom*. This is a document that lists the values and expectations and principles by which the school community abides. PEARLS is an acronym for: pride, excellence, ambition, responsibility, leadership and sisterhood. This initiative has an impact on some students, such as student leaders and seniors who spoke about it. One student stated, "PEARLS help us know how to understand what we are supposed to do as we move to the next grade level." However, there were some students who were unable to discuss their knowledge and understanding of PEARLS. One student stated, "I will learn more about it when I reach the next grade."
- During a teacher team interview, teachers stated that one of the most important school expectations is that every student has the opportunity to go to college. They stated that all students have leadership classes during which these expectations are part of the curriculum. Some students that were interviewed shared how these classes have prepared them for college. One grade ten student stated, "In the leadership class, we're talking about getting ready for college; they've been preparing me since last year." Another student stated, "I was expected to find programs that will put me on a career path and help me find a program for a neurosurgeon at Columbia University."

## Additional Finding

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

School leaders and staff ensure that curricula are Common Core-aligned and integrate the instructional shifts. Student work and data are used to modify curricula and tasks.

### Impact

School leaders and staff work to build coherent curricula and tasks that promote college and career readiness for all students, and provide access to curricula for a diversity of students to be cognitively engaged.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers and teacher teams incorporate the instructional shifts, such as academic vocabulary by designing a curriculum that includes a literacy plan with the objective: increase student success and proficiency through the improvement of content-specific vocabulary by incorporating research-based literacy strategies across the content areas. This was evident in an Algebra unit that included development of the standard: Determine the meaning of symbols, key terms, and other domain specific words and phrases as they are used in a specific scientific or technical content relevant to grades eleven through twelve texts and topics. Most teachers interviewed articulated using subject-specific vocabulary in all subject areas.
- The curriculum is designed to support all learners including students with disabilities and ELLs. A grade twelve unit plan included accommodations and modifications for both groups based upon baseline data analysis and an examination of student work. Accommodations for students with disabilities include visuals, manipulatives, graphic organizers, adaptive materials and modified versions with original text and peer assistance. This was evident in a grade ten math class where students were working in heterogeneous groups and assisting their peers. Accommodations for ELLs include: low-level, chunk reading and bilingual glossaries. Students stated in an interview that there glossaries were instrumental in helping them succeed.
- Teachers stated during interviews that they prepare students for college and careers by incorporating literacy across all content areas to improve reading and writing skills. This was evident in a Living Environment unit plan that incorporates English Language Arts/literacy standards, such as citing specific textual evidence to support analysis of science and technical text. The unit plan also includes a section entitled Sequence of Key Learning Activities that include: Read-highlight–write the problem and write the hypotheses.

## Additional Finding

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

Across most classrooms, teacher pedagogy is aligned to the curricula and reflects a clear set of beliefs about how students learn best based on the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Across classrooms visited, teaching methods consistently provide differentiated instruction.

### Impact

All students, including ELLs and students with disabilities, are engaged in challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in their dialogue and student work.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers state that students learn best by being exposed to differentiated instruction and scaffolding. In a genetics research seminar class, students compared and contrasted body types and what influences them. Students were grouped heterogeneously and provided with scaffolds such as graphic organizers and checklists. Students were free to use whatever materials they felt were necessary to complete their task. A checklist noted included accountable talk prompts for discussion. When a student stated, “Magazines play a big role in why people want to lose weight”, another student referred to her talk prompt stating, “Can you add to that idea?” The student replied, “Yes, because certain magazines show certain body images that can affect self-esteem.” Also, a graphic organizer to list the effects that the media has on body types was available as a reference. The graphic organizer used by these students included a bullet list of ways the media influences body type, they included: Social media, people wanting to fit in based on what they see and wanting to look like the people you see.
- School leaders also shared that students learn best by actively participating in the lesson. In a grade eleven history class, students gave brief verbal presentations by stating a claim and citing the text to support the claim. An example was demonstrated by a student when the teacher asked, “Who is to blame for the Boston Massacre?” The student responded, “I think the colonists were to blame because they started rebelling by throwing snow balls just because they didn’t want to pay taxes.” A student countered, stating, “I disagree because the captain stated in the story, shoot them, and the colonists had to defend themselves.”
- Teachers stated that students learn best in heterogeneous groups. This was evident in most classes visited. In a grade ten math class, student groups consisted of students with disabilities, various learning styles, common interests and higher achievers. Using a think-pair-share strategy, students were challenged with determining if a table represents a linear or exponential equation. All students worked together in groups. When prompted by the teacher, a student volunteered, “We decided it was a linear fraction because it has a pattern.” Another student in the group added, “It’s going to form a straight line.”

## Additional Finding

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

Across classrooms, teachers incorporate assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the curricula and consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

### Impact

Teachers provide actionable feedback to students to support student learning and make adjustments based on assessments thus effectively meeting all students' learning needs.

### Supporting Evidence

- A teacher's review of a baseline assessment analysis in Algebra 1 shows that in one class answered 44.4 percent of the questions correctly, another class answered 30 percent of the questions accurately. The teacher documented that there is a need to make adjustments to differentiate instruction to address the lower third performing students in each class. The teacher further stated that they need to provide more access points throughout the lesson, and make the lessons more student-centered.
- In a Geometry class, the teacher used a vocabulary knowledge rating pre-assessment rubric in a unit on factoring. The rubric was written in English, Spanish and Arabic to address the needs of the different languages in the classroom. The rubric posted three words: equilateral triangle, isosceles triangle and scalene triangle. The number three means the student can use the word and define it number two means that the student has heard the word before but cannot define it and number one means that they do not know the word and never used it. The teacher further checked for understanding by asking students to put up three fingers if you know the triangles and can define them.
- In a math class, a teacher posted an error analysis for each student to determine if they are ready to move on to the next phase of the lesson. Students had to explain their work and the choices they made. An example was evident in a student error analysis sheet, a student wrote, "I chose number four because we learned this yesterday and I wanted to make sure I got it right." The teacher responded by stating: "Very good, this is one way to get better, continue to use the annotations because it is really helpful."
- Actionable feedback was evident across classrooms. A student scored an 83 percent using a writing rubric. The teacher wrote, "Your writing is good, your essay shows organization and critical thinking skills. However you did not mention rights and freedom under the government and the purpose needs to be stated in the introduction." Another example was evident on a paper on political reform. The teacher stated, "Excellent writing, the conclusion is incomplete as per the rubric. The task requires more development of the effects and influences of the books and idea." Students stated that they receive feedback from their teachers on most of their work.

## Additional Finding

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

School leaders support teacher development with feedback that captures strengths, areas for improvement, and next steps aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. A system is in place to facilitate professional development and make informed decisions regarding pedagogy and succession plans.

### Impact

Feedback articulates clear expectations for teachers' growth. Professional development decisions and succession plans are informed by observation data trends.

### Supporting Evidence

- Feedback from one past observation noted that in demonstrating knowledge of content and pedagogy, "The teacher can identify important concepts of the discipline and their relationships to one another." It was also noted that the teacher was effective in designing coherent instruction, citing that learning activities were directly connected to instructional outcomes. In the same observation, component using questioning and discussion techniques was rated developing, stating that "the teacher's questions lead students through a single path of inquiry." Next steps included, "The teacher needs to improve his questioning by using depth of knowledge questioning to elicit from students their knowledge of the content."
- The principal stated that classroom observations help build the professional development plan. The professional development plan documents that 77 percent of teachers stated that they need professional development on questioning and discussion techniques. This is supported by *Advance* data which indicates that this has been one of the highest areas of concern in teacher evaluations. This resulted in professional development in understanding and using Webb's *Depth of Knowledge* (DOK).
- School leadership employs teacher experience and expertise to make informed decisions regarding assignments. For example, in the science department, a teacher received her administrative license and is now the science department lead. Two additional teachers received their administrative license and are now data specialists which have an impact on teachers identifying the importance of using technology and data to improve instructional practices during teacher meetings.