



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Bronx Dance Academy

**10X308
3617 Bainbridge Avenue
Bronx
NY 10467**

Principal: Sandra Sanchez

**Date of review: December 11, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Sheila S.-Gorski**

The School Context

Bronx Dance Academy is a middle school with 237 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 30% Black, 67% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 8% English language learners and 21% special education students. Boys account for 19% of the students enrolled and girls account for 81%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 94%.

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

The school ensures Common Core aligned curricula, integrating key instructional shifts across the subject areas and grades. Structures are in place to refine units of study and curriculum materials based on student work and data-analysis.

Impact

The school's curricular decisions build coherence and encourage college and career preparation for all learners via data analysis and student work which inform curricula refinements, thus providing suitable access to curricula for a diversity of learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers implement the Expeditionary Learning curricula in English language arts (ELA) and use its resources to engage students in reading complex articles. Teachers also plan for the complexity of text from the Common Core Library to promote making connections, fluency, language, annotation, supporting claims, context clues, and non-fiction genres. Math in Focus is also implemented to encourage students in developing word problems that will assist in their understanding of making connections between math and real life situations.
- All units across the content areas include long-term targets, supporting targets, assessment of the unit module, anchor charts and protocols. For example, all long-term targets begin with an, "I can" statement such as, "I can cite text-based evidence that provides the strongest support for my analysis of literary text." Supporting targets also begin with "I can" statements. An example is, "I can identify key details that help me understand Ha", a character in the text. A lesson check includes a "Think-Write-Pair-Share" requiring students to think about a question posed, write notes individually and then share their answers with a partner followed by a specific pair of students sharing main points in whole class discussion. Anchor charts and protocols may require students to engage in "things close readers do."
- Unit refinements informed by student work prompted the school to make modifications of alignment to the school's preferred model, the workshop model, to also include student conferences to assess the learning. Additional refinements incorporate the writing process in a quick write, visuals, and recordings. Specifically, math unit refinements include journals depicting the use of math academic vocabulary and student reflections of their learning. Teachers also refined units to include explicit vocabulary instruction, writing across the content areas, infusion of technology, scaffolds of the texts, and second language acquisition techniques using the Frayer Model.
- A review of lesson plans shows parallel elements to those in the units with the inclusion of tiered questions. They consist of the reading of a short text or chunking of the text and answering vocabulary questions. For instance, in one grade 8 ELA lesson plan students were required to read a short text called *Refugee and Immigrant Children*. Students then answer questions using context cues to make meaning of challenging academic vocabulary. Some examples of the questions written in the plan are, "What is a generational gap" and "What is a cultural gap?"

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

The school's focus on teaching practices including questioning techniques, entry points, and discussion to increase student interaction and raise the level of student thinking is developing across classrooms.

Impact

Across classrooms questioning techniques, scaffolds, and entry points to prompt high levels of thinking inconsistently support student learning, thus limiting a variety of students from demonstrating their thinking and being integral to the learning.

Supporting Evidence

- In the majority of classrooms visited students were observed looking around the classroom using the resources such as charts whenever needed. Some charts included strategies used during prior lessons such as multiple ways to make annotations, chunking the text to make meaning, and paraphrasing a text to understand the theme of a story.
- During classroom visits, some students joined in class discussions only answering teacher-created questions which were mostly teacher directed-to-student. The majority of questions posed were at recall or knowledge-based levels with minimal opportunities for students to lead discussions.
- In one grade 7 algebra math class students working in groups were each assigned a component to assess. A group using the SMART board to present took turns reading a text and each explained a part of the algebraic expression they were solving. The seated students were the audience that used a rubric to assess their assigned component to provide feedback to the presenting group. For example, group A rated annotations noted by the presenter and group B rated their peer's mathematical mastery of computations, symbols, clarity and understanding. Each group provided feedback in the form of "a glow" and "a grow". Feedback measured included a glow such as "well-developed understanding", "specific vocabulary use", and "no spelling errors". Feedback as "a grow" indicated, "Explain your reasoning" and "no use of annotations". The class provided feedback to its peers and the teacher circulated the classroom asking questions to assess student comprehension. Most of the questions were long-drawn-out or rapid fire questions. However, students demonstrated uncertainty of what was being asked and withdrew from answering the questions for lack of clarity and understanding of the questions.
- A review of lesson plans indicates uneven teaching strategies with appropriate scaffolds and questions. Some questions in lesson plans include, "What is a glossary?" and "What does it mean when two texts are connected?" Most of the classrooms provided one graphic organizer for the all students. In some classrooms students did not know why they were assigned to a group or what to do with the resulting outcomes.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across the school teachers use common assessments and create rubrics to track student progress toward meeting goals. Assessment practices include checks for understanding and student self-assessments which teachers regularly use to make instructional adjustments.

Impact

The school has structures in place to consistently monitor progress via analysis of data and throughout daily lessons to inform adjustments to curricula and lessons and meet student learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses running records as a baseline, a midline and end-line assessment to gauge student reading levels and measure the instructional progress on the school's focus around complex texts as aligned to the school's goals. Student data results are also used to strengthen writing with a focus on key writing standards. Using running records three times a year has informed curricular adjustments including increased focus on strengthening the skills of academic vocabulary and making inferences from the text.
- The school engages in Drop Everything And Read (DEAR) time, a school-wide assessment practice to immerse all students in reading habits and enhance their reading skills on a daily basis to build a passion for reading and writing. Teachers model reading habits such as, fluency, intonation and enunciation, and even share a book over the Public Address System to ensure that the entire school shares this technique. Using student and teacher high interest books teachers assess vocabulary, how students make connections, and meaning through daily questions, and use the results to make ongoing instructional adjustments. Students also use a specific rubric to self-assess or assess peers in areas, such as the use of annotations while reading and the use of academic vocabulary.
- Teachers use ACHIEVE 3000 and Light Sail to assess English language learners (ELLs) and special education students. Light Sail is being piloted with the purpose of analyzing its results to expand its use throughout the school. Via the use of these adaptive programs all students are able to independently choose texts with scaffolds as needed such as visual support, set goals, monitor their own growth, and increase their independence as learners.
- Across classrooms and subject areas teachers and students use rubrics to examine student understanding. For example, the, Math Journal Entry Rubric is used by the teacher to assess the student's reading comprehension of math problem measured by the successful integration of the elements on the rubric presented in numerous designs that include graphs, charts language use to develop a coherent understanding and possible solutions for a problem. All rubrics include a reading standard and require students to read text and write in order to show their understanding of a concept. It is also used by students to examine their learning and monitor their own goals.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to all constituencies via a myriad of modalities and support families and students in their understanding of those expectations.

Impact

The school articulates its high expectations to the school community on a regular basis. As a result, stake holders at home and at school play an active role in supporting students, leading to increased student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- The Bronx Academy Staff handbook is provided for all teachers and used on an ongoing basis to maintain communication. For example, the school's focus on the importance of tiered lessons, professional development for teachers regarding the instructional shifts, the Danielson Framework for Teaching, Common Core expectations, curricula refinements, rubrics, student engagement, and questioning are some of the high expectations relative to ongoing review in the handbook. A calendar is also sent to the staff communicating the yearly expectations and is updated to meet the needs of the staff as needed.
- School leaders engage in ongoing communication with parents via letters to families, curriculum night, orientations and auditions. Additionally, monthly School Leadership Team meetings and monthly Parent Association meetings inform the most current events. High school articulation and meetings with parents about the process are also periodically communicated within workshops and one-to-one meetings. For instance, a recent informational workshop invited grade 8 parents to the school to learn about choosing the right high school. Continuous information regarding morning and afterschool programs informs families of the supports afforded to students in preparation of the student's next levels.
- Leadership cabinet meetings ensure that the school's shared vision is communicated. Student work, data analysis and teacher data reports inform learning walks and classroom observations that are used to provide feedback to all staff members and archived in the ADVANCE system confirming full school-community responsibility for meeting the school's high expectations.

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

The majority of teachers is engaged in professional collaborations and regularly examines student work and data to increase student achievement.

Impact

All teachers meet multiple times per week to examine pedagogy and student work ensuring the progress of school goals, teacher capacity, and increased student progress.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers meet numerous times per week to examine student work, monitor their progress toward goals, and reflect on instructional practices. Using the Atlas-Learning from Student Work protocol, meetings are facilitated by teachers and teacher leads that provide low inference feedback to each other. Teachers follow an order depicted in the protocol as a description and interpretation of the student work, a discussion of classroom implications, a reflection, and debriefing of the process, outcomes and next steps.
- During a teacher team meeting, one teacher began with a description of student background regarding three students from each of the school's subgroups, general education, special education and second language learners. Teachers then engaged in the analysis of the student products that required students to solve a problem comparing consumption costs from two time periods. After determining the strengths and weaknesses of each student according to their demonstrated work, teachers decided upon specific modifications, including additional explanations and visual aids, to increase student understanding.
- The work of teacher teams is memorialized in Google Docs. Minutes and agendas are uploaded into the systems accessible to all staff members. Teams share best practices gleaned from their pedagogical knowledge. Teachers state that the leadership visits their team meetings periodically, provide ongoing feedback, and find it very supportive to have opportunities to meet with peers and learn from one another.
- Teacher teams' efforts to meet the school goal to increase and sustain student achievement for all students are demonstrative in long-range student achievement. These are cited on the school's most recent School Quality Guide as 91% being indicative of the average pass rate for courses in math, English, social studies, and science. The school is meeting the expected outcomes when compared to the city and outperforming the district performance results on the State exams performance and achievement in high school after leaving the Bronx Dance Academy.