



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Jonas Bronck Academy

Middle School 228

**400 EAST FORDHAM ROAD
BRONX
NY, 10458**

Principal: Brenda Gonzalez

Dates of review: December 9, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Jacqueline Gonzalez

The School Context

Jonas Bronck Academy is a middle school with 258 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 18% Black, 70% Hispanic, 4% White, and 7% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 21% special education students. Boys account for 39% of the students enrolled and girls account for 61%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012-2013 was 97.3%.

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	Additional Findings	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	Celebration	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:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Across all grades and content areas teachers employ instructional strategies that are grounded in school wide beliefs that students learn best when lessons include student choice, and opportunities for critical thinking, and high quality discussions.

Impact

Lessons that are well planned and executed effectively result in student work products and discussions that reveal high levels of student thinking and participation. Diverse learners have a variety of ways to access content and demonstrate their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- In all subject areas, teachers implement strategies that include scaffolding questions using Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK) levels, strategic grouping of diverse learners based on data from Standards Mastery assessments, and on task and text complexity. In the vast majority of classrooms, high-level discussions are student led while teachers monitor and track participation. In one class, during the Socratic seminar, the teacher used the smart board to jot students' names, summarize their input, and tally frequency of contributions. All voices are valued and heard by peers and teachers encourage full participation.
- Lessons across classrooms begin with a review of learning targets that are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). Clear expectations for engagement are reflected in the motivational "Do Now" which is timed and anchors student learning in a question or task. For example in an English class, students read the guidelines for discussion and quickly transitioned to a student led Socratic Seminar focused on "Does true love exist?" In a math class, students reviewed a graph on the depreciated value of a car in preparation for a lesson on functional relationships.
- Students describe their learning at Jonas Bronck Academy (JBA) as "interesting, challenging, and fun", and add that the work they are doing is preparing them for college. This is evidenced in student work products, which are mostly research-based and guided by inquiry. Student work reviewed included a seventh grade historical argument essay, a power point presentation on Africa, and an original short fiction by a sixth grader. Across content areas, tasks reflect high levels of student ownership of learning and demonstration of critical thinking.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

High expectations are consistently communicated to the entire staff, students, and school community, and there are various structures in place to support all stakeholders in meeting those expectations.

Impact

The work of school leaders and staff in ensuring that high standards for teaching and learning are clear and communicated consistently is evident in the school's communication structures. However, there are missed opportunities for partnering with parents to support their children, including higher achieving students, as they progress towards expectations for college and careers.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers completed a survey and ARIS self-assessment in the beginning of the year, which focused on his/her individual goals, aligned to the expectations for professional practice using the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Teacher accountability is guided by progress towards individual goals. Furthermore, professional development, observations of lessons, and inter-visitation by colleagues, specifically focus on questioning strategies and feedback to students, which are school wide expectations.
- The school's advisory program is a structure that has enabled teachers to develop strong trusting relationships with small groups of students. Students speak highly of this program and say that advisory teachers really care about them and have high expectations of them for high school, college, and beyond. During Monday and Friday early morning meetings teachers help students organize their planners, ensure that they are ready for learning for the week, and facilitate discussions about topics related to their social emotional growth and readiness for the next level.
- Parents say they receive frequent communication about their children's progress, via emails, phone calls, and progress reports. They indicate that the staff is always available to assist them with any aspect of their children's school life and provide support for larger family issues in times of crisis and need. There is an awareness of CCLS expectation and school wide goals and priorities amongst parents. However, parents express that they would like to be more involved in the actual development of school wide goals and initiatives and that they need more information about the expectations related to the CCLS.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Curricula across content areas are well aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and require that all students use critical thinking and analytical skills.

Impact

As a result of strategic curricular decisions across core content areas and electives, the school ensures consistently rigorous units of study and tasks. All students have access to complex, non-fiction, and content specific texts, and opportunities to demonstrate higher order thinking in their work products.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers have developed the school's curricula and aligned all content areas to the CCLS over the past three years. Decisions have evolved from standards alignment to grappling with scripted programs such as Expeditionary Learning. Teachers have adjusted the sequence of learning experiences and developed inquiry based tasks. For example, students read *To Kill a Mockingbird* to answer the essential contemporary question, "Is New York City segregated?"
- Teachers' capacity in curriculum development and refinement is strengthened by ongoing professional development sessions facilitated by Teaching Matters as well as school based teacher led workshops. Teachers use protocols from the National School Reform Faculty to help them analyze academic tasks, develop learning targets, and revise pacing of modules, to support mastery of standards by all learners.
- Typical classroom activities are designed to engage all students in critical thinking, self- and peer- assessments of work, and accountable talk using scaffolds or sentence starters to extend each other's thinking and respectful dialogue or disagreement. For example, an eighth grade unit includes a lesson that asks groups of students to interpret imagery in Shakespeare's *All the World's a Stage*. In a Social Studies class, students analyze a Rudyard Kipling poem to discuss American Imperialism.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms and content areas, the use of rubrics, student self- and peer- assessments, and common CCLS-aligned assessments, allow for a clear portrait of student mastery and progress. Teachers use data from assessments to provide meaningful feedback to students.

Impact

Teachers' and school leaders' use of the analysis of data to inform curricular and instructional adjustments ensures that students' learning needs are met. The targeted feedback students receive about their learning makes them aware of their next steps and allows them to demonstrate increased mastery.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers administer baseline assessments in all content areas to students at the beginning of each school year. Data from baselines and Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) are used to inform starting points for instructional planning and adjustments. Additionally, teachers use rubrics aligned to the MOSL rubrics to assess on going performance tasks to ensure that students are aware of the criteria used to measure their yearlong learning.
- Task specific rubrics are used to assess student work and provide students feedback that informs their next steps. Students say teachers give them frequent feedback and ask them to self-assess using rubrics so that they can "own their learning" and monitor their own progress. A review of various work products reflects that across grades, most rubrics are based on a scale of four ratings from "exceeding" to "attempting" standards.
- The school's online standards program, Mastery Connect, allows teachers to assess and track student progress on particular content/grade level standards. A review of pre- and post- assessments by unit provides grade level snapshots of student mastery for each learner relative to the standards, including English language learners and students with disabilities. These snapshots are used to determine extra supports for students and strategic grouping for classroom instruction.

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

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in frequent professional collaborations focused on the analysis of teacher practice, student work, and assessment data. The structure for teacher team meetings is an important decision-making vehicle in the school that influences key initiatives about student learning.

Impact

Structures for teacher collaboration result in the development of teacher leadership throughout the school. The frequent opportunities for teachers to assess one another's instructional practices and impact on student learning strengthen pedagogy and student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Grade level teams meet daily for an hour while content teams meet weekly for an hour. The main focus of teamwork is the analysis of student data via inquiry cycles to develop instructional strategies that support student learning. For example, modeling during the beginning of the lessons and scaffolding new vocabulary that students will encounter in text. Teachers state that feedback from colleagues about their planned questioning strategies and specific suggestions for making adjustments to tasks such as changing the pacing of learning targets has enabled them to make necessary shifts to support student learning.
- The effective use of "SWAP", Scholar Work Analysis Protocol by all teacher teams has elevated teacher capacity to define student's learning needs and make necessary instructional adjustments. During one team meeting, teachers spent time discussing a student's profile, which provided context for the student's readiness including previous assessment information and pertinent data such as language proficiency, scores on DRP, and Performance Series assessments. Teachers then use this to determine next learning steps for the student and apply instructional adjustments for other learners as appropriate.
- Each grade team has a lead teacher that is also a member of the school's instructional team. In addition, two peer coaches, one demonstration teacher, and a math lead teacher play essential roles in the schools' decision making about teaching and learning. For example, teachers developed school wide criteria and rubrics for the meaningfulness of displays of student work. Teams of teachers also worked on task specific rubrics together and shared specific scaffolds and strategies to support particular learners, including students with disabilities and English language learners. This collaboration increases school wide coherence of learning expectations and teacher accountability for the progress of students they share.