



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

East Bronx Academy for the Future

High School X271

**1716 Southern Boulevard
Bronx
NY 10460**

Principal: Sarah Scrogin

**Date of review: May 8, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Buffie Simmons**

The School Context

East Bronx Academy for the Future is a high school with 628 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 26.5% Black, 70% Hispanic, 01% White, 02% Asian students and American Indian 0.5. The student body includes 11% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 85.0%.

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	Additional Findings	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	Additional Findings	Proficient
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	Focus	Developing
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	Celebration	Well Developed
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:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promote school goals and the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards with the instructional shifts, as well as shared leadership.

Impact

The school's structured teacher teams and professional learning strengthen the instructional capacity of teachers via the effective leadership structure that has affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- The vast majority of teacher teams are engaged in monthly cycles of inquiry based lesson study, which incorporate self-reflection, intervisitations, and peer feedback connected to teacher developed questions regarding their practice in relation to the Danielson Framework for Teaching component 3c that align with the school's instructional focus for this year. For example, in a Science Team Meeting Agendas and Minutes, teachers developed learning tasks to increase the amount of learner self-direction. The team discussed measurable objectives; supports needed to actualize the goals, assessment and rubrics. Each teacher developed goals, so as to successfully engage students in open-ended discussions, questions and investigations.
- Teacher teams, grade and subject area, have developed reflective practices and strengthened teacher instructional capacity by their articulated key shifts they make within their instruction. In a middle school English language arts (ELA) agenda, teachers reflected on goals set for test preparation. Teachers identified things that they are proud of such as the ability, "to analyze text and give supporting evidence providing examples and explanations, focusing on central and main ideas, weaving in test-taking strategies to the mini-lesson." Teachers stated, "I used to be very independent but I have learned through this collaborative process that we all are needed to improve student outcome and that is why we strengthen our skills and speak the same academic language.
- Distributed leadership through teacher teams is the core of the school and exemplifies through the mission statement: "at our school, all of us learn by doing, by actively digging in to the job at hand. Grade teams meet weekly and are comprised of one teacher from each subject area working collaboratively with learning specialists and guidance counselors to facilitate team meetings and to plan interventions for students who have IEPs, English language learner (ELLs) status, or who are at-risk or in need of acceleration. Grade teams engage in Kid and Teacher Talk and are responsible for the academic performance and social-emotional well being of the students in their grades. Subject area teams meet weekly to focus on curriculum alignment work and serve as facilitators of team meetings and also serve as coaches for individual teachers. The teacher leadership team comprised of subject and grade team leaders meet together with the administrative team weekly to set goals. In ten years, teachers and assistant principals have become network leaders, principal leadership facilitators, principals, assistant principals, lead and model teachers.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Teachers use common assessments and grading policies aligned to the school's curriculum. However providing actionable feedback to students and checks of understanding are inconsistent.

Impact

The limited student feedback and lack of checks for understanding hinders student growth and ownership.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has a uniform grading policy based on students' mastery of standards more than on the completion of work. The specified policy as such, homework – 10%, classwork – 35%, tests/quizzes – 20% and projects – 35%. While the school reconciled mastery-based grading, providing actionable feedback to students is limited. Student work provided to the observer had multiple assessments. Students' feedback was inconsistent. In a United States Government class, with student work, students received a presentation rubric and the teacher specifically gave detailed feedback such as, "...this is a good place to insert a counterclaim and how do these statistics match your own survey results?" Whereas some work was accompanied with rubrics and checklist, students had limited feedback to support them in the progression of their learning.
- Across classrooms, varying use of teachers' feedback to students hinders their next steps. In a Physics classroom, the teacher wrote meaningful comments in to ensure correction. "A well-developed experiment. Great collection of qualitative and quantitative data. To improve your "experimental error" section you need to explain more clearly how the batteries influenced your results. Then suggest how to improve the design." In an English language arts (ELA) classroom, the teacher assessed the qualities of a paragraph on a 2 point rubric. The teacher gave examples to demonstrate why the student did not receive a 10/10. The students received a 9/10 and next steps to explicitly connect to the topic and to highlight key words. However, this practice was not consistent where the presentation of student work was either devoid of student work or meaningful feedback including next steps. During the interview, students shared their work. Students in middle school math are given a closure activities packet to reflect and synthesize on what they have learned during their chapter. However, in review of samples of students' closure activities packets, work reflect, a score in a percentage form or check without comments. Student work comprised of ungraded work, rubrics without feedback, and grades such as 24/28 without rubrics or a check with great job or excellent work.
- Ongoing checking for understanding throughout the lessons is inconsistent across classrooms. During classroom observations, some teachers included exit slips, questioning, and walking around to assess student understanding. However, some teachers fail to check for student understanding throughout the lesson. In addition, student work denotes a check for good work or work was ungraded. Although the teacher walked around to assist, there was limited check in to assess the class understanding. Although some classes use self or peer-assessment practices, this is inconsistent across the school. Students are grouped continuously based on data. However, not all teachers are able to guide students toward improvement in small groups and provide them with specific learning strategies to improve their work as evidenced in self-assessment forms.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

High expectations are consistently messaged to staff via the use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching in trainings and other modes of communication. Families are apprised of student progress towards college and career readiness.

Impact

Structures that support the school's high expectations build buy-in and accountability amongst staff, students and their families, providing a clear direction towards elevated student achievement and their future.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal provides focused and targeted leadership that clearly communicates expectations of elevated academic achievement for students that models excellence while providing supports and responsibility. The principal's theory of action since opening the school 11 years ago has focused on developing and sharing a high standard of expectations for effective teaching across the classrooms. Promoted by all staff, there is a strong culture of high expectations to prepare students for a better future. This is evidenced by high levels of expectations for all staff throughout the community via workshops, staff handbook, website, peer-visitations, progress reports, orientations that emulate a culture where accountability is reciprocal between all stakeholders. Frequent cycles of observations hold staff accountable for meeting expectations for pedagogical practice. Teachers advise and hold each other accountable through the regularly scheduled team meetings and intervisitations where teachers work together to refine pedagogical practices via demo lessons and co-planning opportunities.
- During interviews, staff and parents expressed that they strive for the best in all that they do and are appreciative to have stability with the staff and administrative team. Parent workshops provide information regarding the importance of exam expectations, the Common Core Learning Standards and high school and college preparation. The staff emphatically shares that they believe in their students and their focus is on college and career preparation. This belief is echoed during the student and parent discussions. A parent quote: "My child was on the verge of dropping out of school, this school has saved him, and he is determined to attend college". Another parent states: "We live in the poorest Congressional district in our nation but this school has been a life line for us." Additionally, a parent states: "My child participates in Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) to support him with skills needed for college."
- The principal provides focused and targeted leadership that clearly communicates expectations of elevated academic achievement for students that models excellence while providing supports. With the focus on college-readiness, the school had an increase in acceptances to four-year colleges from the previous year. Consequently, teachers provide rigorous instruction of Regent's level courses such as Integrated Algebra, Living Environment, Spanish Proficiency, United States History and Government, achieving high student pass rates by which students receive high school credits upon graduation from middle school. Additionally, the school offers Advanced Placement courses such as English Language and Composition, Spanish Literature and Culture, United States Government and Politics and United States History.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curriculum and reflect an articulated set of beliefs how students learn best. Teachers consistently provide multiple entry points to the curricula.

Impact

All learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities, have access to standards based curriculum.

Supporting Evidence

- The school is committed to full implementation of the Danielson Framework as noted in the principal's staff meeting notes and professional development calendars. The school espoused the need to praise students and build relationships through grouping and by engaging students as problem solvers in learning and life. Teachers model expected behaviors and confer with groups of students. This is evident in the classes observed. For example, in a Grade 6 ELA class, the teacher models figurative language and solicits examples from the class.
- The school believes that students must be engaged in rigorous tasks. This is evidenced by open-ended questions. Teachers are provided with a lesson plan template that ensures planning for diverse learners that incorporate multiple entry points. Teachers are aware that all students are expected to engage in productive struggle for all lessons and teacher planning notes represent attention to rigorous tasks. This was evident during a science lesson, as a teacher opened the lesson by asking students, "Why is it better to eat a plant based diet instead of a meat based diet?" Another teacher conferred with groups of students and reminded them to present their evidence and to be able to defend their conjecture through academic language. Students presented their thinking and through parallel teaching the three types of symbiosis were noted. Students were engaged through heterogeneous groupings. Equally, in a Spanish 1 class, students in their targeted groups expanded their vocabulary in Spanish through reading, speaking and writing. The teacher strategically placed a native speaker in every group to assist students with vocabulary and comprehension.
- All learners demonstrate their risk taking through challenging tasks. Teachers challenge students to be critical and independent thinkers and to defend their opinions, arguments and solutions. In a physics class, students engaged in station learning and explored the properties of light and sound by conducting a series of mini-labs, making observations and discussing within their groups the results of the investigations. In an algebra class, students worked in groups to interpret evidence in order to use one of the three strategies to solve quadratic equations to support their arguments.

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty make purposeful decisions to build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students. Academic tasks repeatedly demonstrate higher-order skills across grades and subjects for all students.

Impact

The school has coherent curriculum practices that promote college and career readiness and rigorous practices that meet the needs of all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal, administrators and staff hold firmly the belief that all learners must perform at high levels of attainment through engaging and rigorous academic tasks. The principal deepens staff knowledge of rigor through an intensive, professional study series around increasing rigor in student tasks that engage all students in progressive struggle as they progress through the learning tasks. Evidence of learning is progressive. Students have transitioned from learning objectives to learning targets, 'I can do' statement related to CCLS embedded in each lesson. The school's stated instructional focus of citing and presenting evidence is apparent in planning documents across subjects and grades.
- Teachers detailed lesson plans contain a lesson component, enduring understanding, essential question, instructional objective, coaching support, vocabulary or word root, texts, sources, tools, timed learning activities, instructional supports, differentiation and entry points, timed check for understanding, practice and wrap-up. A grade 7 social science plan asked students to find the claim of primary and secondary source documents through scaffolded questions and four different sources related to the question "Is oil a good source of energy for the society?" A grade 9 math plan asked students to find the connections between multiple representatives by looking at a graph. According to the lesson plan, students were expected to be able to respond verbally and to write equations in different forms. A grade 8 United States history plan asked students their opinion whether the United Nations should be involved in the unfolding situation in eastern Ukraine. Based on the lesson plan, students will be able to improve their argumentative writing and discussion skills by using a rubric to set goals and to engage in a debate with students and adults representing the United Nations Security Council. A grade 6 lesson plan asked students to write poetry to communicate emotion and theme through word choice, repetition, line spacing and figurative language. Based on the lesson plan, students will be able to write free verse poetry focused on conveying emotion about an object, moment or social issue using various literary devices following the poetry checklist. The plans observed provide access for students for rigorous tasks and leads to higher student outcomes.
- Teachers meet weekly in subject teams to review tasks, lesson plans and units ensuring Common Core alignment, promoting higher order thinking and providing students with access to the curriculum via multiple points of entry. The school has partnered with Teachers College Reading and Writing Project for ELA in the middle school to increase student mastery. For ELA curriculum in the high school, the school adapted and adopted units from Engage New York. College Preparatory Mathematics is used in the middle and high school for math. Teachers collaboratively create units with curriculum materials from Teachers College Reading and Writing Project for science and social studies. Similarly, teachers create curriculum aligned to Understanding by Design and Odell Education for the arts, foreign language and electives.