

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

East Bronx Academy for the Future

Middle-High School 271

**1716 SOUTHERN BOULEVARD
BRONX, NY
10460**

Principal: SARAH SCROGIN

Dates of review: Nov 21 - 22, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Mimi Fortunato

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

East Bronx Academy for the Future is a middle-high School with 628 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 28% Black, 69% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 23% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 85.7%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal's effective use of budget, scheduling, and teacher time, is aligned with the school's instructional goals to promote teacher development and engage students in meaningful work. (1.3)
 - Budgetary allocations are used to provide ongoing one-to-one teacher coaching through the establishment of two United Federation of Teachers' (UFT) lead teacher positions, and the hiring of two part-time coaches who facilitate teacher team meetings and job-embedded professional development for teachers. In addition, funds for substitute teachers allow for coverage when teachers attend off-site professional development. Early release half-days are strategically scheduled to support the Achievement Network (A-Net) and high school data cycle. Funded partnerships with Teachers College Reading and Writing program (TCRWP) provide middle school interim assessments, and the A-Net supports teacher professional development in data analysis. Participation in the i-Zone, Connected Learning, and the Expanded Success Initiative (ESI) further builds teacher capacity to plan for rigorous learning experiences that engage students in the creation of meaningful work products.
 - A thoughtfully developed instructional schedule provides for a broad range of teacher team meeting time, including time for daily common planning. Grade-level teacher teams meet three times each week for 'Kid Talk', 'Teacher Talk', and 'Team Talk' where teachers use protocols to track student progress, assess lessons, unit plans, and performance tasks, determine text complexity of reading materials, and refine interim assessments. Content area teacher teams meet once per week, review work products, identify learning gaps, and plan for re-teaching of skills not yet mastered. The lead teachers, part-time coaches, and instructional specialists from the New Visions Network support teacher team capacity building. As a result, teachers plan rigorous Common Core aligned units in each core content area, building instructional practice to engage students in higher order thinking and productive struggle.
- School leaders use data from frequent observation of instructional practice to make informed decisions regarding professional development that supports teacher reflection and growth. (4.1)
 - All members of the instructional leadership team, including the principal, assistant principal, coaches, and lead teachers, conduct or participate in weekly informal observations of teachers utilizing the Danielson Framework. Interim course assessment data is analyzed along with classroom observation notes to identify teacher's next steps, which are provided in written formative, actionable, and time-bound feedback. In addition, teachers self-assess and set goals based on the Danielson Framework. The principal and assistant principals then review these goals, provide effective feedback following observations, and plan for suitable support so that teachers can revise their goals. For example, if a teacher is not using formative assessment in instruction, the coach will provide specific recommendations via weekly email exchanges following informal classroom visits by administrators about how to incorporate a task specific rubric or progression to gain a clear understanding of where a student's progress falls along the

continuum of skill mastery. These practices of frequent cycles of observation and ongoing feedback regarding next steps support the development of teachers, including those new to the profession or to the school. (a)

- The implementation of frequent observation and feedback cycles allows for collection of data to plan for job-embedded professional development that supports individual teachers as needed. A coach, who is also a member of the instructional leadership team, is assigned to and meets with identified teachers once a week and visits those teachers' classrooms weekly. School leaders utilize T-Eval, an online teacher evaluation tracking and management system, to systematically maintain all observation and feedback data, and use data from observations to thoughtfully plan both school-wide and individual professional development. An example of this is the school-wide focus on the use of East Bronx Academy "STARTS" and "STOPS", where the instructional team has identified practices that support or hinder improved student mastery. School leaders administer an internal teacher survey annually and analyze its results to adjust scheduling, determine areas of professional development needs, make teacher assignments, ensure retention of effective teachers, and support the development of future school leaders. For example, a former assistant principal is now a school principal, the current assistant principal of instruction was a LEAP intern during 2011-2012, and the current assistant principal of organization was a founding teacher.
- Teachers engage in inquiry-based professional collaboration that promotes shared leadership and the refinement of pedagogy, leading to improvements in adult and student learning. (4.2)
 - Teachers participate in grade level and content-based teams weekly and engage in structured inquiry-based collaborations using a protocol to analyze interim assessments relative to the Common Core Learning Standards, identify what students did not learn, and develop strategies for re-teaching these standards. Teachers collaboratively plan for both full class and small group re-teaching, targeting students identified as in need of support. For example, teachers across grades 6 through 10 use a Teachers College Reading Writing Progression checklist for informative writing, building coherence school-wide on expectations for students' level of mastery in writing. This school-wide commitment to professional collaboration in building coherence in aligning instruction to Common Core Learning Standards continually improves instructional practice.
 - Teachers lead professional collaborations in roles such as UFT lead teachers or grade level leads, and engage in instructional decision-making and in planning for professional development. Protocols used during grade-level and content-team meetings support focused analysis of student work products, interim assessment data, and summative data from Regents and NYS English language arts and math assessments. Teacher leaders facilitate grade and content team meetings, and meet with the principal and assistant principal after school weekly to share data from classroom observations and to debrief the progress of their teacher teams. At these meetings, the teacher leaders share in the collaborative analysis of school-wide data to discuss strategies for moving groups of students and to ensure coherence in next steps for professional development in building teacher capacity to implement identified instructional practices. These embedded structures for teacher collaboration have resulted in teachers assuming responsibility of their professional growth, and in building teacher capacity to support the growth of colleagues as well.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that academic tasks embedded in curriculum and unit maps are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and consistently provide appropriate supports and extensions for all students to develop higher-order skills. (1.1)
 - The instructional team has collaborated with the Teachers and Writers Reading and Writing Project in ongoing curricula development. However, planned tasks are not always aligned to Common Core Learning Standards, and units of study and lesson plans do not always integrate the higher order thinking questions and skills that promote college and career readiness. For example, a seventh grade English language arts unit of study engaged students in Depth of Knowledge level three and four activities by asking students to support their ideas with details to identify research questions for their research topics, and to determine an author's purpose and how it affects a reader's interpretation of information. However, a global studies lesson "brain starter" in an integrated co-teaching class asked students to respond to ten true or false statements such as, "Muslims pray five times a day", and "Muslims don't eat pork." As a result of this inconsistent planning for higher order thinking activities, there is a lack of coherence in the integration of the Common Learning Standards and instructional shifts and in providing access to the rigorous academic tasks that promote college and career readiness for all students.
 - Teacher content and grade level teams meet regularly to revise curricula maps and plan units of study, lesson plans, tasks, summative assessments, activities and rigorous tasks aligned with the Common Core Learning Standards. However, a review of curricula maps, unit plans, and lesson plans provided evidence of limited planning of scaffolds or multiple entry points for English language learners and student with disabilities. For example, an ELA teacher's lesson plan outlined specific teaching strategies such as conferencing and re-teaching the skill of selecting evidence to support a position in an argumentative essay. However, an algebra lesson plan for a class of students with disabilities expected students to complete a worksheet of twenty similar problems without scaffolds or alternate tasks provided for the diverse learners in the class. As a result, there are limited opportunities for access to tasks that are academically rigorous and that build higher order thinking skills and cognitively engage all students, thus impacting the school's capacity to close the achievement gap for English language learners and students with disabilities.
- Strengthen pedagogical practice across grades and subjects so that lessons include multiple entry points for all students to ensure that diverse learners demonstrate critical thinking and high levels of participation. (1.2)
 - School leaders have developed a shared set of expectations regarding the essential elements of a lesson that include a brain starter, mini lesson, independent or group practice with opportunities for student engagement in appropriately challenging tasks, and a lesson summary, along with frequent checks for understanding and supports for diverse learners. However, this lesson model is not implemented in a consistent manner across classrooms visited. In the majority of classes observed, all students in the classes were assigned the same task to complete. In a living environment class, students were expected to complete a worksheet by selecting words from a box at the top of the page and filling in the blanks to complete sentences. In a global studies class, students were asked to summarize paragraphs of a low-level text. Although teachers were

observed checking in with students during independent or group practice, there was limited evidence of strategic grouping or the use of scaffolds to ensure access for all learners. This resulted in inconsistent teaching strategies to allow for student engagement, with a number of students observed not able to demonstrate mastery of learning objectives.

- In a visit to an advanced placement participation and government class, students were expected to write a blog post arguing how effective an interest group has been in influencing a United States government action. Students were observed creating original written blogs, posting these on the school blog, and using a checklist to self- and peer-assess. In an integrated algebra class, students were observed working in groups to build equations for geometric sequences and map connections within sequences. However, in the majority of classrooms visited, the assigned task was not differentiated, and there were limited scaffolds used to support the diverse learners in the group. For example, in a global studies class, some students were unclear as to the expectations of the task that followed the mini-lesson, while students who had completed the low-level task of summarizing a paragraph waited for next steps. In most classrooms, full class discussion was limited to call and response, with a small number of students answering teacher-generated questions. The result is that students are not consistently engaged in tasks that provide opportunities for higher-level thinking and meaningful levels of participation in rich discussion.
- Improve teacher practice in the analysis and use of data from summative assessments as well as daily checks for understanding to inform effective and timely instructional adjustments that meet all students' learning needs. (2.2)
 - Teachers collaboratively develop course grading policies, and common interim as well as summative assessments. In grades 6 through 8, teachers administer Achievement Network (A-Net) assessments in English language arts and math, and develop in-house science and social studies assessments. In high school courses that culminate in a New York State Regents, teachers create Regents-based assessments using questions from previous Regents. A-Net provides assessments, scoring and professional development to support teacher teams in analyzing results and developing instructional plans for re-teaching for targeted groups of students. However, teachers participating in a grade-level teacher team meeting were unable to share an understanding of where individual student performance was on the continuum of skill development, and they could not articulate next instructional steps that might move large groups of students to mastery. Students shared that they are not always clear regarding task expectations, assessment outcomes, or next steps needed for improvement. As a result, the loose alignment of outcomes from formative and summative assessments to curricula revision limits the development of effective feedback that might be used in understanding and planning for next steps.
 - School leaders expect that teacher lesson plans reflect embedded checks for understanding, and this was evident in a review of most lesson plans. For example, a global studies plan called for the teacher to identify which students had not yet mastered the expected skill during independent work time, and to re-teach it during the lesson or in the next lesson. However, teacher practice observed during classroom visits provided limited evidence of ongoing checks for understanding, with few teachers noting formative assessment data or making real-time instructional adjustments. As a result, teacher instructional strategies to meet the needs of all students on a daily basis are inconsistent, hindering student progress towards skill mastery.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: East Bronx Academy for the Future	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	