

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Celia Cruz Bronx High School of Music

High School 10X442

**2780 RESERVOIR AVENUE
BRONX
NY, 10468**

Principal: Jerrod Mabry

**Dates of review: Mar 3-4, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Deena Abu-Lughod**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Celia Cruz Bronx High School of Music is a High School with 436 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 26% Black, 69% Hispanic, 2% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 38% of the students enrolled and girls account for 62%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 89.4%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Teacher pedagogy aligns to the school's beliefs about learning, ensuring teaching strategies that promote discussions so that all students have frequent opportunities to engage in rigorous learning experiences. (1.2)
 - Classroom practices reflect the school's goal of aligning pedagogy to the expectations of the Danielson Framework for Teaching, including a commitment to engaging students in rigorous performance tasks in academics and music. The school's instructional focus on using evidence to support an argument in speaking and writing is embedded in social studies and English instruction, where teachers have regularly engaged students in close reading and annotating text to build comprehension. This practice has now extended to mathematics, which has increased students' precision and accuracy in their responses to math problems and helped them to justify their thinking. In addition, humanities teachers incorporate Socratic seminars, during which students make use of multiple annotated texts to discuss controversial topics and questions such as, "Did Abraham Lincoln abuse his power?" and "Should governments engage in censorship?" Timely interventions by skilled faculty members ensure that students support their arguments with evidence and push them to consider the implications of their positions beyond the particular circumstances. All students take two music performance courses daily, where they uniformly demonstrate intense focus on the tasks, fully owning the experience knowing, as one student said, "we must work together to make our ensemble the very best possible." Classroom instruction across the school typically involves teacher use of technology, as well as graphic organizers and visual aids to scaffold learning. In addition, the resource room and the English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher push in to classes that have larger numbers of high needs students to provide small group support, and they support teachers in identifying strategies that meet the needs of these students during times when they themselves cannot be present. As a result, most students have opportunities to engage in tasks at appropriate levels of challenge.
- Resources are strategically aligned to support the school's goals and engage students in meaningful artistic and academic learning opportunities that lead to college and career readiness. (1.3)
 - The school has made excellent use of existing resources and enhanced relations with existing partnerships to support its goals. Partnerships with Exploring the Arts and with Lehman College provide students with access to university life, including instruction in professional rehearsal halls and multiple opportunities to perfect their craft by performing publicly and attending master classes in the city and out of town venues. To ensure students and faculty have access to sufficient technology for testing, the principal connected the school's aging stock of 60 computers to a low-cost server-based system called Neverwear. Additionally, each classroom has an iMac computer connected to a whiteboard to enhance instruction. In addition, he redirected significant funds during the second term last year towards student needs, targeting support to seniors through PM school for those still in need of passing Regents exams and credit recovery programs for those needing to pass courses to graduate.

These decisions led to a 12 percentage point increase in the graduation rate, from 77% in 2012 to 89% in 2013. At the same time, higher performing students accessed College Now courses and other enrichment activities to round out their high school experience as they advance their musical careers.

- Having experienced significant teacher turnover two years ago, the school established a rigorous hiring process that includes a demonstration lesson. This process has been used strategically to acquire new faculty that support the school's efforts to enhance its academic offerings. For example, these new hires cover conceptual and music physics so that students may have four years of science instruction, additional Advanced Placement (AP) courses, and the music theory component to increase the number of students who earn diplomas with advanced designations. In addition, teacher assignments are strength-based and intentionally designed. For example, freshman are assigned to teachers most able to instill strong study habits and literacy skills, and courses culminating in Regents exams are assigned to faculty with the strongest track records in the subjects to impact credit accumulation and Regents passing rates. At the same time, the principal teaches AP biology and the assistant principal teaches the piano program. A full complement of out-of-classroom supports, including credit recovery and PM school for Regents preparation, where attendance exceeds 90% and multiple opportunities for enrichment to advance music appreciation and performance enable the school to close the achievement gap and extend it beyond basic expectations. As a result, students at all levels and sub groups, have access to learning opportunities that promote college and career readiness.
- The school ensures a safe and supportive environment for students and staff that foster positive social and academic behaviors for all students. (1.4)
 - Upon the mid-year change of leadership last year, the school commenced what they termed a "re-start" process of school-wide reflection. This open conversation has brought staff and students together more strongly around the academic focus to complement the high quality music program that has earned the school national recognition. Using data from the Learning Environment Survey, the school built on the strong interpersonal relations between the new administrators, teachers and students, to create clear systems and structures that promote a culture of collaboration between adults and enhance student voice throughout the school. To ensure first year students adapt well to the rigorous demands of musical performance along with academic work, nearly a third of incoming students are matched to a senior student-mentor who provides academic and social support that encourages students to do their best. In addition, open mic sessions in the cafeteria allow students to support each other with feedback on their compositions and musicianship. Students vote for a "teacher of the month," to celebrate the ways faculty have influenced students' personal and academic growth, and students feel they can trust any adult in the school to look out for them. At the same time, relationships between administrators and teachers have improved considerably, as evidenced by key indicators on the 2012-2013 Learning Environment Survey where the percent of teachers agreeing that leaders have a clear vision, clear expectations and are trustworthy rose from approximately 25 percent to over 95 percent.
 - Because of strong communication practices, administrators, guidance counselors and teachers know each student well and take collective

responsibility for students' academic and personal behaviors. Clear ladders of referral for attendance and for academic intervention services, backed by close monitoring of academic performance in Jupiter Grades, keep staff attuned to particular student needs. For example, at the end of the first semester, all teachers received lists of their own students who were in the school's lowest third or who obtained scores below 70% and teachers responded by indicating their intervention plan, which is coordinated with the assistant principal of organization and guidance counselors. These staff members, together with the parent coordinator in turn schedule parents for consultations to enlist their support in setting specific academic, attendance and behavioral goals and monitoring progress. While the school has minimal suspensions, these systems have improved class attendance, punctuality and work completion. An additional part time college advisor, access to the full service Montefiore clinic in the building and numerous academic and music enrichment programs further support diverse student needs. These systems ensure a positive, focused learning environment for all students.

- School leaders prioritize the observation of teaching practice to provide targeted feedback and identify professional development needs, resulting in improvements in pedagogical practice across the school. (4.1)
 - The new principal and assistant principal have worked collaboratively with staff to build a common understanding of the expectations of the Danielson Framework for Teaching, resulting in a high degree of teacher buy in. All teachers agreed to allow supervisors to record lessons during all observations that leaders are conducting this year, where 95% of teachers chose to have six observations. Videos are uploaded to BloomBoard, an electronic tool that allows supervisors to strategically “tag” evidence in the video-clips and align the evidence to the components of the Framework for Teaching, so that the post-observation feedback entails a transparent, data-based analysis of practice to identify next steps. These conversations have led to the creation and follow through on individual growth plans, when required, and inform the school's professional development priorities which are addressed during at least one staff-wide training per week. Specific departments also receive regular support from expert coaches from the City University of New York. The school is purposeful in its approach to developing teacher leadership. The English as a Second Language teacher serves as the well-respected lead teacher who co-facilitates with the assistant principal the three weekly teacher team meetings. They also provide facilitation training to department leaders, most of who are in leadership programs themselves and often facilitate professional development for their peers during “Teacher Talk” Fridays. Teachers appreciate the renewed focus on instruction and support this system provides, as evidenced by a mid-year survey in which 80 percent of teachers said they received helpful feedback on their teaching, up from 20 percent before the leadership change.

What the school needs to improve

- Align curricula and academic tasks across all departments to the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts, so that students are consistently engaged in rigorous learning experiences. (1.1)
 - The school has attained high graduation rates based on curricula that align to the State content standards. The school is in the process of

developing a curriculum library with units that align more closely to the Common Core Learning Standards and that reflect the instructional shifts. At present, this work is coherent in the English department, where teachers have identified appropriately challenging core texts at each grade level and are emphasizing argument writing based on evidence from text. The math department is working purposefully to integrate the common core standards by adapting parts of the EngageNY modules in some classes, but is less deliberate in its attention to the instructional shifts. The substantial music curricula are fully aligned to the National Standards for Music Education and the NYC Blueprint Strands. The social studies department deliberately phases in a “staircase” of academic skills that students must demonstrate in their first and second years, gradually shifting the emphasis from informational to argumentative writing and speaking. However, reliance on Regents-based materials limits most tasks to factual recall, and student work is accepted where students summarize different points of view without defending a position or synthesizing across texts, thus undermining the teachers’ intentions. Evidence in science tasks for first and second year students lack rigor. For example, while assignments in Advanced Placement biology and physics require considerable cognitive demand and involve real-life experiments and demonstrations, assignments in other science classes and labs, lack depth and complexity, requiring little more than fill-in-the-blank worksheets, definitions and short summaries of basic facts. In addition, the planning for diverse learners is not reflected consistently across departments in lesson plans or units of study. While some teachers include choice, such as in the menu in the “Layered histoire café” or identify how they will work with specific struggling students, others do not. Thus, inconsistent approaches to embedding higher order skills in some courses, results in some uneven experiences that prevent students from maximizing the opportunities afforded to fully advance on their path to college readiness.

- Extend strong assessment models and use of standards-aligned trait rubrics across all departments so that all teachers consistently provide students with actionable and accurate feedback to accelerate their progress. (2.2)
 - Teachers initiated a school wide grading policy this year that has been shared with students, in which 40 percent of a student’s grade is based on formative assessment and 60 percent based on summative assessment. However, some unit plans confuse the terms, leading to some lack of clarity about how grades will ultimately be determined. In addition, the school is beginning to create common assessments, with a view to norming expectations across teachers on the same subject so that classroom grades can be used more reliably as indicators of performance and progress. While all teachers record overall exam results in an electronic system, the use of item analysis is uneven. Across the school there are pockets of excellent assessment practices. For example, the physics teacher conducts item analyses on every assessment, carefully tracking mastery of particular content standards to inform instruction at the whole group and small group level. Similarly, English teachers are using the NYC Performance-Based Assessment rubric to identify student needs more precisely and to guide curricular and instructional adjustments. However, the use of holistic rubrics, the absence of procedures to engage students in substantive writing, and the paucity of precise feedback that identifies next steps and systems to monitor students’ response to feedback across all disciplines, hinders the school’s ability to push students to their full potential.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Celia Cruz Bronx High School of Music	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