



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

**Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning**

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2014-2015**

**South Bronx Preparatory: A College Board School**

**Middle-High School 221**

**360 East 145<sup>th</sup> Street  
Bronx  
NY 10454**

**Principal: Ellen Flanagan**

**Date of review: January 14, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Kristine Mustillo**

## The School Context

South Bronx Preparatory School is a middle-high school with 656 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 27% Black, 71% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 23% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 92.0% for middle school and 88.0% for high school.

## 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>Well Developed</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>Proficient</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>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</b> |

## Area of Celebratio

|                           |                              |                |                       |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Quality Indicator:</b> | <b>3.4 High Expectations</b> | <b>Rating:</b> | <b>Well Developed</b> |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|

### Findings

High expectations are consistently communicated to staff through the Danielson Framework for Teaching. High expectations are communicated to students through regular advisory and academic supports.

### Impact

Structures and systems that include ongoing communication support both high instructional expectations and mutual accountability for staff and students' personal behaviors leading to their success and college and career readiness.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school participated in the Teacher Effectiveness Pilot to introduce staff to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. In addition to unpacking the standards through school-wide conversations, the practice of inter-visitations is used regularly to norm what each domain looks like in practice and create a culture of learning across the school. Administration conducts regular cycles of observation and feedback individually and as an administrative team to ensure consistency of feedback to teachers and to strengthen their own practices in providing instructional supports.
- Teacher team planning meetings include a focus on three Danielson competencies each month. Administration uses observation data and teacher feedback to inform competency selection and the time period for the focus. Across classrooms and in teacher team conversations there was consistent evidence that teacher capacity in the planning and preparation and instructional domains is being strengthened.
- All students participate in advisory with school staff, including administration. During advisory students review their academic portfolio to understand course and exam expectations. Advisory also focuses on fostering personal and academic behaviors necessary for middle school, high school, and college. Juniors and seniors participate in regular meetings with administration and their parents to ensure they are on track for graduation, have filled out college applications, applied for financial aid resources, and/or have a post-secondary plan. Eighteen months out of high school, between 75% and 79% of the students are consistently enrolled in post-secondary programs as compared to a peer average of 40% and City averages of 65%-70%.
- A three year Connected Learning grant helps students and families stay connected at home. Students are able to access individualized practice in English language arts and math. This grant also gives students access to e-mail and Jupiter grades so that they can monitor their own progress towards completing requirements and access teacher support should they need assistance. Expanding student use of self-monitoring and communication systems supports student ownership of their educational experience.

## Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

### Findings

While pedagogy provides consistent instructional supports, the use of strategic entry points and extensions to support higher order thinking skills in tasks and conversations varies across the school.

### Impact

Across classrooms, scaffolds and supports are available to assist students in accessing rigorous curricula materials and tasks, however as the supports are broad rather than strategic extensions are being modified to ensure they are enriching the curricula and are appropriately challenging.

### Supporting Evidence

- Role assignments are utilized in project based tasks and investigations. Students may serve as recorder, reporter, and/or timekeeper, or take on more specialized roles like researcher, depending on the task. This practice along with vocabulary supports, graphic organizers, and station teaching, are evidence that teachers have implemented structures to support access and engagement for all learners. However, teachers largely monitor and check in with groups, missing out on strategically assessing and providing guided support during work sessions so that all students are appropriately challenged.
- Station teaching was utilized consistently in math. In an eighth grade math class, teachers established stations where students were working to apply their knowledge of transformations in various activities. One station was a reteach station designed to provide small group instruction based on student needs. Following the modeling of the practice, the teacher set a timer and students were left to practice independently without further assessment or guidance, and they then moved to the next center. A second station labeled *Collaborative Activities* was largely students working independently while a teacher was available for questions as needed. At times this group became distracting to other groups, as they were calling out and commenting to each other without engaging in meaningful dialogue around the task.
- Role assignments and questioning strategies were used in science, social studies, and English language arts, to promote participation in tasks and discussion. Students participated in conversations that asked them to analyze and synthesize multiple sources of text in evaluating societal conflicts. In a science class students collaboratively analyzed plant and animal cells looking for different characteristics to be able to identify cell samples. However, teachers “checking-in” and taking “mental notes” limited opportunities to increase engagement and push student thinking, relying heavily on their memory as opposed to having conference notes or checklists to have more accurate records of where students are performing in the moment.

## Additional Findings

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.1 Curriculum**

**Rating:**

**Well Developed**

### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure all curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). Student work and data is consistently used to refine curricula and tasks.

### Impact

The school's curricula decisions build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students. Systems and structures to support revisions to curricula and tasks allow planning for access and engagement of all learners.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school has adopted Expeditionary Learning in English language arts and CMP3 in math to supplement teacher created Common Core Learning Standards aligned curricula. Teachers participate in the process of curriculum development in vertical teams along with administration. Teams meet each summer and weekly during the school year to continually strengthen this work. The school utilizes the Tri-State Rubric along with resources from Engage NY and the Common Core Library to ensure rigorous Common Core aligned curricula and tasks across content areas. In order to meet the needs of a diverse population of students moving towards college and career readiness, teacher teams meet to ensure the principles of Universal Design for Learning and executive functioning skills are embedded within units of study.
- Teacher teams meet regularly to refine units and academic tasks using student work and data. Student work is analyzed using the What, So What, Now What protocol to inform instructional decision making. Student data in the form of item analyses on periodic assessments is used to modify unit and lesson plans for reteach opportunities and spiraling of content skills. Student work and student data is also used to form instructional groups so that tasks are planned and scaffolded to address individual learning needs providing access and increasing cognitive engagement in appropriately challenging tasks.
- Lesson plans show a heavy emphasis on asking students to explain their thinking in math and to use text based evidence to support claims in English language arts, science and social studies. Scaffolds are embedded within units to support students in rigorous tasks. This includes the use of graphic organizers and small group instruction where peers take on different roles in collaborative group work. Teachers are increasing scaffolding up and challenging tasks for high level students.
- Teachers define rigor as mental cross-fit learning. This involves giving students the opportunity to think and learn through the provision of experiences that include project based learning, station teaching, modeling, group work and independent and guided practice. As part of the iZone the school focuses on technology integration and utilizes Light Sail and Achieve 3000 to supplement the curricula, giving students access to individualized practice in school and at home.
- All non-tenured teachers participate in curriculum reviews with tenured teachers and administration in order to strengthen curriculum and build instructional capacity school-wide. In addition, vertical team meetings take place monthly to ensure vertical coherence across grades and content.

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|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Quality Indicator:</b> | <b>2.2 Assessment</b> | <b>Rating:</b> | <b>Well Developed</b> |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-----------------------|

### **Findings**

Across the vast majority of classrooms, assessments are aligned to curricula and offer a clear picture of student progress that inform instructional and curricula decisions.

### **Impact**

The school's systems for student work and data analysis provides actionable feedback to both students and teachers and results in exemplary progress gains for all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Teacher teams analyze student work using protocols. Teachers use this information to determine instructional next steps for groups and individual students.
- Teachers analyze student progress using baseline and benchmark assessments across content. Teachers use item analysis data to plan for student groups. Teachers examine questions where high percentages of students selected incorrect responses, look at the skill that students were being asked to demonstrate, the language of the question to identify any misconceptions and how to incorporate academic language into units of study. Additionally, teachers look at student process in extended responses to determine where students may have gone off track and identify which skills they were able to demonstrate and which skills require additional support.
- Teacher teams developed a writing rubric that spans contents in grades 6 through 12 in order to ensure coherence in expectations school-wide. This rubric, which is also utilized across content areas, ensures students receive consistent feedback on their work products and can identify their growth along the continuum.
- The school utilizes performance assessments and teachers participate in ongoing professional development around norming and scoring student work and in forming next steps using assessment results. These ongoing professional dialogues across grade and vertical teams results in valuable feedback to teachers around the impact of instruction on student performance and feedback to students around their next steps.
- The school spans grades 6 through 12. In grade 6, exam results in English language arts and math show proficiency ratings that are typically around 10%. By the time the cohort of students are in high school, Regent exams show an overwhelming majority of students passing. 2013-2014 results show 85% of students passing Integrated Algebra, 96% passing Living Environment, and 85% passing United States history

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|---------------------------|---|----------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Quality Indicator:</b> | <b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b> | <b>Rating:</b> | <b>Well Developed</b> |
|---------------------------|---|----------------|-----------------------|

**Findings**

All pedagogues are engaged in structured professional collaborations focused on strengthening teacher practice and improving student performance utilizing the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the Common Core Learning Standards as benchmarks.

**Impact**

The work of teacher teams has resulted in improved pedagogy and increased student achievement for all students, with exemplary gains for students in high needs subgroups, closing the achievement gap.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teacher teams meet regularly in vertical and grade bands. Teacher teams use this time to participate in student work analysis, plan instructional rounds, and engage in professional studies designed to support instruction aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Teachers noted specific changes to practice such as providing exemplars for students and having discussions around rubrics prior to the start of units and tasks so that students are clear on expectations and have a plan on how to work towards them. Teachers noted inter-visitiation practices have resulted in more effective differentiation and engagement strategies being utilized across classrooms.
- A vertical teacher team within the humanities department explored the essential question, “How do I differentiate up without giving more work?” Teachers examined a unit plan, asking clarifying questions and giving professional feedback. Opportunities for student debate and evaluation of primary source documents were embedded within the unit along with increased opportunities to engage in peer dialogue assessing the impact of the Columbian exchange.
- The school has demonstrated consistent progress gains in English language arts and math for all learners. Teachers note perseverance and building on best practices from year-to-year as the key to student progress. Most recently, teachers noted students struggling on State exams, including State Regents requiring supporting claims using relevant evidence. Content teachers worked with literacy specialists to develop strategies and identify opportunities for students to evaluate source documents and create organized writing pieces. These practices were shared and implemented across grades and content and resulted in improved student work products.