



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

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**The Bronx Latin School**

**Middle-High School X267**

**800 Home Street  
Bronx  
NY 10456**

**Principal: Annette Fiorentino**

**Date of review: December 3, 2014**

**Reviewer: Mimi Fortunato**

## The School Context

The Bronx Latin High School is a middle-high school with 516 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 24% Black, 74% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 16% English language learners and 22% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 94.1%.

## 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>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>Additional Findings</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>Celebration</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>

## Area of Celebration

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

The principal has developed a distributive leadership structure, and ensures that the vast majority of staff engages in ongoing grade level and content area inquiry-based teacher-led professional collaborations.

### Impact

The embedded collaborative structure empowers teachers, promotes school-wide instructional coherence aligned with the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts, and supports progress towards learning goals.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers meet regularly in grade and content specific teams and use collaboratively developed protocols to analyze curricula and student work, engage in shared reflection, and develop action plans to address next steps. For example, teachers have developed an inquiry protocol for task development and implementation in which they rate one another's planned tasks on a scale of 1 to 4 for alignment to content standards, evidence of planning for multiple entry points, multiple strategies, and language precision. Teachers use the outcomes to collaboratively support curricula revisions.
- Agendas and minutes of all instructional meetings are shared through the use of Google docs, ensuring coherence and shared accountability for school-wide improved instructional practice. For example, minutes from an English language arts inquiry team meeting provided evidence of their collaborative development of the lesson study process, noted that members of the team assume shared responsibility for crafting a common writing rubric to be used across grade levels.
- A distributive leadership structure is embedded as an integral part of the school culture. Teacher leaders and department heads facilitate grade-level and department meetings, and teachers assume a leadership role in supporting colleagues in instructional decisions that impact student programming and curricula development. Teachers affirmed that they that they have significant voice in key instructional decisions, and stated that their perceptions and findings are taken into consideration. For example, the full instructional team meets each summer to co-plan and collaboratively revise curricula across grade level and content areas.

## Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

### Findings

Teacher practice across many classrooms reflect unity around a set of beliefs regarding how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching. In addition, the principal has developed structures to strengthen teacher pedagogy in implementing targeted instructional scaffolds and in the use of questioning and discussion techniques. However, these practices are not yet implemented across the vast preponderance of classrooms.

### Impact

Although teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect a common set of beliefs, and teachers provide multiple supports consistently to engage all learners, those supports are not always strategically planned. Thus, some students do not have the benefit of high quality supports and extensions that give them access to challenging and rigorous tasks that promote rich peer-peer discussion and full engagement in and ownership of their learning.

### Supporting Evidence

- Across a number of classrooms observed, lessons followed the workshop model, providing students with a structured do now, mini- lesson, and guided as well as independent or group practice. For example, in an English language arts and class observed, students were engaged in an independent practice writing task that reinforced skills taught in the mini-lesson and prepared students to support their claim in an upcoming Socratic seminar. However, in a self-contained English class for students with disabilities with a lesson aim of “What are the reasons authors write texts?”, the mini-lesson, guided practice, and group practice did not provide sufficient support to ensure that all learners in the class mastered the skill of analyzing author’s purpose, as evidenced by a number of students in the class expressing uncertainty as to the difference between the purpose of writing to inform, or writing to entertain the reader.
- Many teachers provided multiple entry points for English language learners and students with disabilities as well as learning extensions for higher achieving students. However, a science teacher was observed assigning all students the task of completing a worksheet that contained recall questions about fingerprints. In this class, differentiated scaffolds or supports were not evident, and groups of learners who completed the worksheet were observed waiting for further directions from the teacher rather than engaging in a learning extension.
- In a math class observed, students were given opportunities to demonstrate their thinking and justify their answers using sentence starters such as, “I have a question about...”, and “I would like to build on that idea...” In the group practice segment of the lesson, students were observed in peer discussion, peer evaluation, and in presenting their work to the class. However, during student presentations, the teacher posed questions directly to individual student presenters in a teacher-to-student, student-to-teacher call and response pattern of interaction. In a grade 12 United States History class, students were observed reading aloud excerpts from *A Raisin in the Sun* from the front of the room, and the co-teachers posed questions to those students, who then responded directly to the teachers, with the rest of class seated in rows silently observing the discussion.

## Additional Findings

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

The school has implemented structures that ensure curricula coherence across grade levels, with lessons designed to align to Common Core Learning Standards incorporating rigorous tasks that reflect the instructional shifts and college and career readiness skills for the school's diverse learners.

### Impact

Curricula and academic tasks in most classes emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills and promote college and career readiness for learners. However, tasks in some classes do not reflect strategic planning and refinement so that all learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities are cognitively engaged in rich tasks that provide them with opportunities to demonstrate high-level thinking across all content areas.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers have developed curricula that promote coherence in the grade six through twelve continuums across most content areas. For example, the principal has established a key instructional goal of writing across the curricula, with teachers expected to incorporate writing on demand activities that deepen student preparedness for college work.
- Teachers work collaboratively to plan for a high level of rigor for cohorts of students (whose grouping is based on student achievement) to ensure that higher-order skills are emphasized across grades and for all learners. However, a lesson objective in a Living Environment class was, "What is the purpose of nucleic acids?" This class lesson asked students to complete a worksheet that consisted of primarily recall questions, and the exit ticket consisted of the recall question, "What important nucleic acid is found inside the nucleus of cells?" In a social studies class, students were observed completing identical worksheets consisting primarily of fill-in-the-blank questions such as, "The ancient \_\_\_\_\_ thought of Egypt as being divided into two types of land", and "Name five cities that are located near the Nile River."
- Teachers collaboratively plan curricula refinements through an analysis of student needs. Most teachers' lesson plans listed modifications and supports for English language learners, and a math teacher noted strategically designed fluid groupings based on data analysis. However, some teachers' lesson plans noted generic supports such as, "translated text", "homogenous grouping", and in some lessons, there was no evidence of planning for strategic and individualized instructional supports.

**Findings**

Across the vast majority of classrooms, assessment practices are aligned to curricula, generating comprehensive data that provide feedback to teachers and students about student levels of mastery of learning targets, across grades and subjects. Ongoing analysis and tracking of student progress data are embedded assessment practices across the school.

**Impact**

Collaboration on continued refinement and implementation of a variety of assessments and sharing of assessment data with students and staff result in accurate feedback that helps students improve their performance and guides teachers in implementing adjustments that result in improved achievement by all learners.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teacher teams continually develop and revise assessments that are aligned with Common Core Learning Standards and the school's instructional goals of on-demand writing across content areas and increased math talk in classrooms. For example, math teachers administer a minimum of one Common Core task in each unit and English language arts and science teachers administer a minimum of two argumentative and one informational writing task per course.
- The school has developed an assessment cycle in which teachers are expected to use the resulting data from collaboratively developed assessments to identify students' learning needs and inform next instructional steps. Through this process, teacher teams are able to analyze student outcomes and implement revisions in instructional strategies, including skill sequencing and re-teaching of tasks. Minutes of team minutes show analysis of assessment data and follow up interventions such as re-grouping, after school tutoring, and Regents tutorials.
- Rubrics displayed on bulletin boards throughout the school provide actionable feedback to students. There are task specific rubrics, including a text annotation rubric posted on the wall in an advanced placement writing class where students were engaged in annotating text. Similarly, in a writing class, the teacher provided students with an argumentative paragraph rubric as they crafted a paragraph in response to the prompt, "Does race still matter in America?" Teachers were also observed making notes on clipboards as they provided students with feedback on work being done.
- A collection of spreadsheets show schoolwide, grade, class and individual level results of assessments that illustrate student mastery of targeted skills across all content areas. For example, IXL math reports contain spreadsheets that illustrate class schoolwide and individual level performance and progress of all students on the targeted skills. There are also I-Ready Class Profiles and Instructional Grouping Reports that show skills mastered by individual students. In addition, transcripts and other reports that track attendance, college and career readiness and Regents credits earned, further illustrate all students' progress and needs, and provide them with actionable feedback on performance across all disciplines.

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

The principal has a system for reciprocal communication of high expectations, and has created extensive opportunities for professional development for staff on the Danielson Framework for Teaching, and systems of ongoing feedback to families regarding student progress towards college and career readiness goals.

### **Impact**

The school's effective structures for sharing professional expectations result in staff members exhibiting a strong sense of mutual accountability in improving teaching and learning. On-going reciprocal communication with families fosters a culture of high expectations for all members of the school community in understanding student progress as connected to college and career readiness.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- The principal communicates high expectations to staff through a staff handbook, ongoing memos, and feedback to teachers regarding professional and instructional non-negotiables. For example, teachers are expected to participate in four inter-visitations and two lesson studies with colleagues each year, and to facilitate a minimum of three Socratic Seminars in their classes yearly.
- Teachers are engaged in ongoing professional development and collaborations such as lesson study in which teachers assume shared accountability for meeting established expectations and next steps.
- All teachers are expected to develop an individual professional growth plan that includes one goal aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, one goal aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, and one goal aligned to student outcomes. Teachers revisit these goals throughout the year. In addition, frequent cycles of observation and inter-visitations provide ongoing feedback to teachers regarding progress towards identified goals.
- Parents shared that they are in frequent contact with teachers and staff members regarding their child's growth, and that the school provides opportunities for them to participate in workshops regarding the Common Core Learning Standards, the college search and application process, as well as financial aid application procedures. Parents affirmed that they have access to the on-line grading system, and that they use Skedula to monitor their child's progress towards graduation.