

Advance in Practice: Using Observation and Feedback to Support Teacher Development at the Bronx School for Young Leaders



Principal Serapha Cruz says, "My approach is to use the *Framework for Teaching* for teacher development, we really said, 'Let's use this to create a common language about what best practice is.'"

At the Bronx School for Young Leaders, teachers and administrators are working together to build a school community that regularly collaborates to strengthen educator practices. Principal Serapha Cruz works with her assistant principals and instructional coaches to provide teachers with frequent observations and feedback on their classroom practice. Principal Cruz says, "I set guidelines that we need to focus on development. I wanted to make sure that there wasn't a divide between the teaching staff and administrative staff. We need to have great conversations to keep all of us growing in our profession."

Below are some strategies the staff at Bronx School for Young Leaders uses to strengthen their practice and support teachers' development.

Developing a common language

The staff has embraced using the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* to build a common language for professional conversations that take place during the *Advance* observations and feedback cycle and professional development. Many teachers at the Bronx School for Young Leaders are using the *Framework for Teaching* to talk to each other in the hallways and during formative peer classroom visits as well.

Christina Iannacone, a sixth grade Social Studies teacher says, "The *Framework for Teaching* influences all my conversations. I love having my colleagues visit my classroom to offer insights using the *Framework* because that helps me better educate my students. Talking to my colleagues and reflecting on my practice has helped me identify so many new strategies to bring into my classroom. [Having these conversations] helps me show my students that learning is a process for everybody."

NYCDOE educators interested in learning more about developing a common language to support teacher development can visit *ARIS Learn* (NYCDOE login required). [Click here](#) to access a recommended learning opportunity and get started.

Prioritizing observing teachers in action

Principal Cruz has her instructional coaches conduct formative observations to support teacher development in addition to the observations she and her assistant principals conduct. Every morning the team has a quick meeting to discuss the observations, feedback, and support planned for the day. On days when the schedule doesn't allow the team to meet, they are able support each other's work with their teachers using a simple tracking system kept in the office. "This keeps us focused on our priority: being in classrooms every day."

Alex Corbitt, an ICT teacher, shared that he and his co-teaching partner, Grace Omorebok, "Get observed at least once a week by either our administrators or subject specific coaches. We get feedback that we can take and implement right away."

Ms. Iannacone visits her colleagues' classrooms when she can observe skills and strategies that other teachers are using. "I am particularly interested in how I can help my students construct better written arguments. I visited with some of the other teachers to see how we can work together to reinforce the skills and content we are teaching."



Seventh grade teachers Eric Weiss, Mary Paz, Alex Corbitt, and Grace Omorebok

NYCDOE educators interested in learning more about prioritizing time spent in the classrooms to support teacher development can visit ARIS Learn (NYCDOE login required). [Click here](#) to access a recommended learning opportunity and get started.

Thinking critically about strengths and areas for development

Reflecting on what is going well and areas for development provides teachers the opportunity to celebrate their successes, build on strengths, and become even more intentional about how they use strategies that benefit their students. When teachers share best practices they invest in their school’s community as well as their students’ learning.

“When my principal and I went through the *Framework* [during a feedback conversation] and looked at where my ratings aligned for each component, Using Assessment in Instruction (3d) really stood out. During the lesson, I noticed that the students needed more time on one quiz. I circled specific questions for pairs to work on based on what I saw they needed support on. That ended up being an impetus for a really good lesson, and it is something that I wouldn’t have picked up on without the observation. It is something that I first did because it seemed like the solution to kids needing support on the quiz, and it went better than I thought it would so I started using that strategy purposefully the next day.”

Seventh grade English Language Arts teacher, Eric Weiss, finds that highlighting the developmental aspects of the *Advance* observation cycle has provided him with insights into his teaching that have a direct impact on his students’ learning: “I think the administration does a great job of really setting us up for success; they give really good feedback and great support. The feedback I received from my formal observation allowed me to teach more effectively, especially with regard to planning and preparation.”

NYCDOE educators interested in learning more about identifying areas of strengths and development to support teacher development can visit ARIS Learn (NYCDOE login required). [Click here](#) to access a recommended learning opportunity and get started.

Collaborating to set next steps and provide support



Sixth grade teachers Alex Sarli and Christina Iannacone

One of the keys to successful teacher development at the Bronx School for Young Leaders is to ensure that following each observation and feedback conversation, teachers have clear and actionable next steps for developing their practice in hand and support available to help implement them.

Principal Cruz says, “I am a big believer that teachers need to construct next steps with the administrators. We try to present the observation evidence to our teachers in a way that allows them to highlight the most important next steps to focus on. We ask what key things they want to work on between observations and note those next steps for the teacher and the coaches that work with them. When an instructional coach visits the teacher to offer support, the teacher can feel confident that the coach is aware of the collaboratively set next steps and is there to help them.”

Adam Sarli, a sixth grade math teacher and instructional coach, uses the teachers’ next steps to plan for and implement the math team’s professional development. “The math department is implementing a new curriculum and there are some common components that we as a team need to develop. It

is nice to be able to notice a pattern like that and then have a space, like a professional development Tuesday, to address that as a group.”

NYCDOE educators interested in learning more about collaborating to set next steps to support teacher development can visit ARIS Learn (NYCDOE login required). [Click here](#) to access a recommended learning opportunity and get started.

NYCDOE educators: How are you using *Advance* to support teacher development and student learning? Celebrate your success and share your best practices with colleagues across the City. Nominate yourself, your colleagues, or your school for an upcoming feature of “*Advance in Practice*” [here](#).