

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**Bronx Studio School for Writers and Artists
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle school X269**

**928 SIMPSON STREET
BRONX
NY 10459**

Principal: DAVID VAZQUEZ

Dates of review: October 18-19, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Timothy Behr

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Bronx Studio School for Writers and Artists is a Junior High-Intermediate-Middle school with 400 students from grade 6 through grade 11. The school population comprises 23% Black, 74% Hispanic, 1% Asian students and 0% other students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 20% special education students. Boys account for 42% of the students enrolled and girls account for 58%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 88.8%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders use a research based framework as a formative assessment tool to monitor teacher practice with an emphasis on enhancing student performance. (4.1)
 - o The school-wide focus of enhancing teacher practice is supported through differentiated opportunities for teachers. Peer visitations, seminars, a mentor buddy for novice teachers, bimonthly observations which includes written and verbal feedback deepen teacher practice. These programs provide targeted professional development which enables teachers to learn together and from one another. As a result, teacher's growth is maximized to positively affect student learning potential.
 - o The school has prioritized successive cycles of mini-observations across all grades and disciplines. The administrative team is highly visible and regularly interacts with teachers in a combination of formal and informal observations utilizing the Danielson framework. On-going conversations and memorialized feedback informs teachers of the quality of their work. Next steps will include questioning, discussion, and student engagement competencies. Therefore, the school is now identifying pedagogical trends leading to professional development activities that support teacher's improvement in classroom practice.
- The school is safe and inviting and is conducive to promoting students academic and social emotional growth to support interest and involvement in their learning. (1.4)
 - o Students are engaged and happy. You feel welcome as you enter the building because the climate is warm and inviting. The school's six core values: academic excellence, community expectations, peacekeeping culture, service, creativity, physical and emotional health are prominently displayed and regularly discussed. Effective administrators and teachers support students well, creating an atmosphere of mutual respect, leading to progress of attaining school wide objectives.
 - o The administration and teachers recognize and are acknowledged by students. They know students by name and know their specific strengths and weaknesses. An affiliation with Casita Maria, A Center for Arts and Education which is located on the top floor of the school promotes high levels of participation in social and academic activities that extend classroom learning. As a result, there has been a positive impact on students as evidenced by an improvement in attendance.
- Administration and faculty collate and analyze data regarding student learning outcomes highlighting areas for improvement at the school, grade, and class level. (2.1)
 - o The school regularly reviews multiple sources of data. . Based on this information the cabinet prioritized improving the writing skills of students identified by the city as the lowest third. The school offers additional support to these students via an advisory class that meets two times per week. The advisor then coordinates ongoing discussions to help teachers address students' needs successfully. This practice has promoted highly effective collaborations of all teacher teams and improved teaching strategies. As a result, the majority of subgroups are attaining the 75th growth percentile or higher on the 2010 NYS English language arts test.

- An Assistant Principal assigned to supervise support services effectively provides students and families with a variety of opportunities to grow socially, emotionally, and academically. (4.4)
 - o The principal thoughtfully assigned an assistant principal to supervise pupil personnel and guidance concerns. Responsibilities include an advisory program and professional development that provides teachers specific strategies to implement during their weekly meeting with individual students to monitor academic progress.. Students are doing better in school as evidenced by scores on teacher made tests. They state that they are comfortable going to an adult for guidance. Consequently, teacher's turnkey strategies to other staff members, increasing the amount of teachers and students benefiting from the practice.
 - o There is a wide variety of programs to support students academic, physical, social and emotional needs. The junior varsity rugby team was city champions. The Afro Latin Jazz Academy of Music provides instrument and ensemble instruction. There is a Planned Parenthood Sex Education after school class. An annual trip to Spain and an emotional wellness team enrich student's learning experiences These opportunities provide mentoring for students and enhance their school experiences leading to improved self esteem, physical well being and positive community relationships.
- The principal in collaboration with key stakeholders makes organizational decisions that are aligned with the school's grade expansion to improve instructional coherence and student outcomes. (1.3)
 - o To support staff in the analysis and application of data, newly hired assistant principals meet weekly with their assigned content area collaborative teacher teams to discuss and cite examples of how to use data in meaningful ways. Teachers hold themselves accountable for student's academic, social and emotional progress. Teams have begun using data and the analysis of student work to drive instruction. As a result the school is developing a deepening of practice to provide targeted meaningful instruction to meet the needs of students.
 - o Administrators and faculty are included in all instructional phases including class and team collaborations. This decision has been key in establishing timely and effective communication between all constituents to ensure informed revisions in all areas of instruction. For example, feedback is supporting the teachers in the implementation of on the spot checks to determine student mastery of content presented. Thus, key stakeholders are informed of student performance status and growth which drives instruction and organizational supports.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve the rigor of instructional practices across subject areas to ensure that every student makes progress. (1.1)
 - o The school is currently focusing on writing strand 1, of CCLS, writing arguments to support change. However, curriculum maps and pacing calendars are not uniform in referring to the CCLS. Since these course guides are incomplete in referencing to CCLS the school is not yet having a consistent impact on student learning and achievement as evidenced by lack of rigor in student work products and lack of significant progress in standardized test results.
 - o The school has an annualized instructional and professional development plan that recognizes that all teachers do not have the same skill set. Although teachers are receiving support they are not yet consistently implementing a

curriculum with rigor nor are they incorporating teaching methods that require students to utilize higher order thinking skills. Consequently, progress is not occurring in English language arts and math as evidenced by the progress report at the middle and high school levels.

- Systematize the use of tools to enable school leader's teachers to evaluate a range of data to identify and address performance trends. (2.3)
 - o Teachers in grades 6-8 do not consistently conference with students or use running records to monitor progress. In grade 9-10 the school's use of a rigorous procedure to analyze summative and formative assessments is limited. Instructional practices do not regularly include an item analysis of assessments to inform instruction. Teachers have grading policies but feedback to students that identify next steps is limited. As a result, there is limited acceleration of student learning which precludes students from making adequate yearly progress.
- Implement structures to consistently monitor content area pacing calendars, unit plans, teacher practice, and student action plans that are aligned with the CCLS and improve instructional coherence.(5.1)
 - o The school has not yet established a procedure to gauge the impact of instruction on learning resulting in uneven levels of student performance. In addition the tools are not adjusted to address known voids in student knowledge. As result, the school has not yet established a procedure to gauge the impact of instruction on student learning in order to support the establishment of best practices throughout the school and sustain student performance and progress.
- Promote consistency in differentiating instruction based on data so that lessons demonstrate purposeful grouping, various activities and focused questions that maximize student performance (1.2)
 - o Teachers can discuss behavior trends and learning styles of students in their classes. However, this information is not consistently utilized in classroom instruction. Questioning in most classes was low level and usually requires students to provide yes, no ,or basic responses. Tasks for students were rarely differentiated and there was a lack of challenge to ensure that the needs of students are fulfilled. Consequently, students individual learning needs are not addressed which results in students not performing to their potential.
- Develop assessments that are aligned to standards to enable teachers to know their students strengths and weaknesses to support targeted instruction in all content areas. (2.2)
 - o The school examines students' formative and summative assessment results. This analysis has lead to a broad identification of concepts and skills that need to be taught. Teachers do not use this information to plan data-driven, purposeful instruction for various targeted groups of students. Therefore instruction is not meeting the unique needs of students as evidenced by standard test scores.
 - o To systematize classroom practice the school is prioritizing on the spot checks for understanding. Teachers have the option to choose to use quick-writes, exit steps, cold calls or turn-and talks to evaluate student learning. However, not all teachers have incorporated this assessment practice into their classroom instruction. Consequently, teachers are not making necessary adjustments to ensure all students achieve mastery of content skills or concepts.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Bronx Studio School for Writers and Artists	UD	D	P	WD
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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 as evidenced by meaningful student work products?		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	
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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 Align assessments to curriculum, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?		X		
2.3 Use grading policies and tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends to inform instruction and curriculum?	X			
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students' progress toward school and class expectations?		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>	UD	D	P	WD
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 staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?		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>	UD	D	P	WD
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		
1..4 Integrate child/youth development, guidance/advisement support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?			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>	UD	D	P	WD
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, with particular attention to the CCLS?	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		

Quality Review Scoring Key

UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed
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