

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

The Jonas Bronck Academy

X228

**400 E. Fordham Road
Bronx, NY 10458**

Principal: Brenda Gonzalez

Dates of review: May 21 – 22, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Melodie Mashel

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

MS 228 is a middle school with 256 students from six through grade eight. The school population comprises 20% Black, 69% Hispanic, 4% White, and 5% Asian and 1% other students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 20% special education students. Boys account for 43% of the students enrolled and girls account for 57%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 97.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders use a consistent system for observing teacher pedagogy that results in improved teacher instructional practices. (4.1)
 - School leaders provide clear and strategic actionable feedback that identifies teacher strengths and areas in need of support. The school's use of Danielson's Framework provides targeted areas for teacher development. Effective teacher questioning and student engagement, specifically engaging students in meaningful discussions have been the focal point of teacher development for this year. The principal meets with teachers to select two to three areas of focus for each teacher. These serve as the goals for teachers. After a series of informal observations, goals are revisited with teachers every three months. Principals, assistant principals and teacher teams engage in reviews of videos of class lessons and they serve as critical friends to provide peer feedback to each other about their craft. School leaders serve as facilitators of this process strategically empowering teachers to support each other. New teachers receive additional support through targeted professional development with coaches from an outside consultant. This cycle of observations, targeted feedback, aligned support, and follow-up observations has resulted in a self-reflective practice and improved student achievement on math unit assessments.
 - The school strategically provides professional development opportunities to both new and highly experienced teachers. New teachers receive support in planning and preparation through targeted professional development by an outside consultant as well as support from coaches and peer teachers. Selected teachers provide professional development to teams of teachers in their specific areas of expertise. For example, teacher expertise is shared around designing student discussion structures and protocols as well as designing teacher questions that promote student thinking. As a result of this clear focus on providing effective professional development, teachers have meaningfully embedded strategies that spawn high level student discussions in their daily lessons.
- The school's curriculum is well aligned to key CCLS standards that engage students in cognitively demanding tasks and support student learning. (1.1)
 - Students are steeped in a common core aligned rigorous curriculum that supports student mastery of key standards. Teacher's use of the Depth of Knowledge rubric and rubrics designed by teacher teams, Common Core Fellows and a consultant to ensure the level of units tasks raise student thinking. Students are immersed in English language arts units of study that focus on close reading of a variety of articles about a central topic. A review of curriculum units and teacher lesson plans reveal that open ended essential questions are posed as the center of units. Students participate in substantive oral discussions about a claim they make on a topic question and provide evidence both in discussion and in written

essays to support their point of view. For example, after reading and analyzing numerous articles including primary sources, eighth grade students engage in open discussion and write an essay to the question “Is nuclear war a crime against humanity”? Grade established benchmarks for key standards of reading, analyzing informational text, writing opinions and engaging in arguments with supporting evidence to justify a claim ensure students participate in rigorous learning experiences. Performance assessments tasks and end of unit tests assess student progress toward mastery of the key standards. As a result, as measured with the use of writing rubrics, all students including students with disabilities and English language learners and have demonstrated an average of 5% gain on post assessment essays from baseline essays since the midpoint of the year.

- Teachers use results from school wide assessments, conference notes, and analysis of student work to refine tasks and design multiple entry points for students including both English language learners and students with disabilities. For example, after reviewing student performance tasks teachers determined special education students required additional time to complete tasks and that English language learners needed a greater variety of reading material that contained graphics to complete assigned tasks. Consequently, additional time accommodation for midyear task completion was provided for special education students with the expectation that end of year tasks are completed within the allotted time and English language learners were supported with online reading material that incorporated illustrations and graphics. As a result, all students have moved up at least one level on post assessment tasks since the midpoint of the school year.
- Across classrooms, well-planned lessons reflect opportunities for student collaboration ensuring high levels of student thinking. (1.2)
 - Aligned to Danielson’s research based practices, the school is committed to fostering student independence in learning and ensuring there are frequent opportunities for students to make decisions about their learning and to express their opinions and ideas. Teachers thoughtfully plan lessons that encourage student discussion and an exchange of ideas. For example, in an eighth grade science lesson students using content vocabulary discussed how to best measure density, mass and length. Through trial, error and educated guesses, students arrived at their findings and explained their thinking to each other. In an eighth grade social studies class after reading a series of articles and primary sources including songs and poems of a particular period in history, students chose to create a political cartoon, poem, essay, or song about the unit studied. As a result, all students contribute to high level discussions and engage in challenging tasks that extend their thinking thus ensuring the vast majority of students perform at the school’s established benchmark of 80% or greater on end of unit performance tasks and end of unit tests.
 - Student work consistently reflects knowledge of material taught, student participation and ownership of learning. Teachers purposefully design and embed open ended questions in lessons that spark student debate and in “Socratic Seminar” sessions and support their claims with evidence from text. In addition, student work products including projects and classroom activities provide students with real life learning experiences.

For example, after engaging in research about playgrounds, sixth grade students constructed a paper prototype of a playground they desired to have at their school and provided a verbal presentation about their product to classmates. In a class of special education students, students engaged in discussions and problem solving about everyday financial experiences. Students worked in small groups and presented the strategies they used to solve problems related to everyday expenditures and banking. As a result of these practices, students produce meaningful authentic work that elevates student thinking and accelerates their learning.

- Teachers effectively analyze and use data from common assessments to inform curricular adjustments that support student learning needs. (2.2)
 - Across classrooms teachers routinely use common assessments to evaluate student work and to gain insight on student understanding of concepts taught. Assessments in the key subject areas of reading, writing and math are administered five times a year informing teachers of student strengths and areas of need. Acuity assessment data, pre and post - performance tasks, rubrics and class quizzes provide teachers with additional information about student learning. Data gathered from these assessments are entered into an electronic tracking system that students independently access to monitor their own progress. Teachers make adjustments to student groupings and rotate individual conferences with students to provide all students with support as needed. In addition, in order to align with student reading interests teachers adjusted units of study to include more informational and content reading material about historical events, adolescent concerns and social issues For example across all English language arts classes a variety of non-fiction genres including magazine articles, feature articles, newspapers, song lyrics, historical documents, biographies and on line reading texts are incorporated into unit studies. In order to stimulate student conversations about their work, teachers embed key questions into their units. For example, in a 7th grade unit of study about the United States Civil War, teachers formulated such questions as “should states have the right to secede?” and “how do issues of power, wealth and morality influence war?”, to increase participation in inquiry, discussion and critical thinking. As a result of these adjustments students readily engage in reading difficult texts, thus as measured by Lexile count all students have increased their ability to read complex text by 20% and they freely partake in deep discussion that stimulates student high level thinking.
 - Teachers’ consistently use a variety of strategies to check for student understanding. Ongoing conferring with students informs teachers of concepts that need to be retaught or taught differently. Rubrics used by both the teacher and student inform each of their next steps. For example, teachers confer with individual students in all content areas; they discuss next steps needed and students design a plan to reach mastery levels. In addition, teachers use end of unit student reflections and exit slips to determine misconceptions of lessons taught. Consequently, struggling students receive support through small group or individual instruction. Students are consistently required to assess their own work and that of their classmates through the use of peer review practice, thus supporting meaningful levels of understanding and

ownership. As a result, students clearly identify their next steps and teachers are able to address student needs in a timely manner resulting in 70 to 80% of student reaching mastery in lessons taught.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve school wide systems to effectively promote student social-emotional growth in order to support student learning. (1.4)
 - The school has systems in place such as advisory groups and a more recent program called “Overcoming Obstacles” aimed at helping students with conflict resolution strategies. Students state they know who to go to address academic concerns about classwork, projects and research. However, some students state they have few venues through which to address personal and emotional issues they may be experiencing. For example, students indicated they feel anxious about non-academic personal matters and uncertainties about sharing their emotions and problems with some staff. As a result of limited structures to support student social and emotional concerns, there are limited opportunities for students to maximize their learning potential and perform at standard levels and beyond.
 - Students know well the academic behaviors needed to be successful in school. Students state they need to study hard, ask clarifying questions of the teacher and peers and monitor their own progress. Honor rolls and assemblies highlight students performing well. Students partner with their families and present their academic portfolios and successes to their parents during conferences. However, opportunities for students to strengthen their personal behaviors are limited and students state there are few opportunities for them to engage in social activities outside the academic arena. Students state they would like more opportunities to engage in physical activity such as sports, have the time to go on trips, participate in more after school enrichment clubs and have a “free” period to be able to freely interact with teachers during the course of the day. As a result, there are missed opportunities for students to fully strengthen all facets of their social development.
- Enhance the work of teacher teams to include the deep analysis of student work to inform instructional adjustments that support student learning.(4.2)
 - Teacher teams meet at least once to two times per week. Sessions are consistently devoted to looking at student work, analyzing data or planning. Teams meet across grades and are facilitated on a rotating basis by lead teachers. Teachers routinely design the focus of team meetings and make key decisions about their direction. As teachers study student work, they identify student strengths and needs and examine if students have met the standard. However, teachers analyze tasks without referring closely to the criteria established on the rubric for the task. Therefore, teachers miss the opportunity to consider how they might move students to the next level or beyond the standards. As a result, this diminishes the effectiveness of the team’s work on improving their own practice thus limiting students’ from performing at peak levels.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: The Jonas Bronck Academy	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score			X				
Instructional Core							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula, including the arts, physical and health education, 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 that is informed by a research-based, common teaching framework and is aligned to curricula, engaging and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?			X				
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?			X				
School Culture							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X				
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve them?			X				
Systems for Improvement							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet students' learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			X				
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?			X				
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching with a research-based, common teaching framework 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				
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?			X				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed