



**Department of  
Education**

*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2014-2015**

**Benjamin Banneker Academy for Community  
Development**

**High School K670**

**77 Clinton Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11205**

**Principal: Deonca Renee**

**Date of review: December 4, 2014  
Lead Reviewer: Mark Ossenheimer**

## The School Context

Benjamin Banneker Academy for Community Development is a high school with 919 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 85% Black, 10% Hispanic, 1% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 0.11% English language learners and 0.54% special education students. Boys account for 45% of the students enrolled and girls account for 55%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 90.0%.

## School Quality Criteria

<b>Instructional Core</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</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>Focus</b>	<b>Developing</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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
<b>School Culture</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</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>Celebration</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

School leaders and staff successfully partner with families to support student progress towards college readiness expectations. There is a culture of learning that systemically communicates a unified set of high expectations and provides effective feedback and guidance support.

### Impact

The established culture for learning with the corresponding academic and guidance supports result in parents actively working with teachers to ensure all students own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level.

### Supporting Evidence

- Student leaders provide peer college advising during college assistance labs twice a week and are trained by the organization College Confident. Peer advising includes college selection, scheduling college visits, interviews, and overnight visits.
- Parents stated clearly that the school has clear expectations that “push students to their academic limit, while helping them get there.” Parents and guardians stated they are included on all emails between teachers and students giving them clear ways and steps in supporting their students such as supplemental websites, book titles, free online courses, and questions to ask their student at home.
- Parents attend school organized college visits, including overnights. Alumni attending college organize and lead school tours for current students.
- School has four guidance counselors and three deans that loop with cohorts 9<sup>th</sup> through 11<sup>th</sup> grade with the senior advisor focused on the college process. Guidance teams focus on credit accumulation and programming as well as reducing chronic absenteeism that has increased attendance by 3.7% so far this academic year.
- School offers 23 sections of Advanced Placement classes as well as College Now courses through Medgar Evers College. In addition, the school has had a consistent 95% four year graduation rate from 2012 – 2014 based on the School Quality Guide.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Developing**

### Findings

The school has a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts that is beginning to be reflected across classrooms. The school's focus on the teaching strategy of questioning and discussion as a tool to provide multiple entry points is a developing practice within classrooms and teams.

### Impact

Across classrooms, there is inconsistent practice of the school's instructional focus leading to uneven student engagement and demonstration of higher order thinking skills.

### Supporting Evidence

- Leadership selected CUNY PSO this year to provide professional development and coaching in questioning and discussion strategies. The professional development calendar indicated a series of opportunities on this topic for teachers during the Monday professional learning time from September to November.
- Science team has so far attended one out of seven full day professional development sessions scheduled over the course of this year on incorporating the instructional shifts and are beginning to implement some of the strategies.
- Teachers across subjects indicated they are in process of shifting their practice to a more student-centered approach designed to have students sharing more of their thinking through higher order questioning.
- Three out of eight classrooms observed were using Depth of Knowledge questioning sentence stems provided by CUNY.
- Majority of classrooms observed had classroom discussions that were teacher–student or student–teacher in pattern, thus providing limited opportunity for most students to demonstrate their thinking.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that the curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and to the instructional shifts with emphasis on analyzing texts and increased application of knowledge. Teachers refine the curricula and subsequent units based on the review of student data.

### Impact

As a result, the school's decisions lead to instructional coherence that promotes college and career readiness for all students. Curricula are refined using student scholarship data in order to increase cognitive engagement with the content.

### Supporting Evidence

- Entire science team attending ongoing full day CUNY PSO professional learning series on CCLS and the necessary instructional shifts within science that are used in planning for greater coherency across science subjects. Unit plans and lesson plans in living environment and chemistry demonstrate explicit planning for the use of claim and counter claim as well as instructional strategies such as Socratic seminar to increase student discussion of concepts.
- Based on performance data indicating students struggling with Common Core Learning Standards instructional shifts such as multi-step word problems, three math teachers are now attending a City College course on CCLS writing within math that is being turn-keyed to rest of department and used in revising of units. Unit plans in Algebra and AP Calculus demonstrate planning to include opportunities for students to write and discuss their problem-solving process.
- The administration created a professional development plan informed by teacher survey, Initial Planning Conferences, and Danielson Framework/Advance data and centered on the promotion of higher order thinking skills across all grades and subjects via questioning in order to increase student cognitive engagement.
- English language arts and social studies course planning across departments and subjects in curriculum/unit maps indicates alignment in CCLS literacy skills from lower grades to upper level Advanced Placement courses.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### **Findings**

Across classrooms, teachers create and use assessments and rubrics aligned to the school's curricula. The school uses common assessments at the classroom, department, and school level to determine student progress towards goals.

### **Impact**

The alignment of assessment provides feedback to students and teachers regarding academic progress and achievement. The school adjusts curricula and teachers adjust instruction across subjects based on assessments and data, leading to increased student progress.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- The majority of student work reviewed during the student meeting was rubric-based providing actionable feedback to students on their next learning steps. For example, one student presented a literary analysis essay that had extensive teacher comments and next steps connected to the attached CCLS aligned rubric.
- Students and families receive feedback on academic progress in the online system Jupiter Grades. Usage reports indicate over 95% of students check their academic progress three times a week.
- Leadership use weekly scholarship reports to determine needed instructional support for teachers. For example, when a particular end of unit assessment indicated a high fail rate, leadership met with the teacher to assist in planning reteach strategies in future lessons.
- CUNY PSO coach provides support to groups of teachers weekly to adjust units and tasks to CCLS and track student progress. Team minutes, professional development plans, and science and math units demonstrate department teams refining performance tasks for increased CCLS alignment and the resulting increases in credit accumulation by cohort.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

Teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promote school goals and the implementation of CCLS with the instructional shifts, as well as shared leadership.

### Impact

The school's structured teacher teams and professional learning strengthen the instructional capacity of teachers and has provides teachers a voice in key decision that affect student learning across the school.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams engage in monthly cycles of inquiry based lesson study, which incorporate self-reflection, intervisitations, and peer feedback connected to teacher developed questions regarding their practice in relation to the Danielson Framework for Teaching components 1e, 3b, and 3c that align with the school's instructional focus for this year.
- The science team articulated key shifts that they are starting to make within their instruction from the CUNY professional learnings series that includes increased student discussions and structured group work. One teacher stated, "I used to be very teacher-centered and now I am incorporating many more opportunities for students to own their learning into my lessons."
- Teachers within department teams have identified and proposed to administration key programming and course development changes based on student achievement data that were implemented by administration. For example, the social studies department shifted US history from 9<sup>th</sup> grade to 11<sup>th</sup> grade, the foreign language department developed an accelerated class for a cohort of high achieving students, and the math department now includes an extra semester of AP calculus for students before taking the exam.
- Across departments and subjects, teachers stated they have high levels of autonomy "to do what's best for our students, as long as it's working." The school does not have defined department lead teacher positions. Teachers stated that was because everyone leads and shares in the responsibility in the professional collaborations indicating high levels of shared accountability. Teachers develop agendas together and rotate team roles such as taking minutes and recapping next steps uploading all documents on the school's Google drive.