

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Bronx Little School

Elementary

**1827 ARCHER STREET
BRONX
NY, 10460**

Principal: JANICE GORDON

**Dates of review: Dec 12, 2012
Lead Reviewer: Myrna Rodriguez**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Bronx Little School is a/an Elementary school with 296 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 19% Black, 64% Hispanic, 2 % White and 12% Asian students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 87%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is Proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Students benefit from a Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) aligned curricula emphasizing Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE) incorporating the Arts resulting in high levels of student engagement and achievement. (1.1)
 - The school provides teacher teams four additional common preps each week to facilitate planning of lessons in the new core standards embedded curricula in English, Math, Science and Social Studies. Each subject emphasizes the CIE shifts such as the increased use of nonfiction texts which results in improving student reading performance leading to career and college readiness. The classroom libraries have more non-fiction texts for students to choose for independent and home reading. As observed in most classrooms students were working with non-fiction texts, such as science, art or social studies content during literacy periods.
 - The school has 26% English language learners Ells and a large portion of transitional Ells. The school uses a whole school approach to address ELL student academic needs such as designating an assistant principal to oversee the professional development of all teachers in ELL strategies and to supervise new literacy and special education teacher support services and academic intervention services (SETTS/AIS) teachers who collaboratively work with general education teachers. The school uses ELL teaching strategies to augment academic vocabulary acquisition using informational texts and assign academic tasks that are aligned to the CCLS to assure that all students are engaged in high performing work and activities. Data shows an increase in student performance in reading, vocabulary and acuity assessments compared to last year's data.
- Across classrooms in all subject areas pedagogy is informed by a research based framework and set of beliefs about how students learn best which yields quality student work. (1.2)
 - Teachers share common beliefs of how students learn best which is evident across classrooms in terms of high level questioning, students working collaboratively, setting achievable goals for the class and individual students and providing time to practice new skills and reflect on learning. For example, students are reading for longer periods of time, alternating between fiction and non-fiction texts every day and they reflect on the reading in various ways, including using the Arts. Because of these shared beliefs grounded in the Danielson Framework, teachers are helping students achieve at higher academic levels which is evident in student work and student progress. Teachers have class and individual data for all students from the previous year and track student progress in reading, vocabulary acquisition using Fountas and Pinell a reading tracker and assessment program, acuity results, weekly vocabulary and reading tests.
 - Across classrooms students are engaged in accountable talk using a Socratic method for responding to each other when they partner and respond to questions or statements made by other students. Students use accountable talk and refer to text pages to dispute or agree with student statements or requests. I observed students asking probing questions of fellow students and restate questions and answers to clarify meaning.

Teachers scaffold tasks so that work products are produced with solid content gradually producing higher levels of work by including evaluation, analysis and synthesis as appropriate. Student conversations and work products demonstrate high levels of thinking and participation. Teachers prompt students to use depths of knowledge questions such as “how do you know-show me the evidence” or “how would you change “x” to make it stronger, and explain your thought process.” Students respond in full sentences using content vocabulary to clarify thoughts or inquire about peers’ thoughts and answers.

- The school leadership makes strategic organizational decisions to use its budget enhance professional development, and provide additional pedagogical staff to support the school's instructional goals to address all students' needs which results in improved academic and social behaviors. (1.3)
 - The school has partnered with the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) and has established a Teacher Center to provide professional development. Through this partnership teachers have a job-embedded professional site that is very well supported and attended. The new literacy coach and academic intervention teacher support both teachers and students in and outside of the center resulting in additional support that is evident in the quality of teacher practices and improved student performance. Teachers are very excited about this center, and spend more time on professional collaborations planning lessons based on researching web sites and videos for use in their teaching because of the resources available in this room and additional professional development personnel such as the literacy and math coaches. As a result of these collaborations in a risk free environment, teachers readily invite visitors to their classrooms to collaborate sharing best practices and improving teaching strategies.
 - The school supports teachers by scheduling four periods a week to grade teams to meet to develop lessons, tasks and assessments aligned to the CCLS. The school schedule also permits Teacher Peer Reviews to support teachers in reflecting on their own practice using a common framework which results in continual professional growth and improved student academic achievement. Teachers visit each other to observe how teachers engage students in challenging tasks and discuss new learnings in team meetings. They use these intervisitations to improve their strategies to help students with the new and demanding tasks aligned to the CCLS to meet student academic needs.
- Teachers align common assessments, reading and writing rubrics and grading policies analyzing the data to inform their work, adjusting curricula and instruction and providing actionable feedback to students which improve student work products. (2.2)
 - Across classrooms students self assess their work and routinely peer review culminating in high levels of student work. Across classrooms students use reading and writing rubrics to self assess, review and revise their own work and work of other students. Students are encouraged to use accountable talk when peer reviewing using the vocabulary and specific elements contained in the rubric. Teachers check for understanding in various ways including using hand signals, slates, and group presentations. As a result students understand that a lot of effort is needed to achieve high levels of thinking, speaking and producing work products and work to achieve levels of performance and student work products.

- Teachers create common assessments and meet weekly to share individual student results in order to analyze practices and next steps for each student through effective feedback. The school uses a tuning protocol that allows each teacher to reflect on pedagogy and resulting student work which improves their teaching practices and student performance. Each teacher shares a piece of student work with the team, and they ask probing and clarifying questions to guide the teacher to improve teaching practices using the evidence of what the student was able to produce. Teachers agreed that they were able to determine how they could guide individual and groups of students to accomplish higher levels of work through this tuning protocol, and have seen student improvement in subsequent assignments.

What the school needs to improve

- Further develop teacher teams to analyze teacher practices with regards to student engagement and learning particularly ELLs and SWDs and develop leadership structures to ensure that teachers have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning and school culture. (4.2)
 - Teachers engage weekly in team meetings to develop lessons to engage all students and the staff responsible for ELLs and SWDs join them periodically. However, in some classes the pedagogical strategies needed to develop vocabulary and other cognitive skills of these students is not evident and as a result students are not acquiring language at a rigorous pace thus not improving reading comprehension and writing at higher levels.
 - The school has teacher teams that are led by lead teachers chosen by the leadership. The teacher leaders have a voice in determining topics discussed and take responsibility for informing their colleagues of the content of discussions and decisions made. However, teachers are not fully engaged in key decision making such as technology curriculum. As a result, even though the school has the internal capacity for developing a rigorous and rich use of technology, teachers are not empowered to push this agenda.
- Strengthen the processes to regularly evaluate the quality of school culture, the ways expectations are developed and shared among all stakeholders including students, and the analysis and evaluation of the quality of practices across the school in terms of technology. (5.1)
 - The school has an inclusive culture and high levels of mutual self-respect. However the leadership and faculty do not have processes in place to evaluate the quality of school culture and the ways expectations are developed and shared among school constituents. In addition, there is a student council, but too few students are involved and the structure is in the developing stages. Teachers are aware that communication with parents should be enhanced through technology, and parents agree. As a result, missed opportunities to develop a rigorous curriculum embedding technology and a stronger student voice deter higher levels of academic and school culture development.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Bronx Little School	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