



**Department of
Education**

Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

**Baychester Academy
Elementary School 11X169**

**3500 Edson Avenue
Bronx
NY 10466**

Principal: Cristine Vaughan

**Date of review: November 24, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Debra R. Lamb, Ed.D.**

The School Context

Baychester Academy is an elementary school with 428 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 75% Black, 19% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 94.0%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
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	Celebration	Well Developed
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	Additional Findings	Well Developed
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	Additional Findings	Well Developed
School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	Focus	Proficient
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	Additional Findings	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Rigorous habits and higher order skills are emphasized in curricula and academic tasks and are embedded in a coherent way across grades and subjects.

Impact

Curricular coherence exists across grades and subject areas that promote college and career readiness for all students so that all learners must demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and faculty ensure that the school's curriculum is based on a constructivist perspective, which influences the selection of curricular materials, and is informed by power standards selected as priorities by staff. The curriculum is infused with different resources used coherently across classrooms. Expeditionary Learning is the core reading program, supplemented by the strengths of ReadyGen's close reading, text analysis, team talk and writing response components. From their previous use of the Teachers College Reading & Writing Project (TCRWP), the school kept guided reading, daily independent reading, with prompts, conferencing, and genre studies. In mathematics, the school uses EngageNY math modules and the reteach, differentiation, videos and game components of GOMath! In social studies, text sets and other CCLS-aligned resources from the New York City Department of Education's (NYCDOE) Common Core Library as well as from the New York State Education Department's (NYSED) EngageNY website are incorporated into the school's curriculum. In science, NYCDOE text sets and Full Option Science System™ (FOSS) kits are used.
- The school is focused on integrating the instructional shifts, with an emphasis on honing academic behavior, fostering student independence and initiative, and deepening questioning skills. The school strives for a balance in fiction and nonfiction texts and to ensure that students have access to both grade level and above level text. Real-life challenges and opportunities for students to do research are incorporated into the curriculum across content areas to enable students to engage in problem-solving. For example, in a module focused on the destruction caused by earthquakes, grade two students wrote letters to a friend in California warning them about an earthquake that will be hitting their area, incorporating information gleaned from two texts, and explaining how to be prepared and protected during the earthquake.
- Across grades, a five-day exemplar protocol is used where students read and understand on day one, model and do on day two, compare on day three, complete an exemplar on day four, and analyze and rate the exemplar on day five. The day five exemplar is differentiated based on student needs and observations students engaged in the other four days of the exemplar protocol. Tasks are evaluated and refined to ensure that student work and discussions build both conceptual knowledge and higher order thinking skills. Tasks are also modified to include varied discussion protocols, graphic organizers, technology and small group activities. Resources such as Rosetta Stone®, Google Language and Google Translate provide support fluency and automaticity for English language learners (ELLs). Students use Study Island®, an e-learning application, to access individualized interactive help in multiplication and other skills.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

While staff establishes a culture of learning that systemically conveys high expectations for all student, communication that supports families' understanding of high expectations for college and career readiness can be strengthened.

Impact

Students receive feedback to help understand expectations for college and career readiness so that they are prepared for the next level, however families' understanding of these expectations are not deepened to enhance home-school partnerships that support student progress.

Supporting Evidence

- Parents reported that they receive very detailed feedback on their child's performance and receive reports of their child's progress every eight weeks. "It tells me that the teacher read through the work, reinforces it, and puts me on track as a mother," said a parent. Another mother said, "They have a pattern here, you see it in the homework. My son can tell you the sequence and how it works." A father said his son asked him, "Do you use the date of the book to judge the tone?" The father added, "It's not just reading, it's about getting to the gist."
- Student learning objectives are written as "I Can" statements. Regarding whether schoolwork is challenging, one student stated, "It depends on the subject. Math is not easy, but I can do it. I think ELA (English Language Arts) is harder because you have to use inferencing and give details." Principal Vaughan stated, "Building mental models and using manipulatives is a big expectation for math." Another student commented, "My teacher always gives positive feedback and advice. Sometimes she meets with us and tells us how to fix our work." Another student said, "I'm okay with it being wrong because I'll do better next time." Another student mentioned, "When we learned about the Bill of Rights, the Holocaust, and Child Labor, it helped me to move up in my writing and to learn about our history. I really like learning about history. I learned how to state my opinion and how I felt about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights." Finally, a student added, "If you look in my bag, I have seven books. I'm a bookworm. I got a three on my persuasive writing on the Mexican Revolution, but I think it's a good piece."
- Parent participants in the Quality Review process said they lacked a clear understanding of the Common Core Learning Standards. Although parent workshops are offered throughout the year to help parents support their child's academics at home, it's often the same parents who participate. Parents agreed that the school has many means of contact and said "Improving the knowledge base will push us all."
- The school's website, its logo, and its written communications, including posting belief statements, all reflect the school's organizational social identity, namely "Baychester Academy: School of Great Expectations." Behavioral expectations known as "ROCKS" (Respectful, Organized, Cooperative, Kind, and Safe) are posted on the website and throughout the school. Monthly assemblies celebrate student effort consistent with ROCKS, perseverance, and taking responsible risks. The school's student government president stated, "We're thinking of starting a big brother/big sister program to tutor kids in other grades." Through the school's partnership since 2009 with Education through Music, students build self-esteem and self-confidence while learning to appreciate music.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Across the great majority of classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best and evident in work products and discussions.

Impact

The school's belief system is informed by the Danielson Framework through discussions at the team and school levels. Student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking, participation, and ownership.

Supporting Evidence

- The school focuses on questioning and discussion techniques, engaging students in learning, and using assessment in instruction, based on an analysis of the prior school year teacher effectiveness data. Discussion prompts on classroom desks provide students with four categories of sentence starters, including confirmation (“I think...” or “I believe...”), confusion (“I don’t understand...” or “I am confused about...,” extension (“This makes me think...” or “Now I am wondering...” or “Can you tell me more about...,” and review (“I want to go back to what was said...”). The use of accountable talk stems, team talk groups, individual student goals taped to desks, and real-time, technology-based feedback applications like Class Dojo engage students in their own learning.
- To promote active engagement, teachers regularly engage students in team talk and circulate among the groups listening and giving feedback. Using a “flipped classroom” protocol, more class time is available for more rich conversations between student groups and more one-on-one time between teachers and students. Reading groups are charged with assessing their own participation, cooperation, active listening, and adherence to protocols. During a grade five lesson, students were actively engaged in writing about women’s rights under the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and Title IX.
- Tasks are differentiated for students performing above level, at level, and below level to reflect high levels of student thinking. Teaching points are also differentiated. For example, a grade five lesson focused on the book *Esperanza Rising* has a single learning target (I can analyze how Esperanza develops and changes over time) together with differentiated teaching points for high support (Good readers use context clues to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words), medium support (Good readers chunk longer text to paraphrase each section of the text), and independent with coaching (Good readers make inferences about characters by using evidence from the text). Likewise, a fourth-grade lesson had a single learning target (I can identify details that support the main ideas of a section of *The Scoop on Clothes, Homes and Daily Life in Colonial America* and *If You Lived in Colonial Times*) together with differentiated teaching points for high support (Finding the gist, identifying important details), medium support/partner reading with independent coaching group (Finding the gist, making inferences), and independent coaching/partner reading with medium support group (Making inferences).

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Across the great majority of classrooms, teachers use common assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula and offer a clear portrait of student mastery. Also across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the varied use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

Actionable and meaningful feedback is provided to students and teachers regarding student achievement. Teachers make effective curricular and instructional adjustments to meet all students' learning needs and students are aware of their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- "We're a very data-driven school," said one teacher. Teachers analyze data from weekly ReadyGen performance tasks, the i-Ready[®] electronic diagnostic, end of module reading and writing assessment tasks, mid-unit assessments, and end-of-unit assessments, exemplars, exit tickets, on-demand writing, debriefings, and Fountas and Pinnell reading levels. Data is uploaded onto Google Docs so that everyone has access. Four-point rubrics are used by teachers and are understood by students. Child-friendly feedback is provided in the form of "glows (strengths) and grows (next steps)."
- Kindergarten, third, fourth and fifth grades are performing higher in literature than informational texts, according to a formative assessment analysis conducted by the school. First grade is performing at the same level in both literature and informational texts, and second grade is performing higher in informational texts than literature. As a result, the school is deepening its work on informational texts, is continuing to use question stems daily, and is building content knowledge in social studies and science. In mathematics, there has been a seven-point gain from September to November 2014 based on the school's analysis of mathematics exemplars, which was reflected across most grades. There was a decrease in Level One performance based on the MoSLs in ELA and mathematics and the on-demand tasks. However, the performance in mathematics by third and fourth graders for the same period decreased, leading to the school's decision to focus more support on solving two-step problems. Students who are performing on or above grade level have shown progress on the writing tasks. The school attributes this progress to the provision of targeted feedback to students, the analysis of student work, and the use of differentiated tasks with scaffolds as needed.
- Common assessment practices used include thumb-o-meter, stop and jots, answers on individual dry erase boards, think-pair-share, entrance and exit tickets, and scoring of on-demand writing. Teachers use checklists daily to document student observations during class, and modify lessons for differentiated student groups based on this data. While her first-grade students completed a mathematics exemplar in small groups, a teacher circulated the room using Post-It Notes to give immediate feedback to students. Similarly, a grade four teacher documented feedback she provided verbally to groups of students as they completed exit tickets. A grade four teacher asked students to make recommendations on a student presentation. Students offered verbal feedback and graded the presentation using a common rubric. Afterwards, the presenting student shared her self-assessment and stated, "In my opinion, I think I should have gotten a higher grade because I used valid inferences and claims, analyzed the text, and included relevant facts and details to develop my response."

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The great majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations that have strengthened teacher instructional capacity and promoted the implementation of the CCLS. The school has embedded distributed leadership structures.

Impact

There is school-wide instructional coherence and increased student achievement for all learners. There is effective teacher leadership and teachers plan an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal stated, “There’s a laser focus on performance in team meetings and these meetings lift the pedagogy of the teachers through collaborative effort.” During at least four common planning periods weekly in addition to weekly team meetings, teachers share what units they are focused on and how they are differentiating their support to low/middle/high students. Teachers plan and review student assessments and to adjust/revise curricula to align with the school’s chosen power standards and to effectively address the needs of their students. They also plan how to support students through the unit and regularly discuss resources, materials and ideas.
- All grade meetings have structured protocols for looking at student work to capture the gaps between what students know and unit/lesson expectations. The protocols in use, like the Probing Question Protocol, were shared with teachers by two colleagues participating in the Teacher Leadership Program (TLP). In a Grade 5 team meeting, four teachers engaged in a discussion of trends among student work artifacts of two students, specifically the difficulty both students encountered identifying and elaborating on text details. A tentative action plan was discussed by the team, focused on chunking the text, labeling the evidence to ensure effective extraction of the right evidence, and using a graphic organizer and question stem with details to help both students to express their interpretation of the evidence.
- The school’s embedded distributed leadership structures influence key decisions. Administrators and teacher leaders collaboratively facilitate all teams, including the school’s Child Study, Professional Development, Special Education, MoSL/Data, and grade teams. During team meetings, teachers rotate group leadership roles like timekeeper and note taker. The school is one of a small subset of schools participating in the first implementation year for the NYCDOE’s Model Teacher program, a school-based teacher leadership role in which the school’s two Model Teachers serve as resources to their colleagues by demonstrating effective teaching strategies, sharing their success in achieving instructional goals with students, and hosting intervisitations to their laboratory classrooms. For example, a first-grade Model Teacher recently facilitated a session for her colleagues on the topic of “Using assessment data and units of study to design child-friendly goals in kindergarten through grade two. Teachers participating in the NYCDOE’s Teacher Leadership Program (TLP) facilitate the school’s professional learning communities (PLCs) each Tuesday and turnkey professional development for their colleagues. The school’s Academic Intervention Services (AIS) teacher is currently a participant in the NYCDOE’s Leaders in Education Apprenticeship Program (LEAP).