



# **Quality Review Report 2013-2014**

**Bronx Career and College Preparatory**

**High School 479**

**800 Home Street**

**Bronx**

**NY 10456**

**Principal: Kizhaya A. Roberts**

**Dates of review: November 13 - 14, 2013**

**Lead Reviewer: Rosemary Stuart**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Bronx Career and College Preparatory is a high school with 310 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 37% Black, 61% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 14% English language learners and 25% special education students. Boys account for 44% of the students enrolled and girls account for 56%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 77.1%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Progress toward meeting school goals around academic performance and social-emotional growth is supported by an inclusive culture that ensures that all students are well known and their voices are valued. (1.4)
  - School administrators and teachers encourage students to be confident co-owners of their learning goals and value student voice in building school culture. For example, students determined they wanted to have a dress code and, after partnering with the administration to formulate it, take pride in enforcing it themselves. Students shared their ideas for improving the breakfast program and the school enacted new policies that give students opportunities to volunteer in the cafeteria. A member of the student government stated, “The principal is interested in what we have to say because she knows we can help other students improve on an academic level.” She went on to explain that more involvement in the student government has motivated students to do better in their classes and improve their attendance and thus make progress toward meeting their academic goals. Parents noted that the school offers several programs that help build their children’s self-esteem, including internship programs with local elected officials, judges, and an advertising agency, thus providing real-world experiences that broaden their knowledge of possible college and career paths.
  - All students in the school are identified each marking period as being on track to graduation (green), needing support to stay on track (yellow), and/or off track (red). Students in the yellow and red groups receive additional services and the attention of a tiered intervention team. Additionally, a team of teachers discusses each student and his/her progress, including attendance trends, is noted. Intervention plans include teachers reaching out to students on a daily basis to reinforce positive behaviors such as good attendance and timeliness with assignments. In a large group meeting, students cited myriad examples of teachers attending to them as individuals, for example, one staff member attending the class of an advisee “just to show her support.” During one of the history department meetings, each teacher exhibited a deep understanding of individual student’s social-emotional and academic needs. As a result, individual students are known well by many members of the staff. Additionally, the principal spoke to students by name and was able to recount each student’s academic and personal story. Parents indicated one of the most important reasons they feel their children are experiencing success at the school is the small size and personal attention given to them. One student explained that she feels comfortable and safe at the school and said, “I like small settings where I am not just a number.” Consequently, 89% of students indicated that the adults help keep them on track to be promoted to the next grade and to graduate.
- Teachers create common assessments and rubrics to provide feedback to students and to inform curricular adjustments aimed at improving outcomes for all students. (2.2)

- During regularly scheduled department meetings teachers revise assignments and develop assessments and rubrics that align with the units of study in curriculum maps developed prior to the beginning of the school year. In response to these assessments, teachers formulate new questions and strategies, such as providing a choice of graphic organizers or varying levels of text complexity, to engage students at their identified skill or content knowledge level. During lessons, teachers are expected to have students self-assess their level of understanding (LOU) by indicating on a scale of one to four how well they understand what they are doing at that moment. This process was observed with varying frequency in the classrooms visited. In one science class, students wrote their LOU in the margin of their notebook while the teacher circulated around the room consulting with those students who indicated a low LOU. In other classrooms, the teacher asked students to raise their hands indicating their LOU and then grouped students accordingly to provide support for those who needed it. One teacher had differentiated assignments for groups of students based on their LOU. Most teachers use this strategy, or other strategies such as exit slips, to gauge student understanding and to inform grouping for the next lesson so that students benefit from immediate feedback and individual support making them aware of next steps to maximize their learning.
- Consistent communication of high expectations and professionalism unites the entire school community to support students as they prepare for college and career. (3.4)
  - An articulation and credit recovery team (ARC), comprised of department chairpersons, a guidance counselor, the union chapter leader, and the principal, meets monthly to review curriculum, grading policies, and school-wide practices. This team disseminates information to the rest of the school about expectations and accomplishments regarding student achievement. Notes from a recent ARC meeting include discussion of the approval process for credit-bearing independent study courses as well as a review of the school-wide grading policy. The administrators commend strong professionalism in observations, noting such things as an individual teacher's contribution to the specialized instruction team, or participation in inter-visitations. Furthermore, teachers are expected to improve their pedagogical practice through inquiry-based collaboration and professional development opportunities that are noted in a digital calendar of events for the staff. Additionally, individuals and teams of teachers feel personally and mutually responsible for the students they teach. During a team meeting, one teacher reported on the success that students have had using the Castle Learning system for individualized instruction and noted the importance of making sure that all teachers and students take advantage of it. Another teacher commented that, "We try to find activities that will push them, (the students), to higher thinking and apply to their own lives."
  - On the first day of the new marking period students thronged to see their rank in academic performance for the prior marking period. The excitement over the new rankings permeated the school as students celebrated or expressed their determination to do better in the future and reflected the belief among the students that the vision of the school is to "get you ready for college." One student indicated that he was no longer

at the top of the list and asserted that his goal was to regain his position at the top as part of his college preparation plans. In addition to keeping students informed about their academic progress, the school promotes college readiness by providing an advisory program beginning in ninth grade. In one advisory class visited, students were reviewing their transcripts to help them prepare their personal goals. More than half of ninth grade students use the Jupiter Grades program an average of 1.7 times per week to track their own academic progress and 43% of parents of twelfth graders use this program to track their children's progress. Parents say they are partners with the school to support their children as they strive to meet college and career readiness expectations.

- The school leader ensures that all teachers collaborate in order to strengthen instructional coherence and support student progress toward mastery of learning goals. (4.2)
  - Teachers meet daily in inquiry-based collaborative teams focusing on the school-wide goals of improving academic and behavioral outcomes for students and aligning curriculum to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). At these team meetings teachers regularly report on a Cycle of Student Achievement (COSA) that begins with grouping students according to their needs as identified through a pre-assessment, along with two case studies to illustrate the needs. The team gives the presenting teacher feedback on strengthening the alignment of the work with CCLS and shares ideas for improving pedagogical practices. When the teacher has implemented the identified strategies and conducted a post-assessment, the results are presented at a subsequent meeting. The team looks at student work products, discusses the impact of the instructional strategies, and notes the progress students have made. During one team meeting, a first-year teacher reported that, after the first marking period, many students in his history class moved out of the approaching standards group to the meeting standards group as determined by an analysis of student work in the post-assessment phase of his COSA. By the same measure, the number of students meeting standards in his class rose from 15% to 41% with two students moving into the exceeding standards category. Additionally, team members regularly report on their activities and evaluate themselves through a survey that is analyzed by the principal and school leadership team in order to determine the need for professional development. A recent survey showed that 65% of respondents reported their teams were effective in focusing on school-wide goals and over 75% reported their teams were effective or highly effective at focusing on student needs and outcomes.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Emphasize planning and refining of lessons so that all students have access to rigorous curricula and tasks that incorporate higher-order thinking leading to consistent engagement. (1.1)
  - Each department team creates curriculum maps and unit plans that the school leader reviews to ensure the inclusion of standards, college and career readiness skills, essential questions, assessments, and a variety of entry points to engage all learners in rigorous tasks. Unit plans across

grades and content areas place an emphasis on vocabulary development to increase access to the content of the lessons for diverse learners. For example, a unit of study on the constitutional foundations of the United States references the CCLS, lists essential questions, unit content, skills, vocabulary, differentiated assessments and states that students interested in a career in law or politics “will need to thoroughly understand how and why the constitution was written....” However, only a few of the unit and lesson plans specify what a teacher will do for students who are struggling with the content during a lesson, as in a science lesson that prescribes one-on-one instruction for students who indicate their level of understanding is low. One lesson plan indicates that “stronger” students are expected to complete a task, but states that struggling students will copy it during the share-out. As a result, not all lessons include explicitly differentiated instruction or are planned to engage diverse students in rigorous tasks at their identified level of performance.

- Build on the strongly held school-wide belief of cognitive engagement for all students to consistently provide multiple entry points so that all students produce high levels of student work. (1.2)
  - All stakeholders assert the belief that students learn best when cognitively engaged and the principal discussed using leveled questioning and making the work relevant to students’ lives as strategies for increasing that engagement. One student indicated that he was bored in his English class until the principal suggested that he enroll in an accelerated class, which he now feels is a better class for him. A parent indicated that her daughter’s schoolwork is challenging and that she is engaged in the right level of struggle. However, the belief in the power of cognitive engagement has not resulted in school wide instructional practices that ensure all students are consistently engaged in tasks requiring higher-order thinking. In one classroom, English language learner students were struggling with vocabulary without the support of dictionaries or word walls. As a result, they were not able to access the deeper level of content or to respond to the writing prompts at a high level. Although, in the classes visited, students were generally on task and were attending to teacher directions and prompts, the level of instructional rigor varied from teacher to teacher. The teachers in an English class provided ample skill-based scaffolds for the students to complete the “do now” tasks, but missed several opportunities to ask probing questions or lead discussions with non-process oriented prompts. In a history class, the teacher had a discussion with one student, while three other students had their heads down on their desks. Uneven levels of student engagement and participation is evident in the quality of student work products as well. Some students produce work that is sophisticated and complex such as an essay comparing and contrasting the philosophies of Helen Keller and Colin Powell, in which a student quotes from the texts and states an opinion that if we all “had the kind of teachers Helen Keller had, we would all succeed.” As a result of a partnership between the art and social studies department, students produced political cartoons about the effects of the government shutdown. However, in other classes, teachers rely on worksheet-based lessons with students completing the tasks by following step-by-step instructions or copying notes from the board. Consequently, not all students are able to demonstrate their learning in a meaningful manner.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Institute for Collaborative Education	UD	D	P	WD			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			X				
<b>Instructional Core</b>							
<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				
<b>School Culture</b>							
<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			
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>							
<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 <b>inquiry approach</b> 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				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>D</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>