

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Bronx Envision Academy

12X511

**1619 Boston Road
Bronx,
New York 10460**

Principal: Emily Shu

Dates of review: February 25-February 26, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Joan Prince

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Bronx Envision Academy 12X511 is an Arts Endorsed school with 239 students from grade 9 through 11. The school population comprises 34% Black, 62% Hispanic, 2 % White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 23% special education students. Boys account for 41% of the students enrolled and girls account for 59%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 85.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- All members of the school community work cohesively to ensure a safe, inclusive environment that promotes a culture of trust and enhances students' academic and personal growth. (1.4)
 - Meetings among the school leaders, teachers, parents and students establishes a positive school culture that permeates the entire school community cementing the school belief that passing is not enough and if all stakeholders are unified in building a safe and inclusive culture, then the academic and personal behaviors of students will be prepared for the next level. The principal, who knows each student by name, encourages students to excel in all aspects of their learning experiences. There is an open-door policy with the principal for discussions and meeting with teachers, parents, and students. There are positive behavior protocols in place like the 'Evening of Excellence' to celebrate student achievement and personal growth. The daily schedule includes a strong advisory support system that reinforces positive academic and personal behaviors during which teachers' conference with students to ensure that they are meeting expectations. There is an obvious presence of teachers always modeling and referring to appropriate behaviors in one-to-one meetings with students. Home contact, when needed, is an on-going priority. Teachers and paraprofessionals, as well as school leaders, are in the hallways during change of periods to promote demeanor and safety protocols, and there are designated periods for bathroom usage to endorse safety. Parents and students expressed in meetings that the principal ensures that there is a culture of mutual trust that supports the academic and personal growth of students, who stated that they feel safe and supported. Extra support both in academics and/or social-emotional issues is available by teachers, coaches and counselors before and after regular school hours. Furthermore, the school prioritizes students' engagement in tasks and discussions involving evaluation and synthesis of topics to promote growth both in academics and on a cultural or moral level. Student voice is welcomed and valued; the school promotes responsibility and leadership that enhances academic and personal growth with participation in many extra-curricula activities. There is an active student council that contributed to the adoption of events, such as Pajama Day, Career Day, an Ambassador Program and College Panel that has interns from the 9th grade doing college preparation to facilitate success. The 10th grade partners with Lehman College assisting students in all challenges to meeting expectations in all subjects. Students state that they have input in choice of literature for the school library and they plan school-wide events. In addition, the school incorporates community members in instructional activities such as Career Day; the students set up collaborations with local business organizations and create opportunities for community service projects such as beautification around the school. Through Portfolio Roundtable Reviews and Junior Thesis presentations tracking participation and progress, it was determined by surveys that there is strong satisfaction among parents regarding communication and mutual trust, and 81% of students agreed that there is an adult they can go to when they have a problem either academically or involving their socio-emotional health, thus resulting in the adoption of effective personal and academic behaviors.
- The school consistently conveys high expectations and provides supports to students, staff and families that ensure students are prepared for the next level of learning. (3.4)

- Parent workshops and parent meetings on topics such as the Common Core Learning Standards with a presentation on performance tasks by grade, communicates expectations to families connected to college and career readiness. The grade teams outline to families at the start of the school year the support for college preparedness and are aligning learning activities that integrate technology and the arts. There is a lending library for parents to encourage participation in the educational process. Other activities, such as Career Day, promote a college and career mindset by having freshmen and sophomores tour local colleges and speak with professors. Juniors participate in workshops during Career Day to learn about the educational backgrounds required for different occupations. Juniors also tour colleges outside of New York City to broaden their perspective on choices. Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) preparation sessions for sophomores and juniors is offered along with assistance from the school social worker to support this work. In addition, there are constant information sessions to help families understand their children's progress toward meeting the school's and grade level expectations. Family members state that they understand what their children need to accomplish to be successful at their next level of learning due to the constant communication and electronic grading system with daily homework access and progress reports. The parents state that they fully support the school's efforts in preparing their children for their next level. Moreover, since opening the school the principal has focused on developing and sharing a high standard of expectations for effective teaching across classrooms, including all high-need sub-groups. Through committees, both advisory and teacher leadership, and action plans reinforcing high expectations school-wide, teachers regularly meet with administration to identify professional goals aligned with school instructional goals to support a culture of learning focused on college and/or career readiness. Collectively, teachers convey high expectations as shown through lessons prepared with a lens on Common Core. This was shown through a student project that culminated in a Mock Constitutional Convention where the students took on the role of a delegate they had researched and argued the major points that were discussed at the actual Constitutional Convention with their classmates. Teachers focus on increasing opportunities for students to accumulate credits and meet their Regents requirements to stay on track to graduate both toward college and career goals. This close monitoring of students' academic progress has improved student ownership and completion of assignments. As a result, the school's consistent focus on standards, communication and high expectations results in a high rate of credit accumulation across grades.
- The strategic use of resources and organizational decisions clearly support the school's instructional goals that constantly improve student learning outcomes and academic performance. (1.3)
 - Intentional staffing and organizational decisions allow for small group instruction, daily co-teaching, and pull-out academic interventions dedicated to improving student success. The staff developer and lead teacher spearhead curriculum planning across subjects and grades and support teacher development through demonstration lessons, in-classroom coaching, and meeting with teams to ensure alignment with Common Core expectations. Teacher programs reflect push-in for special education and English as a second language (ESL) so groups of students are directly supported during classroom instruction. The principal organizes and flexibly schedules classes based on students' needs and strengths. There is a schedule that accommodates counseling as needed, and the principal and assistant principal thoughtfully consider individual learner profiles when making teacher assignments to create collective ownership for student progress. In addition, the master schedule provides time for teacher teams to meet three times

per week to support the school's instructional goals. Teacher teams look at student work and design protocols to measure the effectiveness of their lessons and prompt discussions on how to improve instruction based on a review of the quality of student work and the level of rigor embedded in the task. Therefore, the collaborative work of teacher teams coupled with the focused analysis of student work and the targeted academic intervention groupings for students planned during team meetings, contributes to the narrowing of students' learning gaps as noted in improved performance in class. This is reflected in end of unit performance task results and student work posted on boards and work folders. Furthermore, teachers are provided with resources, such as computers and Smart Boards in each classroom, and a laptop cart for use by students during lessons. Teachers and students are using the individual computers for research that support the school's instructional vision of project-based learning and connection to the arts while aligning with the Common Core to plan lessons across the curriculum that integrate technology. This has led to increased student use of technology as a tool to facilitate research, creativity, and promote greater engagement in lesson activities. There is a strategic use of teachers in co-teaching and push-in classes and the use of double periods to further increase support for the project-based model. Students are more mindful of the opportunities they are receiving, thus producing higher quality work, such as writing their own plays and producing them with the help of *Bread and Puppets*, a community-based organization. The school benefits from these partnerships and organizations, including ones in the arts, that enhance all aspects of the school and provide opportunity for youth development experience such as allowing students to participate in theatrical groups as well as other arts affiliation programs.

- School leader and faculty align curricula to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and instructional shifts to build coherence and challenge students through rigorous academic tasks that promote college and career readiness. (1.1)
 - The school uses CCLS aligned units in all subjects to ensure coherence and attention to the instructional shifts across grades. Teacher teams engage in unit planning and lesson creation to identify areas that require further adjustments to prepare for interim assessments and identify core skills within academic disciplines. They then design tasks to support higher order thinking in student engagement. All classes are started with a motivation introduction 'project', a Visual Thinking Strategy (VTS) that is arts-based and captures interests and begins the inquiry process. A unifying arts-based theme provides coherence in curricula and tasks across all subjects. In math, patterns and modeling emphasize the habits students need in order to engage in higher level thinking. As observed in a math classroom, students were asked to compare and contrast different types of equation graphs and the effects of changes to those equations. There were also videos representing the equations to better explain the overall importance of understanding this framework in relation to Algebra 1. Reading and writing standards focus on comprehension identified as a need through summative and real time interim data examined during team meetings. Open-ended questions and higher order thinking skills based on Depth of Knowledge (DOK) are evident in curriculum maps, and in lesson plans that include essential questions. Rigorous tasks include adjustments based on a review of student work products and demonstrate the requirement for higher level thinking in inquiry and discussions, enabling all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, to exhibit acquisition of knowledge. For example, in one English as a second language class, students were engaged in a productive struggle to answer: "What does it mean to be alive?" Responding to a radio-lab on 'Finding Emilie' about a girl who was dying and on life support, discussion followed about how

emotions influence our actions and the use of claims and counterclaims between students and between the teacher and students furthered the responses including higher level DOK questions as well as examining who, what, how, and why questions.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve instructional practices to provide students with multiple opportunities to be actively engaged in higher-order thinking discussions in order to generate high quality student work products. (1.2)
 - Teachers exhibit a similar classroom routine that aligns with the schools' belief about how students learn best. The belief emphasizes the importance of infusing art, literature, drama, music and the study of humanity into the everyday curriculum. Students receive opportunities to showcase their talents in various aspects of the arts while preparing for the competitive world after high school. The pace of the lessons using visual strategies keeps students alert, engaged and interested. However, higher-order thinking discussions do not always drive the learning, and skill-building within deficit areas is not always evident to assist students in deepening their thinking. Strategies to support comprehension and foster important reading and annotation skills have been articulated and are shared and practiced across disciplines. However, these strategies are not consistently evident across classrooms. As expressed by the school leadership, the school focus must now encompass more targeted support for students to express what they are thinking in their writing. Across classrooms, students worked in groups or pairs allowing for additional guidance from the teacher to participate within each group. Nevertheless, teaching strategies to ensure that all students participate and engage in high level thinking through accountable discussions, as well as differentiated questioning during independent and/or group work, and whole class instruction, was not consistently evident, resulting in limited scaffolds and supports for all students to produce high level work products.
- Strengthen assessment practices so that teachers provide actionable feedback to students and use student data to make instructional adjustments that result in meeting the needs of all learners. (2.2)
 - Teachers use common assessments and rubrics aligned to the school's curriculum to determine what students know and can do. However, although teachers provide feedback on student work, it is often general in nature and does not always provide detailed reasons why students were successful or offer targeted next steps for improvement aligned to the rubric. Teachers meet weekly during the school day in order to collectively discuss data about students they share and offer supports and strategies to improve student outcomes. However, their analysis of student work is not yet specific enough to provide all students with timely and meaningful feedback. For example, varying degrees of feedback by teachers do not consistently provide students with a clear picture of their strengths and/or weaknesses on writing projects. This prevents students from having the ability to assess their performance and know what to do to improve their work. As result, inconsistent use and analysis of formative assessment data to provide meaningful feedback to students, limits accelerating the progress of all learners. Furthermore, students are encouraged to conduct self- and peer- assessments of work products using rubrics or checklists. However, on-going checks for understanding that enable teachers to gauge student understanding at various points in the lesson is not consistent practice. As a result, teachers struggle to make instructional adjustments during the lesson that further advance student learning.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Bronx Envision Academy	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