

Quality Review Report 2009-2010

**Bushwick Leaders High School for Academic
Excellence**

**High School 556
797 Bushwick Avenue
Brooklyn
11221**

Principal: Catherine Reilly

Dates of review: March 24 - 25, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Gwen Stephens

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Bushwick Leaders High School for Academic Excellence is a high school with 477 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 17% Black, 82% Hispanic, less than 1% White and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 22% English language learners and 18% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 81%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient

The principal has a clear vision for the school, which is to convey high expectations and attainable success for all students to graduate from high school and enter college. Staff, students and parents are enthusiastic and attest to the high quality of support the school provides for its students.

The school climate is positive and welcoming where parents have good access to teachers and receive helpful ongoing communication. The senior students share that the school feels safer and more respectful. Regular pupil personnel team meetings provide information about students to enable counselors and the academic staff to update each other around issues of progress, attendance and discipline. The multiple guidance services for students and families, an advisory program, and AVID college preparation program offered throughout the calendar year, increases the likelihood of students staying in school. The school has developed a network of support with community-based organizations and businesses with extra funding to provide students with broader opportunities to succeed.

Teacher teams are scheduled to meet by content and by grade. These teams use a range of data with a primary focus on credit accumulation, credit recovery and Regents pass rates. These teams operate more as planning teams rather than collaborative inquiry teacher teams. Although the teams produce multiple artifacts, they do not have formalized protocols or evaluation criteria that would depict a clear picture of the impact of their work on the improvement of instructional practice to raise student performance levels. Although teachers collaborate and work together, they indicate the need for more support in the development of goals that meet their differentiated professional needs.

The school uses the standard mandated high school core curricula with limited art, some theatre, music and various technologies. This curriculum is not varied enough to offer expanded learning opportunities to accommodate the entire school population. The higher-level course offerings are restricted to small numbers of students. There are no established checkpoints for revising lesson plans although the school has the capacity to do this through the collaborative structures in the teams and to set measurable targets to raise the levels of student achievement. The focus of school on capacity building on curriculum and instructional improvement is not fully established as some teachers' lessons lack differentiated instructional practices to meet all the academic needs of each learner.

What the school does well

- A passionate hard working principal communicates high and clear expectations to students, staff and parents, which motivates the school community and sets a course for continuous progress.
 - Strong relationships between families and the school develop when new students enter and participate in an interview with school staff. At this point, the school conveys its expectations regarding academic performance, behavior and school life. Parents express a sense of pride about the school and always feel welcome. This translates into high levels of parent leadership and commitment to school goals and school activities such as the gala event that parents organize each year.
 - Conversations with students indicate that they understand what the school expects of them as young adults. Students describe participating in sisterhood and brotherhood trips to colleges. As one student stated, “It is expected that we do well, graduate and go on to college.”
- Enthusiastic student and adult support for the school underscores students’ expressions of respect, caring and personal responsibility that leads to high interest in learning and increased graduation rates.
 - Students feel genuinely cared for by the staff. Because the adults and students know each other by name, there is sense of trust and respect in the school community. Students say, “The school feels like home and the teachers are your parents away from home.”
 - The administration has responded to behavioral issues raised in the previous year by extending support for teachers through advisories. This has led to a decrease in student suspensions that keep them away from school and interrupt their learning.
- School leaders and faculty gather and analyze an extensive range of student data to identify trends and establish measurable school-wide goals that promote student progress.
 - Teachers receive information electronically through “jump drives” containing a variety of data from a range of sources so that they can design and monitor individual programs for students entering the school. From such information, students entering the 9th grade in the lowest third and 11th graders are given double periods of English language arts and math to ensure additional support.
 - Detail analysis of student data from Regents results prompted the school to look at the language expected for these exams and instigated the integration of non-fiction text in content areas.
- Teachers confer regularly with students and formulate interim goals to provide optimal instruction for those in need of supports or extensions for improved academic success.

- The disaggregated results of the statewide exam for English language learners are used to further inform instruction and target academic support. At the weekly department and grade meetings, teachers analyze the data on the progress and instructional needs of the special education students in collaborative team teaching classes. The school provides this subgroup with structured blocks of instructional time in English language arts and social studies to target their needs in a consistent and coherent manner.
- Frequent analyses of Regents pass rates and credit accumulation data allows teachers to monitor students' performance and provide them with alternative supports. This includes a Saturday program and extended evening school with the goal of acquiring Regents pass rates so students can meet the demands of expected yearly progress.
- The school benefits from long-time partnerships with community-based organizations including the arts that enhance all aspects of the school and provide opportunity for youth development experiences.
 - The school benefits from corporate sponsorship, with new additions of technology and a school library to open in 2011. Actors from a theatrical group provide students with exposure to performing arts. Affiliation with community organizations and businesses allow students to actively participate in their community and acquire experiences to help them grow socially and emotionally.
 - Teachers participate in professional development sessions to support students towards college preparation. The school also provides students with an advisory program inclusive of a range of guidance and student support services that hone in on their specific needs to help them succeed.
- The principal and her administration have made strategic decisions about the use of resources, budget and scheduling to meet the school's goals of improving student achievement.
 - The school aligns its resources to support stable meeting time for teachers, effective teacher assignments, and the integration and extension of the use of technology into the school.
 - The establishment of teacher teams that meet regularly to discuss curriculum and scholarship results has facilitated an increased focus on student needs and in developing plans to address those needs.

What the school needs to improve

- Monitor and revise curriculum to develop a coherent and demanding model that is rich in content, and builds on essential questions, knowledge and a broad range of enduring understandings.
 - The school offers students the standard high school courses including visual arts, theatre arts and music. Although curricula align to the standards, there is a lack of higher-level advanced placement courses to

provide further challenge. This year, teachers express the desire to enhance the curriculum so it is motivating and provides broader learning connections than solely focusing on preparation for exams.

- Students use Cornell Notes in class to organize and guide their participation in class and enhance their ability to study effectively. However, this strategy is used inconsistently throughout the building and lacks coherence.
- Promote greater consistency in lesson planning so that classroom, routines ensure multiple entry points for students so they are sufficiently engaged in critical thinking activities coupled with targeted questioning.
 - In some lessons, work challenges the students and instruction accommodates individual needs. However, teacher practice is inconsistent across classrooms and does not reflect a cohesive approach that supports differentiation. Similarly, student work folders do not show sufficient evidence of tiered classroom help to ensure accelerated progress for all students.
- Ensure that the teacher teams use the inquiry approach as leverage to analyze and categorize student work to adjust their classroom practice.
 - Teachers plan together during their content and grade level weekly meetings. Nonetheless, collaborative inquiry work is not yet a fully embedded practice and this reduces the opportunity for self-reflection and a shared understanding of their effect on student outcomes as well as how to improve their teaching.
- Systematize the school's ability to regularly evaluate and adjust the use of organizational resources in response to curricular and instructional decisions to solidify the school's capacity-building practices.
 - This year, goals such as the improved use of formative assessment in the form of "exit slips" are just beginning, and targets set. However, these targets are not measured and are not school-wide nor are teachers given instructional resources to improve this important practice so that they can develop and share effective tools to improve student learning.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: Bushwick Leaders High School for Academic Excellence	△	▷	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	△	▷	✓	+
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?			X	
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?		X		
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?			X	
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X	
Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	▷	✓	+
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			X	
2.2 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance trends?			X	
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.

<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X	
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?			X	
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			X	
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X	

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?		X		
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			X	
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?			X	
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X	

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?		X		
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X	
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?			X	
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?		X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 5		X		

Quality Review Scoring Key

Δ	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed
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