

# Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**Bronx Early College Academy for Teaching and  
Learning**

**Secondary School 324**

**250 E 164<sup>th</sup> Street  
Bronx  
NY 10456**

**Principal: Yvette E. Rivera**

**Dates of review: April 8-9, 2013  
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Evelyn W. Castro**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Bronx Early College Academy for Teaching and Learning is a secondary school with 529 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 24% Black, 63% Hispanic, 6% White, 4% American Indian and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 89%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school staff and leaders have created a rigorous curriculum aligned to key standards, which includes the arts and physical health to instruct across sections of learners resulting in positive student outcomes. (1.1)
  - Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and instructional shifts in literacy and math such as citing strong and thorough textual evidence or the focus on conceptual understanding are emphasized in curriculum planning documents. Because the secondary school seeks International Baccalaureate certification, it also aligns planning with IB's college and career readiness standards and practices. Lesson planning in every subject area is guided by a template called the Daily Routine for Unfolding Instruction (DRUI) which emphasizes higher order thinking and routines. Curriculum maps reviewed for integrated algebra, grade nine documented a unit on inequalities. The curriculum maps show the instructional shifts that help students extend their knowledge from equations to inequalities and learn new skills of equation manipulation. Additionally, in the English language arts unit for grade nine reviewed on writing, the curriculum map addresses the speaking, listening and writing standard through a study on Romeo and Juliet. The content and activities in the plans for Romeo and Juliet included multiple entry points for students to understand mood, motif, metaphor, simile and alliteration. In English language arts and social studies, unit tasks and rubrics show purposeful decision making to emphasize key standards such as finding the central idea. This clearly demonstrates how curriculum is aligned to the CCLS, geared to close the achievement gap and promote college and career readiness.
  - The school uses student work and data to plan curricula that provide opportunities for both lowest and highest achieving students to be involved in CCLS tasks and project based units of study in English language arts and mathematics. When working with plans, teachers, including special educators and enrichment teachers, discussed the refinement of an algebra task on solving equations with unknown in a manner that provided access for students with disabilities. Teachers stated that sharing best practices enables all students to better solve equations for the unknown. Moreover, the use of tangible items enhances the learning experience according to the teachers involved. Teachers used an inventory to help identify mastery skills relevant to success with math problem-solving and cognitive engagement and use the inventory throughout the school year to guide their plans for grouping. Team meetings revealed that curriculum and academic tasks are differentiated and revised by analyzing student work products so that a variety of learners including English language learners and students with disabilities are provided cognitively challenging work.
- The school analyzes information on student learning outcomes by using ongoing assessment and grading at team meetings to modify instructional plans at the classrooms level. (2.2)

- School leaders and coaches analyze and use school data including pre, post, and formative assessments in each subject. The assessments are both teacher made and commercial assessments. The assessments include: Acuity Periodic Assessments and item analysis, practice administration of the Regents exams in Algebra, English, Global History, and US History; Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests, Delta Math, Response to Intervention framework tasks, and Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI). SRI provides school wide data that is aligned to summative assessments and incremental student progress. This data analysis facilitates ongoing monitoring and tracking of individual student progress, as well as, that of student subgroups. Consequently, the use of students' periodic assessments provides actionable feedback for teachers. Targeted instruction has resulted in incremental growth for students with disabilities as evidenced in grade seven and grade eight English language arts data binders.
- Teachers use the Achievement Reporting and Innovation System (ARIS), Acuity and an online grade book to engage in data analyses. Additionally, teachers create tests and quizzes in order to review student progress, modify student goals, and change classroom groups to adjust the curriculum as needed. The results on mathematics assessments demonstrate that students are making steady progress in key standard areas as evidenced by a review of grade nine data binders.
- The school leadership and faculty have created an environment of transparency and mutual respect that enhances positive attitudes to support the academic and personal growth of students and adults. (1.4)
  - Systems and structures exist to ensure students are known by school staff. Communication between the principal, assistant principals, dean, coaches, parent coordinator, full-time director of college counseling, guidance counselors and the social worker is facilitated by Skedula, an online system where anecdotal notes are exchanged to support student needs. This team also meets regularly as do grade level teams to discuss student learning needs and supports. During student interviews students stated that they feel known and are always certain of exactly who to go to for guidance. This helps to create trusting relationships between staff and students that is supportive of student learning, thus impacting an increase in attendance and decreased suspensions.
  - Student learning experiences family outreach and professional development foster the adoption of effective behaviors aligned with college and career readiness. Each teacher identifies and shares the university they attended and then offer trips with their students and their parents to these colleges. Parents interviewed report that these college trips and discussions reinforce college aspirations. The International Baccalaureate Learner Profile is an integral part of the school's philosophy and is woven into classroom and leadership experiences, assessment practices and is also included in teacher/student/parent conferences. Moreover, students self-assess and peer assess one another. Students are recognized for demonstrating these behaviors. The Learner Profile components promote positive academic and personal behaviors such as: achievement, persistence and resiliency.

This has resulted in a 100% college acceptance rate for the entire 12<sup>th</sup> grade and first graduating class.

- The school uses a research based framework and a daily routine system to execute the observation process, and learning outcomes to elevate instructional practice and promote professional growth. (4.1)
  - School leaders maintain an instructional focus by giving actionable feedback to teachers after formal and informal observations. Observations occur on a regular schedule both weekly and monthly as evidenced by the observation schedule that was reviewed. School data reveals teachers generate a community goal leveraged by the Danielson Framework: Growing and developing professionally for teaching. All teachers share this goal and work at planning toward meeting that goal. Hence, new and senior teachers elevate practice with an embedded customized staff development plan.
  - Performance evaluation is part of an embedded system. Each grade of teachers has a plan for their subject. The Danielson Rubric is used as context for formal and informal observations. The school was part of the Danielson pilot and teacher observations were entered online. Professional growth, which includes teacher's development in competencies in areas of focus for the school. The areas of focus include questioning and classroom management and are aligned to the school goals for students. Teacher's professional growth and skill development has a direct impact on positive student outcomes as evidenced by the incremental progress on Kaplan, English language arts and math assessments given periodically to monitor growth in specific Common Core Learning Standards. Additionally, using a research-based common teaching framework encourages clear expectations, thus supporting teacher development.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Strengthen instructional practices across classrooms so that they are aligned to the curriculum, are engaging and provide multiple entry points to learning in order to produce high levels of student thinking and participation. (1.2)
  - While some class visits were demonstrative of successful use of multiple entry points during the lesson delivery, this was not evident in all classrooms. Differentiation in numerous classrooms is not yet evident resulting in fewer opportunities for higher order thinking skills in student work produced by English language learners and students with disabilities.
  - Some classrooms visited reflected excellent instructional practices. Examples of excellent instructional practices include charting and finding evidence to debate a characters thinking in a love poem. Student work products and discussions are uneven in regard to student thinking and participation. Even though students in some classrooms were able to use evidence and question each other regarding the topic of study on women's right to choose, questioning and discussion were less rigorous in other classrooms, reflecting less positive outcomes for student learning, thinking, and engagement.

- Deepen communication and processes regarding a coherent vision for school improvement that is reflected in data goals to better engage the entire school community. (3.1)
  - Interviews with staff provided insight that staff has been included in professional development, decision-making, and action planning. For example, staff leadership roles have been developed and filled as a result of this planning. The new roles developed include a coordinator of special education, academy and instructional coaches and a coordinator of cultural affairs. These positions have had a positive impact on student outcomes. However, goal setting for school improvement does not include all stakeholders in the school community, hindering school-wide improvement and full partnership with families.
  - Structures are in place to engage and inform parents, including a school newsletter for parents and the school leadership team. Parents stated in interviews that their active role in decision making in the school is expanding under the new leadership. In contrast, parents were also unsure of what specific context school goals regarding school improvement included within those goals. Thus, there is limited evidence that school leaders clearly communicate goals with the school community and parents regarding decision making and school improvement, resulting in communicative gaps between school stakeholders.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

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School name: Bronx Early College Academy for Teaching and Learning	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 <b>inquiry approach</b> 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