

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

School for Excellence
High School 404

1110 BOSTON ROAD
BRONX
NY 10456

Principal: Carmen Bardequez Brown

Dates of review: February 6 - 7, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Carron Staple

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

School for Excellence is a high school with 430 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population is comprised of 35% Black and 64% Hispanic students. The student body includes 19% English language learners and 25% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 74.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders analyze a wide array of data and assessments to determine students' individual strengths and weaknesses and adjust instructional decisions to target students' needs. (2.1)
 - A wide range of data sources, that includes summative item analysis from mock Regents' exams, student portfolios, Regents' cohort data and State accountability statistics, scholarship reports, attendance trends, specific content course data information gathered from weekly teacher team meetings, enables school leaders to make decisions to continuously assess and make adjustments where necessary to target student's instructional needs. As a result of their evaluation, teacher schedules changed to allow for common planning, and where necessary, course offerings were re-designed to offer journalism, philosophy, on-line reading programs, and other electives.
 - With the support of a literacy consultant and literacy coach, school leaders meet weekly to discuss and analyze student work, and create assessments aligned to standards and instructional goals set forth in the school's Comprehensive Educational Plan. As a result, literacy rubrics allow teachers across all content areas to gain a clear portrait of student mastery.
- Highly effective support services provide advisory and guidance programs, and collaborations with partner organizations, offer a broad range of real-world learning opportunities allowing students to succeed academically. (4.4)
 - External agencies and organizations such as Pathway Through the Arts, The Global Classroom, Commission for Human Rights, At Home in CUNY, College Summit, and Gear-Up, are highly effective in supporting students by providing academic, college and career support, and hands-on learning. Consequently, every student has access to information and skills that help them as they continue on to the world of college and careers. Mentoring through advisory supports students socially and emotionally, and the addressing of academic needs creates a community that is focused on students' outcomes, thus accelerating learning
- The school's safe, respectful, and aesthetically calming environment supports students in their social-emotional and academic development, and conveys a message of high expectations to improve learning. (1.4)
 - School survey results prompted an emphasis on character education and socialization via an external program that helps the schools prevent violence. Students also receive conflict resolution and peer mediation training from teachers, and assist administrators after school in resolving student conflicts. As a result the amount of occurrences related to student fighting and classroom disruptions has decreased by 50% as evidenced from the statistics in the Online Occurrence Report System (OORS), and teachers, students, and parents feel safe while at school.
 - Students are allowed input on course selection and are provided choices in electives. Resident artists help teachers infuse the arts across the curriculum. Teachers' display of student work in classrooms, hallways, and offices, include

positive and helpful comments, demonstrates that across all content areas all teachers are using a school-wide literacy rubric to assess writing.

- School leaders work collaboratively with teachers to make effective organizational decisions across all aspects of the school that support student and adult learning. (1.3)
 - The principal's decision to revise last year's practice of meeting monthly, and utilize a school-based option (SBO), created an opportunity for teachers to meet weekly for two hours each Wednesday to plan lessons and discuss instructional practices aligned with State standards. Additional creative scheduling allows for 75-minute periods and smaller class sizes. Budgeting acumen in the area of academic support includes a literacy coach to implement a four-year college curriculum for college and career preparedness, after-school tutoring, Saturday programs, I-Zone training, and the AVENTA credit recovery online program. The decision to allocate funds for resident artists enriched the writing program and provided additional learning opportunities for all students.
 - The school's administration, and as recommended by the teacher hiring committee, strategically added three content-specific special education teachers in the areas of science, social studies and English to the staff to address closing the achievement gap and helping the school to achieve its instructional goals for students with individual educational plans. These teachers consistently examine the work of the students to identify strengths and weaknesses and provide strategies to help address and improve their academic outcomes.
- The school consistently uses formative, interim, and summative assessment data, to analyze student performance, adjust decisions to target, and meet student needs. (2.2)
 - Teachers choose to design their own (DYO) assessments that include performance tasks aligned with Common Core Learning Standards. Consequently, they are able to aggregate data from multiple, relevant sources, that is used to inform planning.
 - After analyzing the data from the DYO, and other assessments such as exit slips, Lexile data, portfolio work, scoring conferences, formative assessments, projects, and tests, teachers further examine instructional decisions and adjust planning. Global and US History teachers create "do-now" assignments culled from student responses on document-based questions to focus learning tasks aligned with the curriculum.
- The school has implemented an effective research-based framework for monitoring teacher effectiveness that has led to improved instructional practice and increased student outcomes for each subgroup. (4.1)
 - In addition to formal observations, school leaders observe and evaluate teachers frequently and informally using the Danielson Framework, and have provided professional development to norm and familiarize the teachers with each competency. Feedback is provided in a timely and supportive manner that details strategic and actionable ways to improve pedagogical skill and leverage improved student achievement. The practice of looking at and engaging in specific competencies within each domain is developing well, and has resulted in teachers feeling more comfortable and confident as frequent mini-observations are effected.

- Teachers support each other with class intervisitations and share best practices using a tuning protocol that allows for feedback aligned with Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Effective Teaching. Further, teachers are required to revisit their goals and look at competency-based strategies to improve their pedagogy.

What the school needs to improve

- Build on emerging practices to enhance communication and collaboration with parents in order to increase their capacity to assist their children's learning and track their children's progress towards attaining set goals. (2.4)
 - The school has implemented the practice of weekly case-conferencing where a student's academic and social-emotional strengths and weaknesses are discussed. However, the school has not yet connected the discussion to identified goals, thus minimizing the ability of families to measure their children's progress and hindering effective reciprocal conversations between school and family to lend suitable support.
 - The school is beginning to use Eduware for the staff as a tool to communicate within the building and parent receive occasional letters and phone calls to discuss their children's progress. But the school has yet to expand communication to include Eduware as a tool to share relevant information with parents so they can understand their children's performance and follow ongoing and "up to the minute" academic progress, thus hindering them as full partners in the success of their children..
- Consistently scaffold questions, provide extensions, and differentiate instruction and resources, so that all students can access source materials and participate in all learning tasks at high levels that maximize student learning. (1.2)
 - While most classrooms have students arranged in table groups, students are not purposefully situated with a task that is strategically targeted for their individualized needs. Instead, students in each grouping are expected to perform the same tasks using the same materials and procedures, which are not aligned to the school's goal of providing differentiation for students with a variety of abilities and learning styles, thus suitable learning opportunities for each student are hindered.
 - Rituals and routines, as well as questioning techniques, vary in effectiveness across classrooms. While some teachers use questioning to push student thinking to a higher and more creative level causing a high level of interaction that is student-centered, other classrooms offer teacher-directed lessons with questioning techniques rooted in low-level recall, or "yes" and "no" responses. These inconsistent practices lead to inadequate and uneven levels of student engagement that prevent opportunities for academic rigor and challenge.
- Develop further rigorous performance tasks in all content areas that consistently engage students in higher order thinking and target the needs of diverse learners, enabling all to meet Common Core Learning Standards. (1.1)
 - Teacher teams are working across grade levels and departments to revise curriculum to reflect Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), with a heavy focus on persuasive writing, and annotated note taking. Some classes did not provide rigorous tasks to accommodate a diversity of learners from specific student subgroups, thus limiting their ability to meet adequate yearly progress.

Although the school works to revise curriculum and performance assessments, it has yet to link major concepts across the curriculum in order to further the application of content knowledge.

- Use collected student data to make informed decisions about interim and annual learning goals for targeted students in need of additional support to impact their academic growth and achievement. (3.2)
 - Teacher teams meet to analyze student work, however it is not evident that as they engage in this work they support students in the area of self-assessment. Thus, students are less reflective about their work and miss understanding next steps needed to meet interim benchmarks and identified goals.
 - Teams of teachers meet in content area and grade level teams to collaborate on and develop curriculum. However, lesson and unit planning do not indicate differentiation of instruction based on the needs of individuals or relevant subgroups of students. Therefore, students are not sufficiently challenged, resulting in missed learning opportunities to accelerate learning.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: School for Excellence	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	
4.4 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
-----------	-----------------------	----------	-------------------	----------	-------------------	-----------	-----------------------