



**Department of  
Education**

*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

**Quality Review  
Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning  
2013-2014**

# **Quality Review Report 2013-2014**

**Bronxdale**

**High School 508**

**925 Astor Street**

**Bronx**

**NY 10469**

**Principal:Carolyn Quintana**

**Dates of review: May 6 - 7, 2014**

**Lead Reviewer: Jennifer Eusanio**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Bronxdale is a high school with 330 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 30% Black, 56% Hispanic, 8% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 20% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013 - 2014 was 84.4%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school works collaboratively to ensure curricula across content areas are integrated to the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts, strengthening coherence to promoting college and career readiness. (1.1)
  - The school has chosen to implement inquiry-based units of study and utilize resources such as Great Books, Springboard, and Read 180, to integrate rigorous strategies into the curricula. A review of curriculum documents revealed the infusion of literacy skills prevalent in the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts into all content areas. A curriculum committee conducts internal scoring of the maps to provide department teams with insight in refining maps to include specific skills around improving the rigor of the unit of study. As a result, a rubric score for one map showed that the creator made a “deliberate choice of concepts and subject matter connected to big ideas and essential questions.” It further indicated that, “essential questions are significant and open ended.” Thus, teacher created units clearly emphasize and streamline questioning techniques, discussion, and the use of text-based evidence. Additionally, teachers’ provide students with opportunities to respond and debate with their peers relative to a lesson’s objectives. As a result, the school is building coherence and promoting college readiness for all students.
  - Learning tasks provide opportunities that consistently challenge students in all subject areas. Students are provided opportunities to engage in rigorous conversations using the Socratic seminar. Using a fishbowl method, one Global Studies task required students to debate an issue relevant to a historical event. An English language arts lesson plan asked students to show mastery of content through a class debate using the essential question as the primer of discussion. Students were required to develop their own questions and debate one another’s thoughts and ideas using various text-based evidence and embed different perspectives including student opinions. Using Great Books, students are provided choices and opportunities to work with multi-level Depth of Knowledge (DOK) questions. Students work in teams to choose questions for discussion and vote on the question of the day. For example, one task allowed students to debate on who was really responsible for Romeo and Juliet’s death. The provision of complex tasks and choice provides rigorous opportunities for all students to demonstrate cognitive engagement and promote higher order thinking skills.
- The school provides a safe and nurturing environment, with a broad range of support services that effectively address students’ social and emotional needs promoting their ongoing academic growth. (1.4)
  - Initiatives such as the Youth Court and student government provide peers the ability to assess the culture of the building and integrate decisions to improve the school’s environment. The implementation of a school store and addition of a College Fair at the school are two activities supported by the administration and student government that were executed this year. Informal surveys on school climate completed by students, staff, and

parents, provide insight to administrators to offer more college trips. Parents reported that the hiring of a parent coordinator opened a clear line of communication between the school and community. In addition, parents reported that the staff are “approachable” and felt, “having our children attend this small community with exposure to different cultures and such close proximity to home, we have never stopped being pleased.” Kid talk and roundtable protocols are conducted with students to provide them with social/emotional support when patterns of behavior not consistent with school ideals. Students reported that these roundtables, which include parents and key faculty members in the process, have offered them a chance to “share concerns” and showed that their teachers care about them. The integration of student voice and reports of culture building demonstrate an inclusive, positive environment that promotes learning as evidenced in the decreased number of student suspensions this school year as compared to the prior year.

- Partnerships with a variety of intervention programs and other professional development opportunities have demonstrated the school’s efforts to promote student engagement and motivation in learning tasks. In one partnership with the Institute of Student Achievement, staff members, were trained to use a distributive guidance model relative to strategies that promote social responsibility, and healthy academic behaviors. In addition, this partnership provides training for teachers in advisory techniques and coaching support for guidance counselors. Another partnership, the Mindfulness program, fosters resilience in students and teachers. Students learn effective communication strategies to resolve current and future conflicts. One student’s response about the intervention program included, “Mindfulness has helped me to concentrate and remain calm”. For teachers, the program increases their sense of efficacy, well-being, and ability to manage classroom behavior resulting in an environment with an increased culture of learning as evidenced in classroom visits. These various levels of support to teachers and students promote the adoption of effective academic and personal behaviors that has resulted in a decrease of infractions this school year as compared to the prior year.
- The school faculty engages in structured inquiry-based professional collaborations with effective distributive leadership practices leading to building capacity and voice of teachers around student learning. (4.2)
  - The principal’s belief in collaborative learning practices is reflected through grade level inquiry teams that build teacher capacity through the review of student work, the integration of Common Core Learning standards into curricula, and sharing of instructional strategies. Grade- wide teacher teams include members from all content areas, teachers of English language learners and students with disabilities. Teams have been trained and use the Tuning and ATLAS Protocols to reflect on student work and refine curricula each week. During a ninth grade meeting, teachers used the tuning protocol to revise a teacher’s lesson plan to integrate scaffolds such as sentence stems for struggling students, develop one or two salient rigorous open-ended questions, and reduce lower-level prompts within the lesson plan. The inclusion of these revisions provides students more opportunities and supportive structures to increase student engagement. When debriefing the team meeting, teachers reported that the inquiry process provides them an opportunity to incorporate “school goals such as ‘questioning and discussion techniques and evidence based writing’. As a

result, discussions and analysis of student data support school-wide instructional practices, strengthening the instructional capacity of teachers.

- Through the implementation of a variety of teams, teachers make decisions on curricula, college readiness initiatives, and school wide programs. The data team, primarily led by grade leaders, guidance counselors, and an assistant principal, analyze student performance, attendance, and behavioral interventions, in order to make adjustments to instruction. The development of the revised grading policy to match state requirements, which was led via department leaders and grade teams, promotes distributive decision making among staff members. In addition, the special education committee distributes departmental roles among each other to hone in on specific areas while reviewing individualized education plans and improving the referral process. As a result, the use of distributive leadership structures builds school wide capacity to improve student-learning experiences.
- School leaders and faculty engage in meaningful goal setting opportunities, which involve all members of the school community in decision-making and regular monitoring, promoting collaboration around school improvement. (3.1)
  - School wide goals are clearly articulated by the principal and reflected in the Comprehensive Education Plan and other school wide documents in order to boost student achievement. Goals are tracked using scholarship reports, results from performance assessments, Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) scores, and student transcripts. Curriculum and grade teams meet regularly to track and adjust instructional practices to meet the needs of students related to school wide goals. For example, a review of the mid-line performance task provided one teacher the opportunity to reflect on strengths, growth areas, and adjustments in instructional practices, leading to including the use of sentence starters and graphic organizers to further support student writing. In addition, to support one school goal, staff members have the integrated argumentative writing into science and adjusted tasks to provide students with the opportunity to work on persuasion within this content area. As a result, student growth has increased in all grades and subject areas, which have furthered the acceleration of credit accumulation in order to, meet school wide goals.
  - Parents and students report that they are clearly involved in the development and implementation of the school wide goals. School goals are listed in all classrooms and hallways, thus communicating them throughout the school. Students reported that their teachers discussed school goals in the beginning of the year and spoke about ways they could work on them throughout the year. Parents reported that they work closely with school staff to develop goals and monitor their progress via School Leadership Team (SLT) meetings. A principal's bulletin is emailed to constituents weekly and provides the community with updates on the attainment of school goals. In addition, newsletters communicate activities towards school improvement initiatives. Involvement and communication of school wide goals initiates stakeholders to further their contributions to collaborative decision-making practices.

## What the school needs to improve

- Deepen teaching strategies to strategically embed multiple entry points in academic tasks to further challenge all learners resulting in student ownership within work products across the vast majority of classrooms. (1.2)
  - Teaching strategies across classrooms included questioning, graphic organizers, and group work, to support diverse students. Students were provided opportunities to develop their own questions and defend claims. For example, students were encouraged to use sentence stems to participate in literature-based discussions. In some classes, some students were provided their own copies of powerpoint presentations with a teaching model created by the teacher to promote engagement into challenging learning tasks. Although several classrooms demonstrated teaching strategies and scaffolds to support all learners, the vast majority of classes did not display the strategic use of high quality supports to ensure higher-order thinking skills in all student work products. For example, while observing one class, students were paired and used dictionaries to assist them with defining words. However, student work products did not reflect higher order thinking skills due to the fact that the activity required students to engage at a low cognitive level. Furthermore, in another class, while students were provided with a task that required students to analyze and critique a writing piece, and the opportunity to work with partners, the majority of the students were unable to complete the task due to the quick pacing of the lesson, which resulted in low-level work. Consequently, the lack of strategic teaching practices across the vast majority of classrooms hinders students' ability to provide high level student work products.
  - Across classrooms, students were provided many opportunities to engage in discussions. Using Socratic seminar approaches, students' conversations reflected high levels of cognitive engagement around student claims and counterclaims. For example, in one classroom, the entire discussion was student dominated with appropriate references made to the text as well as connections to social issues to support their claims. The teacher intervened only to ensure all students had a chance to participate fully in the discussion. This level of engagement was evident across other classrooms with students being provided opportunities to use the Socratic seminar as a means to discuss their ideas at high levels. Although several classrooms were able to demonstrate work products reflecting high cognitive levels showing increased engagement and ownership of tasks, it was not evident in the vast majority of classrooms thus resulting in a lack of opportunities to accelerate learning for all students.
- Refine assessment practices to ensure teachers further engage in checks for understanding to obtain a clear portrait of student mastery to provide meaningful feedback and inform instructional adjustments.(2.2)
  - Teacher created assessments provided a lens for the school to determine student performance and progress. The use of rubrics and a revised grading policy generate a picture of student progress towards learning goals and assessments to provide feedback to teachers and students around student mastery of college level skills. For example, using a mid-point English language arts test, all students were assessed to determine how they mastered instructional shift work, including using text-based

evidence in determining position and counterclaims within an argumentative essay. Students are provided specific, actionable feedback on writing drafts to improve the quality of their work using rubrics. Students reported that they use the feedback to improve their scores and showed areas of improvement in their future work products. However, after reviewing all student work products across the vast majority of classes, varied assessments are not paired with meaningful feedback to offer a clear portrait of mastery to teachers and students. The inconsistent use of meaningful feedback on all student work products limits students' understanding of their performance in order to target areas for improving learning and hinders teachers' using the information to effect suitable adjustments to instruction.

- Across classrooms, teachers use a variety of strategies to determine student understanding of learning tasks. Students were observed using the “thumbs up, thumbs down” method and/or questioning to determine student understanding of learning tasks. For example, in one class, a teacher walked around and asked students questions such as, “How can I help you understand the task more?” and “Where are you getting stuck?” Afterwards, students reported that they were more prepared and able to fully participate in the task as a result of their teacher’s help. In many classes, students were also provided opportunities to self- and peer-assess their performance of the content through student work products. However, strategic use of teacher assessment practices was not evident in the vast majority of classes. Thus, the lack of specific ongoing adjustments across the vast majority of classrooms hinders the opportunity for all students to have their learning needs met to increase achievement.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: <b>Bronxdale</b>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>				
<b>Instructional Core</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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?			<b>X</b>				
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?			<b>X</b>				
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?			<b>X</b>				
<b>School Culture</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			<b>X</b>				
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations?			<b>X</b>				
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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?			<b>X</b>				
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?			<b>X</b>				
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?			<b>X</b>				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			<b>X</b>				
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?			<b>X</b>				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>