

# Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**The Bronx Mathematics Preparatory School**

**Middle School 375**

**456 White Plains Road  
Bronx, New York, 10473**

**Principal: Anya Munce-Jarrett**

**Dates of review: May 7- 8, 2013**

**Lead Reviewer: Claudette Essor**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Bronx Mathematics Preparatory School is a middle school with 302 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 34% Black, 62% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 25% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 90.0%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school has implemented coherent, standards based curricula that emphasize analytical thinking, leading to immersion of students in challenging tasks across content areas. (1.1)
  - In-depth curriculum maps reflect the selected standards, assessments, and related tasks that require high order thinking. Teachers report access to tasks from Engage New York and the Department of Education’s Common Core Library and regularly use Google docs to share Common Core aligned lesson units developed by educational experts from North Carolina and Georgia. Administrators promote the use of frameworks such as *Universal Design for Learning*, *Hess Rigor Matrix*, and *Understanding by Design* to detail what is to be taught in every classroom, with emphasis on rigor and sequential movement along a continuum of skills deemed essential to student mastery of curricula content and concepts. This includes readings from complex texts, leveled questions that ensure teachers focus on the Citywide instructional shifts, and effective questioning to advance higher order thinking by all students. Math curricula include tasks from *Think Through Math* and performance tasks from McGraw Hill, which are aligned to applicable Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). A lesson plan template with a section for grouping, differentiated activities, and scaffolds, ensures that teachers plan effectively for instruction that meets the needs of all students. For example, a math lesson plan evidenced the use of extensions such as vocabulary development aids, annotation of text from a magazine article, and explicit differentiation of tasks for groups of students to respond to the essential question, “How can we make inferences about a population using data from a random sample?” Similarly an English language arts lesson plan showed that students needed to analyze how “mood” is portrayed via “ tone, language and descriptions” by reading the play, *Twelve Angry Men*, discussing related academic vocabulary, assuming roles as witnesses, jurors, prosecutors or the judge, and citing evidence from the text to create and present a verdict to their peers. Thus all students, including students with disabilities and English language learners, receive instruction grounded in CCLS aligned curricula that transmits essential concepts across disciplines and includes rigorous tasks.
- The school’s focus on developing teacher pedagogy around effective questioning and consistent implementation of rigorous tasks has elevated student thinking, resulting in enhanced quality of student work products across classrooms. (1.2)
  - A school-wide focus on questioning and discussion as a pathway for students to demonstrate sound reasoning and higher order thinking skills, supports work products that highlight students’ ability to create arguments and cite evidence from texts, to defend their ideas and opinions. To that end, after reading several non-fiction texts, students completed an argumentative essay that addressed “Cyber Safety: Is the Internet safe for Middle School Students?” Additionally, lessons engage all students in challenging tasks and provide a range of entry points, via grouping and

choice of tasks that reflect deep teacher understanding of every student and promote ongoing re-evaluation of needs. For example, in a lesson from the unit, “The American Dream”, students had opportunities to establish a point of view, select characters of their choice, create dialogue, and produce an essay comparing Langston Hughes’ “*A Dream Deferred*” with deferred dreams of characters in “*Of Mice and Men*”. The task and rubric related to these activities offered all students multiple entry points to learning. The Socratic Seminar approach is utilized across grades and subjects, with students developing their own questions, reading up to four selections to complete a task, and consistently following a well-embedded protocol that allows all voices to be heard. Students demonstrated this in a science class where peers pretended to be judges at a science fair, listened to presentations of projects by others, used a rubric to rate the presentation, asked clarifying questions and offered suggestions to the presenters, with little or no input needed from the teacher. The use of exemplars in math offers students multiple opportunities to engage in high-level tasks that require them to solve complex problems and articulate, in writing, the steps that lead to their answers. English language learners receive push-in teacher support, teacher modeling, one-to-one conferencing, glossaries, and translations that allow them to participate in the same challenging assignments as English language proficient peers. As a result, all students demonstrate a deep understanding of content, via discussions and written work across all subjects and grades.

- The school’s nurturing environment includes adults who work collaboratively in implementing a variety of structures that effectively support the academic, social, and emotional growth of students and adults. (1.4)
  - An advisory program allows students to develop personal relationships with an adult who gets to know him or her very well and offers ongoing support. There are special mentors who are responsible for communicating achievements and concerns to family members, especially for the most at-risk students, including overage students, frequently absent students, and students with academic delays or behavioral problems. The school support and the Response to Intervention (RTI) teams work with students and families to develop individual attendance plans and monitor academic growth. The school also uses a computer program and Robot calls to give parents access to their children’s grades, homework, teacher comments, and daily attendance. Teachers are trained in research based strategies to support the school’s Positive Behavior Interventions Support (PBIS) program, managing classroom routines, addressing bullying and cyber bullying challenges, and using the school’s referral systems, discipline code, and behavior management tools such as detention and section sheets, holding students accountable for their behavior. School staff partners with community-based organizations such as Fordham University, The Leadership Program, Sports and Arts and Cooperative, Healthy, Active, Motivated and Positive Students (CHAMPS), to provide after-school and Saturday academic and social emotional learning programs that include enrichment sessions, homework help, dance, drama, track, double dutch and basketball. A special program builds social emotional skills for boys and all students are taught to use *HA HA SO* strategies to diffuse bullying attempts. Students are

also guided in examining survey data about violence in schools to increase their awareness of the importance of safe and acceptable conduct. A focus on college preparation rounds out the range of services that support students and adults in advancing academic achievement and social emotional learning. As a result, the number of principal suspensions has decreased significantly (a total of 26 from September 2012 to March 2013, compared to a total of 107 in 2011-2012), and there is an overall improvement in student performance, as evidenced by data from periodic and unit assessments in English language arts and math.

- School leaders utilize frequent observation and feedback cycles, linked to a research based teaching framework, that accurately capture the needs of teachers, leading to ongoing improvement in teacher pedagogy. (4.1)
  - The school has deeply embedded the use of the Danielson research based framework for teaching, into all aspects of instruction and teacher reflection. Frequent cycles of observation measure progress toward reaching pedagogic goals outlined in individual teacher improvement plans and teachers receive feedback that details next steps for improving instructional practice. School leaders continually analyze data and student work from observation cycles, to understand teacher skill and impact on student outcomes. Observations and comments are recorded via Google docs, and administrators follow up with data meetings with teachers and implementing lesson plan clinics, to insure teacher reflection on aspects of their instruction that must be further developed to advance student learning. Teachers are encouraged to monitor and assess the impact of their instruction, through feedback from observations, and this informs the implementation of additional suggested strategies and next steps. Administrators use frequent surveys and an observation tracker to monitor progress, gauge teacher feedback, and further define teachers' needs. Collegial walk-throughs, data conferences, and focused analysis of student work reinforce the connection between pedagogy and student progress. As a result, administrator feedback loops and systems continue to enhance teacher growth and development, leading to increased mastery of instructional competencies targeted by the Danielson framework, as evidenced by teacher reports and an analysis of data from observation reports.

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

- Refine assessment practices to improve the effectiveness of assessment tools in generating feedback that accurately reflects students' progress, leading to instructional adjustments that improve student achievement daily. (2.2)
  - Teachers consistently use formative assessments and gather data from formal and informal assessments, including unit tests, Acuity benchmarks, Developmental Reading Progress, Performance Series, Rally and Achieve 3000, to gauge student learning and adjust instructional practice as needed to effect growth in student progress. School leaders and teachers track progress and have clear methods of aligning data outcomes to instructional choices and curriculum development, to improve student achievement. Data is tracked and staff and students receive feedback on performance, via spreadsheets

showing gains in achievement, the Rally Score Keeper, Glow and Grow and Proficiency Reports. Portfolio assessment and exit slips offer additional insights about students' learning needs and informs adjustments to instruction and curriculum. Teachers use generic and task specific rubrics and students understand how to use them. However, reviews of students' notebooks, work folders, and work samples on bulletin boards, indicate a multi-tiered system for providing teacher feedback to students. At times there are checkmarks with comments, including next steps, while at other times the work shows number grades only, or rubric-based performance level scores with comments on post its. Thus while feedback is actionable, it does not always yield an accurate snapshot of students' progress towards mastery of content standards. As a result, there are missed opportunities to provide clear assessment information, thus adversely impacting planning to improve academic progress by all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities.

- Expand structures that communicate effective feedback about learning and offer supports for meeting high expectations for staff, students, and families, to ensure steady movement towards college and career readiness for all students. (3.4)
  - The principal articulates high expectations for all members of the school community, through faculty conferences, administrative bulletins, as well as individual and team discussions. Conference notes, unit and lesson plans, supervisor feedback, and student work products, all indicate that whatever a student's performance level, he or she is expected to advance by at least one performance level by the end of the school year. Skedula, the school's online communication and grading system, which teachers, parents, and students are able to access daily, holds them mutually accountable for meeting this expectation. Teachers receive comprehensive support from administrators, consultants, coaches, and network specialists, in building teacher effectiveness across competencies from the Danielson framework, with a deep focus on questioning skills, embedding technology in instruction and vocabulary development, to expand teacher capacity in offering high level, engaging instruction for all students. School leaders and teachers challenge students to meet high expectations for good conduct, perfect attendance, honor roll, citizenship, and college readiness, through counseling, college and career readiness talks, celebrations, assemblies, town hall meetings and incentives such as trips and breakfast with the principal. A professional development hallway, exemplar bulletin board, and motivational messages and commendations that flash all day on hallway television monitors, remind the entire school of high expectations for academic and social development. The parent coordinator works with school staff and the parent teacher association president to host events, which enable parents to learn about the school's academic expectations. However, with online systems such as Achievement Reporting and Innovation System (ARIS) and Skedula as the main tools for communicating detailed student performance data to families, many of whom lack computer literacy or English language proficiency, focused feedback on their children's progress towards goals does not reach all families. As a result, not all students benefit fully from a strong home-school partnership that is supportive of their efforts to meet and exceed the high expectations set for them.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: The Bronx Mathematics Preparatory School	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score			X				
<b>Instructional Core</b>							
<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				
<b>School Culture</b>							
<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				
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>							
<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				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed