



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

South Bronx Academy for Applied Media

Middle School X296

**778 Forest Avenue
Bronx
NY 10456**

Principal: Roshone Ault Lee

**Date of review: March 31, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Buffie Simmons**

The School Context

South Bronx Academy for Applied Media is a middle school with 346 students from grade six through grade eight. The school population comprises 38% Black, 60% Hispanic, 0.5% White, 01% American Indian or Alaskan Native and 0.5% Asian students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 26% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 is 90.5%.

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	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	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	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:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school communicates high expectations to staff, students, and parents, to engender accountability for continuous student progress.

Impact

Structures that support the school's high expectations amongst staff, students and their families help to provide a path towards elevated student achievement and college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's focus on raising levels of student outcomes through communicating professional standards inspires collective accountability for teaching and learning. School leaders utilize faculty conferences and grade and department team meetings to convey clear professional and behavioral expectations. The school communicates high expectations to the school community through the mission statement, scholars' creed, staff handbook and weekly staff newsletters. The principal holds quarterly State of School and State of the Grade Addresses for the community. Students have a keeping Teacher Attendance Buddy Support (TABS) who meets with them on a weekly basis to monitor their attendance. Attendance incentives include bulletin board highlights, postcards mailed out recognizing progress in attendance, school messenger phone calls that congratulate scholars on improvement, awards and daily accolades.
- The school leaders hold the staff accountable for imparting high expectations for learning by providing weekly professional development in Common Core Learning Standards linked to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Clear messages around expectations for adults as leaders of learning and high regard for professionalism lead established classroom routines. Currently, teachers attend outside professional development meetings and are encouraged to turnkey trainings for the rest of the staff. Leadership skills translated from to students and parents. For example, young women were selected and participated in the Young Women's Empowerment Summit. Moreover, parents and young men attended "Lead by Example & Reverse the Trend" program to prepare males for adulthood with redirection and empowerment.
- The school's proposed theory of action is to increase the reading and math levels of all scholars to achieve progress and proficiency which promulgated throughout the school community. Students share in these efforts by publishing articles for the school paper entitled *SBAAM Times* and *SBAAM Scholar News*. Students participate in subject specific celebration week to model high expectations. Students celebrate their work in October, English language arts (ELA) in January, science and social studies in March and all subjects in June. The school also celebrates college and career week in May to offer students a chance to think about the future, explore new avenues and engage in hands-on activities. For example, a hands-on activity is an architect could bring in images of several possible sites for a particular new development; students could then review each one based on basic criteria and determine the best site. Students prepare three questions, evaluate the presenter and reflect on the presentation. The speaker evaluates the presenter. Subsequently, students write a personal statement to give a snapshot of them as a student and as a person thinking about and planning for their future. All these efforts help build the path towards college and career readiness. As the school continues to strive towards their academic goals, the clearly communicated school foundation enables staff and students to successfully grow together and positively meet upcoming challenges.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Observation of teaching practice indicates an uneven application of differentiation and instructional strategies to provide appropriately challenging and rigorous learning opportunities that promote high achievement.

Impact

The delivery of instruction inconsistently employs scaffolds and questioning techniques outlined in the curricular to provide entry points, participation, and discussions that are appropriately challenging for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's instructional goals include a focus on student discussion, well thought out questions; however questioning techniques did not expand to the student to student level. Classroom visits revealed that pedagogical practices were inconsistently align with the school wide goals on discussion. For example, in a Social Studies class students identified and explored beliefs of Buddhism. The teacher asked series of questions to attempt to activate prior knowledge and analyze the Eightfold Path – such as “What is something that you suffered in life?” or “A person loses their hair because, why?” The improper structure coupled with lower order questioning skills limit cognitive development.
- In a Grade 8 math class students were given a challenging word problem and tasked to find a connection and relationship between variables by using functions. Though students were seated in partnership they were unable to share strategies via written or orally to demonstrate deep understanding. Little supports were provided for struggling students or students with disabilities, leading to some students' inability to complete the task.
- Teaching strategies, routines, and questioning in many classrooms, do not consistently meet the varied needs of learners, as prescribed in curriculum maps, resulting in uneven levels of student thinking, participation, and work products across the school. Accordingly, some teacher lesson plans have clear depiction of differentiation, such as a Grade 8 math lesson that includes objectives, standards, homework, agenda, instructional outcome, assessment, vocabulary, materials, and targeted groups based on English language learners (ELLs), struggling students, students that need to be challenged and even students who are naturally quiet. Furthermore, in an ELA teacher's lesson plan depicts instructional strategies to support students. Students studied relevant text details to define and support author's perspective including fostering discussion, explanations of academic vocabulary, as well as appropriate use of time. Nevertheless, this was not the practice in other classrooms where rapid fire questions, minimal discussion, and poor use of time thwarted high levels of thinking, and participation. In other classes, higher performing students were seated with students that needed assistance. Consequently, classrooms across the grades and subjects inconsistently use individualized teaching scaffolds or extensions for learners. Students are given limited opportunities to experience differentiated applications for access to learning.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school has aligned curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards with the integration of the instructional shifts. Critical thinking skills and analysis and consistently emphasized and coherently planned for all learners across grades and subjects.

Impact

The curricular planning promotes coherence which ensures that students are college and career ready. Tasks across grades and content areas encourage thinking for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Curriculum maps across all content areas, including advisory, What I Need (WIN) intervention program, Targeted Skills Intervention (TSI), Saturday Preparatory Academy (SPA), Harvard Ed program and Middle School Quality Initiative (MSQI) for targeted students and administration, reflect both Common Core Learning Standards and citywide instructional shifts as evidenced in objectives, questions and activities. The school has partnered with Learner-Centered Initiatives (LCI) as a support in adjusting curricular and instructional practices to align with Common Core Learning Standards. Based on identified gaps in previous curriculums maps between Common Core Learning Standards, student needs, and instructional shifts, school leaders and teachers plan together to design curriculum that includes content understandings and grade-level competencies.
- Teacher teams regularly refine units of study and tasks using student work. For example, the math and ELA team meets to analyze student work to assess mastery and to adapt the task and instructional techniques accordingly. For example, ELA teachers refine performance tasks to make more explicit for students. In one task, students in grade 6 wrote a short story in which a character from one of the unit texts faces another challenging experience. Teachers modified the task by including proper writing expectations for students. These techniques included but not limited to hooking the reader with an exposition that introduces the narrator and characters and using transitional words and phrases to convey sequence to signal shifts from one time frame to another.
- The school has built opportunities to engage in learning that promotes college and career readiness. Advisory curriculum reflects topics explicitly in public speaking and advocacy, law and order, entrepreneurship, and underlying themes in community awareness, responsibility and accountability. For example, in grade 8 unit, students created and presented their business plan to learn how to make a profit. Students reflected and made changes to their business plans in order to yield more profit.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

The school's use of common assessments and checks for understanding to measure student progress towards goals across grades is inconsistent.

Impact

The school has created structures to measure student learning, although these structures do not consistency lead to the necessary adjustments that address students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses a variety of common assessments, such as Degrees of Reading Power (DRP), simulations, periodic assessments, unit tests in literacy and math, Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) and state assessments to track student progress. The results of the data and item analysis has allowed for placement of WIN groups. Due to the importance of conferencing on a consistent basis to inform students of next steps, the school is in the process of monitoring the impact of the practice.
- Across classrooms, teachers' use of ongoing checks for understanding, including asking and answering questions, as well as student self-assessments, inconsistently lead to instructional adjustments that address all learners especially ELLs and students with disabilities. During classroom visits, the checks for understanding for a few classes were exit slips while in other classrooms there were minimal checks for understanding throughout the lesson.
- Instructional assessment practices are inconsistent and school leaders addressed this on the teachers' observations. Across classrooms, checks for student understanding were not observed steadily across classes and subjects. In the majority of the classes, teachers taught whole group instruction and students either listened or responded to the teacher. In a few classes, the teacher conferred with students at tables and provided feedback to the whole group for clarification or redirection. However, in other classrooms, teachers circulate as students work, but this practice of roving check-ins did not yield adjustments to lessons, or mid-lesson interruption to share teacher observations that reinforce or redirect for keeping students on track.

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

Across the school, teachers participate in structured teacher teams which address the instructional focus and the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Teacher teams promote teacher leadership opportunities and voice within instructional decisions.

Impact

Inquiry team collaborations are building teacher capacity which is leading to student progress. Distributive leadership structures allow teachers to make key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- During the teacher team, teachers shared that they receive professional development to refine the structure of their meetings. Based on the results from the state exams, the team focus for grade teams is math and ELA. Teacher teams analyze various forms of data to create long and short term goals for skill mastery for their targeted student population. For example, on a grade 8 math simulation exam teachers noticed that students struggled with geometric formulas. The teacher team identified the need to work on recognizing how and when to use geometric formulas in order to support students.
- Teacher teams serve as “lab sites”, where teachers have the opportunity to share and observe best practices. During both teacher team meetings, teachers shared that they are learning from each other which fosters a culture that highlights commendable teacher practices and allows the teacher teams to contribute to the professional development plans. This model, along with the use of peer instructional coaches and demonstration teachers, has created an environment of increased fortify instructional capacity of teachers.
- By looking at student work via the Tuning Protocol, teachers learn strategies from their team members, consultant and assistant principals and collaborate to brainstorm ideas that would address the targeted student’s needs. For example, one teacher noticed that a student in her inquiry group was having problems with a particular math task. Thanks to strategies suggested by colleagues on the inquiry team, the teacher implemented the strategy and the students are beginning to show mastery in this area. These practices have helped to build a collaborative community that shares best practices gained from inquiry team work in math and ELA across the school to close student learning gaps.