



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Bronx HS for Writing and Communication Arts

11X253

**800 East Gun Hill Road
Bronx
NY 10467**

Principal: Terri Grey

Date of review: November 19, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Richard Cintron

The School Context

Bronx HS for Writing and Communication Arts is a/an high school with 413 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 41% Black, 52% Hispanic, 2% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 23% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 88%.

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	Proficient
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	Focus	Developing
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	Proficient
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	Additional Findings	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	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards and academic tasks are refined using student work, to provide access to curricula for all students

Impact

The school's purposeful curriculum decisions build coherence, and data-driven task refinements promote cognitive engagement and college and career readiness for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Lesson plans are cognitively engaging, requiring students to cite evidence, analyze information, develop claims and counter claims, and apply concepts to solve real-world problems. For example, a review of a lesson plan requires students to analyze information from a variety of sources and draw a conclusion based on their findings. In an integrated algebra math lesson plan, students are required to create and solve linear equations and then apply these same skills to real world situations. In a third lesson plan, students are required to write a claim-based piece related to a primary source document citing evidence from the document to defend their stance.
- School leaders and teachers explained how curricula and tasks are purposefully planned and refined using student work collected from benchmark assessments and student class work. For example, a tenth grade teacher team was in the process of grading common benchmark assessments recently administered to determine progress towards student goals established at the beginning of the year connected to citing evidence in writing. Observations from this analysis would then be used to modify units across all subject areas.
- Student work and tasks displayed in the corridors and summative writing assessments found in unit plans across all subject areas were aligned to CCLS and content standards.
- The school's decision to use an online curriculum mapping resource is consistently building coherence across grades and content areas. All teachers use this planning tool and are able to view each other's maps and revisions, and make instructional adjustments from student work and data results aligned to the needs of the school's specific student groups.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies inconsistently provide entry points into the lesson and student discussions reflect uneven levels of student understanding.

Impact

In most classrooms, the limited facilitation of student-led discussions and active student engagement curtailed opportunities to promote higher order thinking and rigorous participation, thus hindering a diversity of students from demonstrating their thinking skills.

Supporting Evidence

- In classrooms visited, some teachers asked only low level recall questions that did not call for students to strategically think or to extend their thinking. In one English class the teacher asked several questions only requesting students to recall facts from a story read the previous day. In English as a Second language (ESL) class, the teacher asked several questions prompting simple answers and then summarized the student's answers for the rest of the class.
- Although students were working collaboratively across all classrooms visited, in some instances, not all students were prompted to actively engage in the discussions within their groups. This prevented some students from articulating the work of the group and having a full understanding of the material being covered. For example, in a science class where students were studying mass to determine the difference in the weight of specific objects, several students in one group could not explain why the group's answer was correct after they had completed the assignment. In another History class, although students had annotated a piece of text that they had just read, not all students were sure how the information that had been identified by the group would be used to develop a deeper understanding of the material.
- Although the principal, teachers, and students described their school-wide focus on annotation and students citing evidence in their writing and speaking, this practice was not consistently observed across the majority of classrooms visited. In one history class, although students were asked to read an article and defend a claim and counter claim during class discussion, the teacher did not ask the students to cite evidence during their discussion. In another history class, while there was evidence of students annotating the text that they had just read, some students could not explain how this practice was helping them complete the task.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teachers create assessments and use rubrics aligned to the school curricula to provide students and teachers with actionable feedback. Data from student work products is used to adjust curricula and instruction.

Impact

The school's use of common assessments, data analysis and feedback allows teachers to determine student progress toward goals and adjust instruction accordingly to meet the needs of all students

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses Rubicon ATLAS, an online system to document all curricula work including the school's common assessments and assessments built in to the units of study and lesson plans designed in curriculum maps. Common formative and summative assessments administered across grade levels and content areas are created collaboratively in teacher team meetings and a rubric is used to assess evidence of rigor and alignment to standards.
- Teachers use data from pre-assessments to work with students to create individual goals aligned to key skills identified in units. For example, all math and science teachers have administered pretests and students have created individual SMART goals based on student outcomes. In the humanities classes, data analysis from pre-assessments revealed that students struggled in two areas of the schools six-point writing rubric. Teachers have created mini rubrics connected to these areas that are being used across all classrooms to ensure that formative assessments and in-class writing tasks are aligned to end of unit summative assessments.
- The use of rubrics accompanied by specific targeted actionable feedback from teachers and students is an established ritual for improving student achievement across the school that the principal, teachers and students were able to speak about. The principal schedules professional development to support teachers in the creation and use of rubrics and with providing feedback to students. During a teacher team meeting teachers discussed how they regularly use rubrics to grade student work and norm their practices to ensure a common lens among staff members. Students spoke to how they regularly use rubrics in class and with homework assignments and how teachers confer with them to provide targeted feedback to improve their writing. Students also spoke to how they use rubrics during in-class writing assignments to peer and self-assess, and how this process has helped them to better understand their strengths and next steps towards improving their writing.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

High expectations are consistently communicated to staff via the use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching and professional development opportunities. Staff provides students with feedback, guidance and ongoing support that helps prepare them for college and career decisions.

Impact

A culture of learning and collaboration between staff, students, and families exists that fosters high expectations for all and prepares students for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal has met with staff as a group and then individually to discuss school-wide and individual expectations for classroom teaching practices. Professional Development is aligned to high need areas of the Danielson Framework for Teaching identified by the schools professional development team after an analysis of last year's teacher observations and student achievement data. Professional development is experienced in whole group, small group and individual settings and conducted by the administration, outside consultants, network specialists and lead teachers to allow for differentiated targeted support.
- During a student meeting students spoke to how advisory classes across all grade levels regularly provide them information on how to investigate and discuss college and career opportunities that best meet their interests and needs. Students mentioned specific examples of how Career Days and the use of the College Board and Career Zone websites were helpful in informing them and pushing their thinking regarding possible options for after graduation.
- Students spoke to how teachers and guidance staff regularly discusses and challenge them to take advantage of opportunities such as College Now, Advanced Placement (AP) classes, as well as additional classes needed to obtain the highest possible diploma option available to them to better prepare them for colleges and careers. The results have been an increase in the number of AP classes offered this school year, increased student registration for College Now classes at Lehman College, and increases in the number of students who are taking classes towards advanced diploma designations.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based collaborations that promote student achievement and strengthen teacher practice. Distributed leadership structures allow teachers to have a voice in key decisions across the school.

Impact

The work of teacher teams has strengthened teacher collaboration resulting in improvements to pedagogical practices and a stronger voice in key decisions affecting supports for student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- During a teacher team meeting teachers spoke about how they regularly meet in grade and content teams to examine student work and use that data to provide feedback to students connected to their SMART goals. At the beginning of the teacher team meeting observed, using a rubric for analyzing student data, teachers were engaged in actually examining student work in order to determine progress on student goals for groups of students they share. Teachers also discussed the focus strategy and how they were implementing it in their discipline areas.
- Teachers articulated how they share best instructional practices connected to targeted areas of focus identified by the examination of student data and how these collaborative meetings have helped to create a culture of intervisitation among staff members that has led to more targeted feedback from peers about their practice.
- Teacher leaders spoke to how they meet regularly with the principal to discuss professional development connected to teacher practice and student achievement trends and collaboratively plan support for staff on a school, group, and individual level. The principal also provides professional development for teacher leaders on facilitation skills to further strengthen their ability to effectively lead the work of their teacher teams.