



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Quality Review
Office of School Quality
Division of Academics, Performance, and Support
2013-2014**

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Bushwick School for Social Justice

**High School 549
400 Irving Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11237**

Principal: Lucas Cooke

Dates of review: December 5 – 6, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Safiyah Satterwhite

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Bushwick School for Social Justice is a high school with 427 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 25% Black, 73% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 20% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 46% of the students enrolled and girls account for 54%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 80.2%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Instructional strategies reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson Framework and provides multiple entry points to the curriculum for all students as demonstrated in appropriately challenging tasks. (1.2)
 - With a centralized focus on the Danielson Framework for Teaching domain 3B, questioning and discussion, Bushwick School for Social Justice (BSSJ) believes that students learn best when students are engaged in meaningful work designed to build critical thinking skills, one allows for productive struggle, and teachers promote the sharing of ideas. The part of this belief focused on student thinking has been a primary lever for the school in ensuring that a coherent philosophy is present. Across classrooms students participate predominately in group work that supports topics relevant to their life experiences and encourages the discussion of social justice. The schools theme is threaded throughout the lessons as students for example work on projects using the text *Animal Farm* and teachers consistently demonstrated intentionality around the implementation of making thinking visible, a research based strategy learned by the staff. During group work students are both homogenously and heterogeneously grouped based on their needs and they work together to produce group work that they could articulate. English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs) are provided access to the same curricular materials and teachers implemented strategies to support their learning. Questions asked by teachers contained scaffolds, graphic organizers, and visual supports were available, books are recorded ahead of time on iPADS, some teachers chunked the curriculum to encourage student sub-groups access to content heavy material, and documents were additionally translated for students in need of bi-lingual support. These strategies and foci around supporting the needs of student subgroups has resulted in an increase in SWD's Regent pass rates and supports the schools assurance and promotion of access.
- The school builds an inclusive culture whereby all students are known by at least one adult resulting in a safe environment, personalized supports, and a culture conducive to student learning. (1.4)
 - Parent and student testimony is a large indicator of BSSJ's approach to being inclusive of student voice as well as ensuring that students are educated in a safe school environment. The school has a student government in place that works directly with school leaders on planning activities, spearheading functions and speaking impacting plans for the school. The school's after-school clubs, ranging from knitting and dance to the Black and Latino Alliance (Blatino) and Queer Straight Alliance (QSA), hold forums, plan school pride week, and serve as avenues to vocalize student opinion and showcase talents. The schools advisory program has additionally been instrumental in ensuring that not only are students' voices included in the school culture but also that students are well known, and supported. Every teacher is responsible for an advisory period where students gather and are instructed with lessons centered on

life skills, attendance supports, and general student success is inquired about. Research based (Conley's) college level skills are used as a foundation to build the schools personal and academic skills approach. For example, all teachers that teach an advisory period focus on ensuring that students receive support and instruction on problem solving, perseverance, independence, self-awareness, conflict resolution, communication, stress management, collaboration, and time management, to support the building of student academic behaviors for success. With a student-teacher advisory ratio of 16:1, students not only receive personal attention but also additionally have a grade-level guidance counselor assigned that seeks to support and guide students through the college preparation process. These systems have resulted in a safe school culture and have been validated by the school survey revealing a higher than the City average rating in the areas of school environment.

- Additionally, based on concerns with attendance the school has encountered, the school's staff has worked to secure a grant to address the issue intensively. This year a grant has been awarded to the school to work with St. Nicholas Neighborhood Alliance, in which the alliance will allocate a full time person to work with the school on addressing the needs of Long term Absentees. Peer mentors have also been implemented whereby students work with other students to identify attendance concerns, and parent participation and volunteering has been started to assist with personalized phone calls to families. These strategies are implemented in addition to Global Connect, the automated phone call system. Lastly, VOLS (Volunteer legal services) meets once a month with families to provide immigration, housing, and other supports that may result in students not coming to school. These strategies that work hand-in-hand to support the school's goal to increase attendance by 3%, has already yielded a 2% increase to date.
- Goal setting at the school level comprised of a short list of focused goals derived from data and tracked to determine progress results in a coherent vision. (3.1)
 - The school has established a variety of academic goals grounded in data analysis that has informed decision-making. One of the most impactful and insistent goals focuses on the improvement of the school's attendance and graduation rate. Based on the inter-dependence of these two outputs, the school has determined to approach these goals synonymously. Tracking of these goals has been a collaborative effort amongst the staff, the newly constructed attendance committee, but most importantly the guidance department. With this goal in mind, weekly reports have been applied and required by administration containing updates on student status, tracking charts have been designed and displayed in the principal's office, and school staff demonstrate clarity on the schools goals by speaking to where to locate the data as needed. Mechanisms such as home visits have been spearheaded and parent communication has increased. As mentioned the school has seen success since last year in the area of attendance and scholarship data have revealed greater pass rates in alignment with college readiness.
 - An additional goal established by the school is one around the Danielson Framework, specifically 3B (using question and discussion techniques).

The school leaders track teacher observation data and use the data to identify needs across the instructional school body. The observation data last year revealed a need to have this focus and therefore professional development efforts have been centered on these techniques.

Observation data is gathered on an ongoing basis as a means of tracking teacher practice improvement and to plan for the future. This support for teachers has resulted in improved teacher practices and more focused support to enhance teacher growth.

- Leadership structures are embedded in a culture that provides teachers with collaborative opportunities and to be involved in making key decisions that affect student learning and further increase achievement for all learners. (4.2)
 - The school's teamwork comprised of a cyclical process amongst the instructional staff includes norming grading processes, planning instructional practices, conducting inter-classroom visits, debriefing, and communicating school wide recommendations to the instructional cabinet for decision-making. This process of professional collaborations has strengthened the instructional capacity of teachers as evidenced by teacher evaluation data and the schools observation tracker. As the school organizational structure is collaborative, and due to its small size, many teachers hold leadership positions and are the primary voice in making decisions that affect their department. Scheduling accommodations by administration are made so that teachers are provided opportunities to observe one another to receive feedback on their instructional practices as well as learn from one another and share best practices. For example one of the teachers wanted to make a classroom review more student-centered. Therefore, she brought the idea to the team, using a dilemma protocol, and the team assisted in developing a concept map lesson plan and strengthening the scaffolding of strategies to support students in developing a concept map. Based on the sharing of these practices teachers have implemented activities such as 'fish bowl' and student led Socratic seminar, which have improved student writing in making connections to evidence and providing greater detail in writing skills. Furthermore, embedded teacher teamwork practices consisting of analyzing student work, identifying missing skills and understanding, and ascertaining gaps in student learning between the intended outcomes and actual outcomes, are part of the norm of their work. Once identified, teachers hypothesize as to why gaps occur. and instructional practices and curriculum are modified accordingly. This work, per observation data, has strengthened the instructional practices of teachers.

What the school needs to improve

- Further the planning and modification of curricula to strengthen coherence and ensure access to rigorous tasks for all learners that result in the promotion of college and career readiness and student cognitive engagement. (1.1)
 - Bushwick School for Social Justice implements a teacher created curriculum, whereby teachers come together on a frequent basis to plan Common Core aligned units and infuse the school's mission of social justice. With interdisciplinary learning at the heart of the schools

program, teachers design units that are not only relevant to students life experiences, but ones that incorporate the instructional shifts and support the demands of preparing students for college and career readiness. The school offers a variety of courses including a senior capstone course centered on preparing students to write at the college level, Economics, Social Justice, and others. The cycle of inquiry established by the school embodies a structure that requires teachers to review student work, implement instructional strategies, re-review student work, and make recommendations for curricula modifications to the instructional cabinet. Early release times on Wednesdays are specifically allocated for the instructional cabinet to make necessary curricular adjustments. Students have ample opportunities to engage in multi-lingual curricular documents intended to provide them with multiple avenues of access. As teachers reflect on rubrics designed, with a focus on English language learners and students with disabilities, due to the small population at BSSJ, curriculum is personalized. To promote college and career readiness the school has recently embarked on an instructional strategy to build thinking skills in students, labeled Making Thinking Visible. The curricula reflect this recent focus in the units that are designed and mapped backwards from twelfth grade CCLS expectations. Conley's works on college level skills are used as a research based document to determine rigor. To meet the demands of the instructional shifts, non-fiction texts have been incorporated into the curriculum in all subjects and activities foster the call for students to use evidence to support their claims. Although these supports have promoted college and career readiness for all students as well as provided sub-groups with access, they have not yet resulted in coherence with regard to curricula design. Furthermore, while there is evidence of embedded strategies to engage students, a focus on strengthening higher order skills and rigor is not yet fully evident. The absence of this precludes ELL, SWD, lowest and highest achieving students from engaging in opportunities to demonstrate thinking.

- Strengthen instructional assessment practices to ensure that across classrooms teacher practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment to meet the needs of all learners. (2.2)
 - Across classrooms teachers create common assessments and rubrics that are aligned to the curriculum in the form of performance tasks and, in collaboration with in classroom assessments, used to provide students with actionable feedback. Although these tasks are aligned to the schools grading policy and administered in every subject, they do not provide a comprehensive picture of how students are concretely performing against specific Common Core Learning Standards and thereby impede efforts to create a clear picture of student progress and mastery across grades.
 - In classrooms, teacher pedagogy reflects an intentional planning of project based group work and end-of-class assessments such as exit tickets and reflection forms. Yet in general, classroom practices reflected inconsistent practices of on-going checks for understanding and student self-assessment resulting in the inability to make effective in-the-moment adjustments to meet students' learning needs.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Bushwick School for Social Justice	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 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards?			X				
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the 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 supports 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 those expectations?			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 student 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 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection?			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