

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

**Bronx Early College Academy for Teaching & Learning
School**

**250 East 164 Street
Bronx
NY 10456**

Principal: Yvette Rivera

Dates of review: Jan 14-15 2014

Lead Reviewer: Carron Staple

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Bronx Early College Academy for Teaching & Learning is a secondary school with 508 students from 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 32% Black, 64% Hispanic, 1% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 10% English Language Learners and 17% students with disabilities. Boys account for 50.0% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50.0%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012-2013 was 90.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school effectively aligns curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and instructional shifts, with rigorous tasks to prepare all students with post-secondary skills. (1.1)
 - School leaders and teachers place a major focus on aligning the curriculum and performance tasks to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and the International Baccalaureate (IB) program components, as evidenced by their unit planning. All teachers have created common core aligned scope and sequence documents and curriculum maps for their discipline with content vocabulary to support understandings and units of study that culminate in criterion-referenced assessments. The curriculum provides increased opportunities for students to write and engage with non-fiction text, in which they must formulate claims and support them with text based evidence. Culminating tasks are open-ended and designed for students to demonstrate their understanding of significant concepts and overarching unit questions, resulting in many students being able to participate in higher levels of thinking and produce work products that demonstrate mastery. As a result of the CCLS aligned curriculum, students are engaged in content standards that prepares them with college and career readiness skills.
 - Through a data-informed needs assessment, the principal and school leaders are determined to target literacy across all grades to improve academic outcomes, including students who are below grade level in reading and writing. Grade teams use common planning time and professional development opportunities to hone in on literacy skills, analyzing student work from performance tasks with the use of protocols. The results of their analyses include the refinement of tasks to better support subgroups of students and targeted students who need additional support. Increased pass rates are evident for English Language Learners and struggling readers, and there is an overall increase in time spent on literacy across the school.
- The school works collaboratively as a unified team to create a safe, respectful, and caring environment where all students are provided with structures that support academic achievement and personal growth. (1.4)
 - The IB Learner profile is at the philosophical heart of what the school wants students to become. This profile is reflected in the significant changes made to improve school culture by improving positive behavior intervention strategies (PBIS) that include frequent student recognition for appropriate behaviors and the addition of more clubs and activities. Students are engaged in after-school tutoring in all subjects to support their success so they can accumulate credits and pass high stakes exams. They also participate in extracurricular clubs that promote social-emotional growth and take care of each other. For example, the middle school students discussed how the

upperclassmen in the high school helped them when they first arrived to the school, by giving them tours, introducing them to the staff and students, as well as tutoring and mentoring them. The students speak of each other and of their teachers like family, which strongly impacts how they feel about the school. The principal has weekly communication with staff, parents and students via Bronx Early College Academy (BECA) Broadcast. School Messenger which is one of the ways the school keeps families informed of students' daily attendance the online grading system Skedula, which keeps parents aware of students' academic performance along with Family Day and Parent Appreciation day are also some ways in which the school brings families and the school community together to build a strong culture of respect for diversity. Students and parents expressed their appreciation of the school's approach to discipline and keeping the school environment safe, the celebration of students, and the fact that they are provided with an education that prepares them for college and careers. Both parents and students stated that the school has an open door policy where everyone has a voice. There is a student government that meets regularly with the principal to act as the united "voice" of the entire student body. Each officer has a role and is required to maintain excellent attendance and grades to continue holding office. Students discussed that the principal has an open door policy and that all adults in the building spend so much time with them that their voices are regularly being heard, whether it's about a club they want to start, a way to get involved in community service, or to discuss their emotional or academic needs. They also discussed that teachers and support staff are very supportive and communicate regularly to keep them informed, which makes them feel respected by adults. They also state that they have multiple people to help them if they seek guidance for social-emotional issues and/or academic support such as guidance counselors, deans and college advisory support staff. Consequently, the work the school is doing to promote a positive college-going culture where all students feel included, valued and supported, is positively impacting students as seen in increased percentages on the learning environment survey and the 94% graduation rate of its first high school cohort.

- The school uses common formative, interim and summative assessment data, including daily ongoing checks for understanding, to analyze student performance, target instruction, and apprise students of next learning steps. (2.2)
 - Teachers create common culminating assessment tasks for each unit that provides further opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning in an authentic situation. Teachers ask the following four questions when crafting assessments: "What will constitute acceptable evidence of understanding?", "How will students show that they have engaged with the unit question and significant concept?", "How will students demonstrate mastery of instructional outcomes as defined by targeted Common Core Learning Standards?", "How will students show what they understand about the significant concept or big idea?" Teachers use these 4 important questions to build a picture of where each student sits on the level of achievement grid and track progress daily. When assessing a

student's work teachers read the level descriptors for each criterion, starting with level 0 until they reach one of the four descriptors that describe the level of achievement that has been reached. Teachers do not think in terms of pass or fail boundaries, but concentrate on identifying the appropriate descriptors for each assessment. For example, in ELA, teachers look for how well a student can understand and analyze language, content, structure, meaning and significance of both familiar and unfamiliar text, compare and contrast themes across genres, analyze the effect of author's choice on an audience, express independent responses to fiction and non-fiction text, and apply language and literary terminology in context as evidenced by their work products. The principal ensured that baseline assessments were administered at the beginning of the school year. Teachers analyzed the data, looked for trends that hinder students from progressing, and worked collaboratively to create strategies for students that will help to close the achievement gap. When looking at Regents data, teachers engage in item analysis to inform their instruction, and in some cases revise the pacing guide or units of study as needed. When looking at student assessments, teachers examine where students struggle and reflect on whether it has to do with teacher practice or students' lack of understanding, which may require re-teaching. Students have rubrics that guide them in completing performance tasks and engage in reflection, peer assessment and self-assessment. There is a school-wide grading policy and an online grading system where students and their families are able to view assessment grades and track progress. Rubrics are used to assess achievement levels and students are asked to do peer assessment, as well as reflect upon their own work using the rubric criteria. Teachers were also observed engaging in a variety of ways to check the understanding of their students, such as turn and talk, Socratic seminar discussions, thumbs-up and down, teacher questions, students summarizing, journal entry writing and exit tickets.

- The observation process is grounded in the Danielson framework, provides quick actionable feedback, and allows for the implementation of effective instructional techniques and professional development to improve practice. (4.1)
 - The principal and her leadership team support teacher practice by providing timely feedback that captures strengths, areas that require development, and next steps for improvement that are aligned to the school's core beliefs about teaching and learning and the observable Danielson competencies in domains two and three. A review of the feedback uploaded on ADVANCE, the Department of Education (DOE) teacher effectiveness system to monitor teacher's professional growth, shows evidence that school leaders provide a common language around expectations of student work, with further feedback pushing teachers to self-assess for reflection and to gain better understanding around the alignment between the professional goals they set and their current level of practice. As part of the school's professional development plan, teachers are required to set goals at the beginning of the school year, this in conjunction with the post-observation feedback discussed with teachers by school leadership is used to inform what topics the school offers for

professional development. After professional development sessions, teachers receive a template where they write about their strengths and areas they need to work on that are aligned to the Danielson Framework. They also write about the support they need in order to grow and become more effective, as well as the professional achievements they have accomplished, as a result of the school's professional development sessions, classroom intervisitations and inquiry work with colleagues. This reflective practice, coupled with weekly professional development around targeted Danielson competencies and analysis of student work products, helps to inform the selection of areas for professional growth. As a result, teachers are modifying their planning for better execution of instruction, and revising the tasks and strategies they create for students to improve the quality of work products submitted in order to increase overall student achievement.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine teaching practices so teachers strategically develop and scaffold to higher-level questions that push student thinking in order to support better engagement and work products.(1.2)
 - While professional development is aligned to Danielson's core domains, with specific foci on questioning and engagement, not all teachers engage students in higher-order thinking through questioning and writing tasks. Teachers scaffold activities so that learners who struggle can have access to content and skill development from their instructional levels. However, accountable talk, student-to-student discussion, purposeful group collaboration, and extended writing and discussion responses are uneven and inconsistent across grades 6-12. For example, in one middle school ELA class, the teacher expertly ensured every student was called on and engaged in the lesson. Students went to the board, explained their thinking to their peers and had a rich discussion that was facilitated by the teacher. However, on the high school level, there were classes where not every student appeared engaged, and where teachers only called on the students who raised their hands. Additionally, the questioning on the middle school level always resulted in deep thinking and responses that demonstrated students engaging in critical thinking and writing. Yet, on the high school level, questioning in some classes were on the lower end of Bloom's Taxonomy, resulting in limited responses, and not much room for extended thinking. As a result, not all learners are being pushed to think and write at high levels, and self-guided inquiry is limited as evidenced from student discourse and student work products.
- Develop data-based systems to inform school-wide professional development needs to support best instructional practices in alignment with the CCLS to promote college and career readiness skills. (5.1)
 - Although school leaders regularly observe teachers' classroom practice and provide feedback, there is no school wide structure in place to track and evaluate observation data around the entire trend

of teacher practice, to inform school wide needs and strengthen professional practice. School leaders have a schedule for when they will observe teachers and provide feedback, but there is no spreadsheet or tracking device to show evidence of teacher improvements. For example, a teacher moving from a rating of developing to a rating of effective throughout the 22 competencies is not being tracked and analyzed as a total comprehensive unit. Therefore, although the professional development is targeted to improve teacher practice, the monitoring of how each teacher performs and improves throughout the school year via the four domains is not clearly articulated through an analysis of school wide classroom observation data for all school leaders to see, thus limiting some opportunities to inform the professional development options needed for teachers school wide, that are in alignment with the CCLS, in order to build effective instructional practices and expectations of the International Baccalaureate program that prepares students for college and careers.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Bronx Early College Academy for Teaching & Learning					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	