

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

West Bronx Academy for the Future

Middle-High School X243

500 East Fordham Road

Bronx

NY 10458

Principal: Wilper Morales

Dates of review: November 29-30, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Michael L. Schurek

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

West Bronx Academy for the Future is a Middle-High school with 636 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 25% Black, 69% Hispanic, 1% White, 3% Asian and 2% other students. The student body includes 14% English language learners and 19% special education students. Boys account for 58% of the students enrolled and girls account for 42%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 88.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and staff work as a unified team to create a calm, respectful and orderly environment for learning to take place. (1.4)
 - The principal believes that one earns respect by giving respect and practices and preaches this philosophy every day. These beliefs, in turn, are practiced by staff and have filtered down to the students, resulting in well-managed classroom environments and orderly hallway movement during change of classes regardless of the school's large campus and shared facilities. Students and staff appreciate the administration's open door policy and attribute the school's respectful culture to the nurturing family atmosphere that has been established. An active student council includes three students who are members of the School Leadership Team (SLT), where they voice concerns and share ideas, resulting in recent dress down days and spirit weeks. These conditions contribute to steadily declining occurrence report and suspension rates over the past five years.
 - Three guidance counselors are each assigned two grades with each of them splitting up the twelfth grade cohort to provide seniors with the attention they need to prepare for graduation and college. Students also receive support and services aligned with their needs from other on-site providers such as the Montefiore Health Clinic, Girls' Talk support groups and substance abuse counselors. In addition, an attendance team and support personnel on each grade conduct on-going outreach to at-risk students, resulting in a 2% increase in attendance for high school students.
- The principal's use of school resources is increasing in alignment to school goals in order to support teaching and accelerate student progress. (1.3)
 - Common planning time has been scheduled that allows teachers to meet on two different teams once each week; one vertical content area team and one horizontal grade level team. Content area teams are supported in beginning the process of looking at student work using a protocol that analyzes students' strengths and areas for improvement in relation to task expectations as a means of devising strategies to increase student abilities in targeted areas such as writing and inferential thinking. Grade teams are beginning to develop long- and short-term goals to align their work to school goals and focus their efforts to engage students in challenging academic tasks. As a result, teacher teams are now positioned to drive more targeted instruction to accelerate student progress in order to achieve school wide goals.
 - The principal has purposely reorganized staff assignments and restructured student time to support schools goals and meet student learning needs. An effective middle school teacher was moved to 11th grade English and a successful 12th grade English teacher was moved to grade 10 to address decreasing English language arts (ELA) Regents scores. In addition, middle school content area teachers are now

instructing all classes on one grade and block scheduling allows for 75 minutes of math and English language arts instruction daily in an effort to help close the achievement gap. As a result, quarterly Regents based assessment results indicate limited progress in ELA for students preparing to sit for the Regents exam this year and improvement in ELA and math for seventh grade students.

- Teacher teams are in the process of aligning curricula across grades and subject areas to cognitively engage a diversity of learners. (1.1)
 - The principal retains the services of consultants to assist the school in aligning curricula to State standards and integrating common core aligned units of study. While some middle school units of study have commenced, most high school unit plans are set to be implemented in the springtime to ensure effective integration of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). The school is currently in the process of determining which of the key standards identified are to be emphasized to target instruction through data identified areas of need. This is evidenced by the continuing development of units of study that reflect the integration of the identified skills, such as citing evidence from text to support arguments, needed in order for students to meet the expectations of the CCLS.
 - Teacher teams are beginning the process of designing common core aligned units of study across subjects and grades with the intent of accommodating all student learning levels. For example, a combined 6th and 7th grade horizontal team is creating integrated English language arts/Social Studies units of study that will raise expectations for the upper grade while at the same time include accommodations for English language learners and students with disabilities. For example, specialized graphic organizers and the use of thinking maps are used to support students. As a result, curriculum maps and units of study are beginning to offer some evidence of adjustments being made for these learners.

What the school needs to improve

- Align the school's observation tools with a research-based teaching framework in order to communicate expectations, advance pedagogical practices and promote professional growth. (4.1)
 - The school's informal observation tool consists of a copy of an environmental checklist with added sections that utilize vocabulary from Danielson's Framework for Teaching and is used to record what is observed during 10-minute visits to classrooms. In addition, a formal observation form is used that recognizes strengths and offers next step suggestions and asks teachers to reflect on their practices by answering questions about how they could improve their lessons. The actual framework ratings are not shared with teachers after these visits, thus thwarting efforts to communicate to teachers their abilities as measured along the continuum of expectations for the targeted competency areas. As a result, many teachers are not provided with the feedback needed to hone their skills in targeted areas to raise pedagogical performance.
 - The school's professional development plan consists of a menu of topics selected through staff surveys and teacher self-assessment, that rotates

monthly so that all staff receive exposure to all presenters and planned topics during the course of the year during contractual after school activities. While administration grants and funds requests from teachers to attend out-of-building workshops, a system for using the school's observation data to support teacher development has not been established, preventing the elevation of school-wide instructional practices.

- Increase the consistency of teachers' delivery of instruction embedding the schools beliefs related to student learning in order to challenge, engage and meet the needs of all learners. (1.2)
 - While the school espouses pedagogical beliefs aligned with hands-on project based learning with high levels of student discussion and collaboration, some of the classrooms visited exhibited teacher-directed lesson activities that are not reflective of a student-centered environment. The school is emphasizing effective questioning as part of its focus in using a research-based framework to inform instruction, however, a number of classrooms demonstrated rapid-fire questioning that did not invite student thinking nor discussion, a critical attribute and belief related to instruction and student learning. Thus, efforts to support coherent pedagogical practices that demonstrate beliefs related to student learning and effective practices are inconsistently implemented, preventing all learners from receiving instruction that is engaging and promotes the production of meaningful work products.
 - Classroom visitations indicate an inconsistency in providing multiple entry points for students and reflect uneven levels of student engagement. For instance, a collaborative team teaching math class set up students in homogeneous groups with different sets of numbers containing both negative and positive fractions and whole numbers. They were expected to work together to place variables on a number line and explain the steps they took to do it in writing, demonstrating a highly engaging activity. On the other hand, a self-contained special education class as well as an English as a second language class, had all students performing the same tasks with little to no interaction, demonstrating missed opportunities to engage and meet the needs of all learners and increase student thinking.
- Enhance grading policies and practices across subject areas to consistently capture data that communicates student mastery and performance trends to track student progress and effectively inform instruction. (2.2)
 - The school uses teacher-made content area quarterly assessments in the middle school and administers mock Regents in the high school to monitor student progress. However, scholarship reports do not align with middle school summative assessment results nor do Regents pass rates in the high school, indicating that assessments and grading policies are not predictive or supportive of student performance. The school is beginning to use an online assessment tool in Social Studies to item analyze student strengths and areas for improvement and plans to expand this practice to the other three content areas. Consequently, limited feedback is provided to students and teachers regarding student

achievement, constraining their ability to adjust instruction to accelerate student performance

- While most teachers use some form of ongoing checks for understanding such as exit slips or questioning to assess the efficacy of their teaching, not all teachers engage students in self-assessment. Students report that not all classes utilize rubrics and in some classes rubrics are not presented until after the work product is complete, thereby preventing students from having the resources to guide their own learning outcomes.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

| School name: West Bronx Academy for the Future | 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 |