

# Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**Bronx High School for the Visual Arts**

**High School 11X418**

**2040 ANTIN PL  
BRONX, NY, 10462**

**Principal: Gwendolyn Jones**

**Dates of Review: Apr 23-24, 2013  
Lead Reviewer: Carron Staple**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Bronx High School for the Visual Arts is a high school with 483 students from grades 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 29% Black, 63% Hispanic, 6% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 21% 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 87.8%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school is beginning to align curricula to state standards and create more challenging tasks across all subjects, in order to promote college and career readiness skills. (1.1)
  - All core departments have just begun revising their curricula for alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and are in the process of targeting key state standards. Curriculum maps reflect that teachers are beginning to collaboratively work together on content teams to revise units of study, resulting in some learning activities that include some differentiation through the use of choice, manipulatives and hands-on activities. The use of a few higher order tasks across all grades is beginning to emerge. For example, in one class, students were creating DNA models to determine if a police investigation had been conducted properly based on their understanding and analysis of DNA. As a result, some tasks and curricula are beginning to promote college and career readiness skills for some students.
- The school is developing the practice of using common assessments to measure student progress to determine intervention strategies that meet the needs of all students. (2.2)
  - The school is beginning to implement common assessments to assess students' learning needs across subject areas. For example, departments are using common quizzes and students are assigned to complete teacher designed projects across subject areas. In order to check for students' ongoing understanding, some teachers are using exit slips and a few use "Turn and Talk" to gauge students' learning needs. As a result, some teachers are starting to adjust their instruction in order to more effectively meet the needs of their students.
- The school provides a safe and caring learning environment, where all students are known, that supports social emotional development. (1.4)
  - Across the school students state that they feel they are known by the staff and can get support for their social and academic needs. For example, students in the 9th grade are supported with weekly advisory classes, and all students across the school engage in bi-monthly Town Hall meetings where they are encouraged to voice their opinions and concerns, and where academic progress, student achievement and character are recognized and celebrated. The Town Hall meetings provide students with an opportunity to receive information from their guidance counselors and advisors, as well as receive information about upcoming school events and priorities for their particular grade. As a result, students expressed feeling like a family and trusting the adults that work to support them with their personal and academic development.
  - Professional development is provided to staff and families around credit accumulation in addition to conflict mediation and dealing with peer pressure. Students expressed how appreciative they were of the numerous college trips and fairs the school has coordinated and feel they received sufficient information to make post-high school decisions to support academic and social behaviors for post secondary experiences.

## What the school needs to improve

- Implement a classroom observation tool that provides effective feedback to teachers and informs professional development needs to improve teacher pedagogy and elevate school-wide instructional practices. (4.1)
  - The feedback in observations does not give a clear picture of next steps for teacher development resulting in pedagogy that is not closely aligned with the school's expectations for instruction. The evaluation of instructional practice with alignment to student outcomes is mostly on a verbal basis resulting in limited ability for school leaders to effectively monitor teacher practice for professional growth that leads to improved student outcomes. In addition, there is no uniform evaluative tool or format that is shared by school leaders, thus the formal written feedback teachers receive varies in terms of commendations, recommendations, and next steps. For example, a review of observation reports reveals that some teachers receive feedback where the recommendation is contradictory to the commendation thus limiting the effectiveness to support school wide instructional goals or to inform professional development to promote teacher improvements. Consequently, teachers are receiving mixed messages on what should be improved, how to improve it and by when as memorialized in observation reports. As a result, the lack of specificity and uniformity of focus in feedback hinders the school's ability to move forward in providing professional development to support teacher's growth in implementing best practices across content areas in order to improve student performance.
  
- Develop systems for monitoring the effectiveness of the school's organizational and instructional decisions in response to students' learning needs, with attention to the expectations of the Common Core Learning standards. (5.1)
  - The school does not have a process in place to monitor, evaluate and adjust curricular, instructional and assessment processes to respond to student learning needs. For instance, the school has not conducted benchmarks to assess the effectiveness of courses for students who speak, read and write Spanish. This lack of monitoring of courses for students whose primary language is Spanish, results in limited opportunities for the administration to adjust course offerings. In addition, there is no system to evaluate the effectiveness of the structure for making school-wide decisions for the placement of students. For example, a major organizational focus is placed on 9th graders who are grouped by reading and math levels and have access to advisory classes, while students in grades 10 through 12 are not grouped according to level or need and do not have the benefits of having an advisory period. There are not school wide structures to gather and analyze uniform classroom observational data, to inform professional development needs to support teachers' professional growth. In addition, the school does not have a system to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher teams in order to analyze the impact of their work on designing challenging tasks aligned to student needs. The absence of systems to evaluate the effectiveness of curricula and instructional needs, teacher teams and professional development needs, limits opportunities for the school to use data to inform their decision making to target students' learning needs in order to increase student progress outcomes.

- Improve teaching practices to consistently support students at their entry points into the curricula and engage all students in high levels of thinking, in order to support rigorous classroom discussions and work products. (1.2)
  - Across classrooms pedagogical practices, lesson planning, scaffolding and questioning techniques do not consistently provide coherent targeted instruction for all students at their instructional levels. For instance, in most classrooms, instruction observed was primarily teacher-dominated with minimal time directed towards engaging students in rigorous work. The majority of the classes had students completing tasks from the same academic learner entry point, which did not take into account the various types of learners and their levels. The majority of questions were low-level recall questions that did not give students an opportunity to extend their thinking. Many of the questions posed to students resulted in one-two word responses that were choral or from an individual student. Some of the questions asked were, “How many years did he spend in prison?”, “Who are the three characters?” “Do you agree or disagree?” “Is he still alive?” Students in many classes spent a good deal of time copying notes from the chalkboard or SMARTboard and few teachers engaged students in higher-order tasks or thinking. For example, across classes, student discussion and participation was conducted as a whole class, with the student-to-teacher format of one student responding to basic recall questions, posed by the teacher. As a result the lack of challenging teaching strategies aligned to students’ learning needs, across all classes and subjects, limits opportunities for all learners to develop and apply high level of cognitive engagement as observed in classroom discussions and student work samples.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Bronx High School for the Visual Arts	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 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						
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed