



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

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**Bronx Early College Academy  
for Teaching and Learning**

**Middle – High School X324**

**250 East 164<sup>th</sup> Street  
Bronx  
NY 10456**

**Principal: Yvette Rivera**

**Date of review: April 29, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Hadiya J. Daniel-Wilkins**

## The School Context

Bronx Early College Academy for Teaching and Learning is a middle – high school with 503 students from grade six through grade twelve. The school population comprises 32% Black, 63% Hispanic, 1% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 49% English language learners and 29% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 91.1%.

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

## Area of Celebration

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.1 Curriculum**

**Rating:**

**Well Developed**

### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are strategically aligned to the Common Core Learning and/or content standards and the International Baccalaureate (IB) Theory of Knowledge instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

### Impact

Individual and groups of students have access to curricula and cognitively engaging tasks that promote college and career readiness.

### Supporting Evidence

- Across grades, unit planners are designed to include the following: Significant concepts, Common Core Learning Standards, IB Assessment Criteria, Danielson key elements, Reading and Literacy indicators, Learning Resources, Culminating Task, Connections to the IB Learner Profile, Planning for multiple entry points, Assessment Criteria and Data Collection. Each unit plan is uploaded to Google Docs to undergo a three-stage process for review and feedback from administrators and a coach. Example of feedback comments noted on unit plans ranged from, "Please reword 'Significant Concepts' as per my comment;" to "Much of this unit is strong, However, the language, especially in the significant concepts and questions, are very challenging. Please see notes, and revise where required."
- Teachers are required to purposefully note the following in unit plans to ensure students are meeting the demands of the Common Core Learning Standards: "What evidence in student work products demonstrated the learning objectives, and which concepts for teaching were in alignment to specific Common Core Learning Standards." All unit plans had to also include identifying significant concepts that were aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Intentionally noted in plans, teachers also consistently described if students, in their focus, impact and target groups, demonstrated mastery of the concepts and skills necessary for meeting the demands of college and career readiness.
- In addition to procedural and report writing tasks in mathematics, physical education and science; expository, literary, persuasive, objective summary and reflective writing in English and social studies, the staff prepared students for college and careers by assigning argumentative essays. A review of student work products uncovered that students across grades, which included the target groups of English language learners, Special Education students and high achievers, were all provided with the Toulmin Argument Model to guide formatting and content for writing arguments.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best. Student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

### Impact

Instruction, strategies and learning activities are derived from Danielson Framework for Teaching and the IB Learner Profile Philosophy. Across classrooms however, opportunities to have students demonstrate ownership of their discussions and high level questions is evolving.

### Supporting Evidence

- It was evident that the IB core values of communication, thinking, and being open-minded coupled with the Danielson's student engagement element, were being practiced in teaching and learning across classrooms. For example, in 10<sup>th</sup> grade science, students were heard being asked to work in their groups to use real data to classify galaxies using a citizen science interface, "Galaxy Zoo." This task provided opportunities for students to continue developing communication and thinking skills, as well as become knowledgeable and open-minded about collaborating with peers and the learning of content. The staff continues to make progress toward making these instructional shifts and core values an embedded teaching and learning practice across all classrooms.
- In six of eight classrooms, students were observed engaged in group or peer-to-peer turn and talk discussions of content material. For instance, in English, students shared their opinions, to group members, on the focus question of, "What is the symbolic meaning of Gregor's transformation?" In math, students explained to each other, "How to generate equivalent expressions using the fact that addition and multiplication can be done in any order, and any grouping?" The school is advancing toward an increase in students' ownership of classroom discussions and participation.
- Across classrooms, teachers were heard posing questions to assess knowledge, comprehension and synthesis of information. Tasks provided students moments to analyze data and apply learning. The staff is working on enhancing opportunities for students to generate content questions, for the purpose of stretching their thinking and learning experiences in all subject areas.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use assessments rubrics, or descriptors and grading policies aligned with the school's curricula. Teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

### Impact

Students' receive actionable and meaningful feedback on work products; and teachers' analysis of students' performance outcomes prompted adjustments in instructional decisions at team and classroom levels.

### Supporting Evidence

- After student Betty's literary essay emerged from a self-assessment and a three-step peer editing process of, "compliments, suggestions and corrections, the paper was then assessed by her teacher. Affixed to the attached task rubric the teacher noted Betty's performance levels that demonstrated mastery of reading, writing and language, and Common Core Learning Standards. The teacher highlighted a level "four" mastery of, "content & analysis, command of evidence, coherence, organization and style, and control of conventions." Using a post-it note for additional feedback, Betty's teacher added, "Great selection of quotes for each survival factor and explanations for them! I also see that you included a variety of transition words: 'in addition,' 'also,' etc.!-good! Next time, when you use transitions, try to vary them by using other ones such as 'moreover,' 'furthermore' (which means the same as 'also' and 'in addition.'" In the student meeting, with Betty and five other students, they all shared how teachers' use of rubrics and noted comments helped them understand next learning steps.
- Teachers use the performance outcome data from Measures of Student Learning assessments, New York State and Common Core exam, teacher-designed tests from Test Wizard and Gradecam to assess students' mastery of identified Common Core Learning and or content standards and International Baccalaureate learner profiles to revise curricular or reteach content. For example, baseline data in math revealed 5 of 28 students in 6<sup>th</sup> grade demonstrated some mastery of, "applying and extending previous understanding of multiplying and dividing fractions by fractions." Units and lesson plans were revised to reteach the standards with scaffolds built in to support comprehension of content. Interim reassessment of the same standards for the same students garnered a 25% increase in performance.
- Teachers use the New York State and International Baccalaureate assessments to determine students' performance of levels. Students' assessment outcomes are categorized on a scale of high, medium and low. (75-100% high mastery, 50-74.9% medium, 0-49.9% low). Students' performance outcomes are then purposefully used in classrooms to create heterogeneous groups for teaching and learning. In heterogeneous groups observed, students were heard supporting each other with the solving of problems and comprehension of content.

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

School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to college and careers. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that systematically communicates a unified set of high expectations for all students.

### Impact

The school provides ongoing verbal and written communication to families to deepen their understanding of college and career readiness expectations for their youngsters; and teachers and other staff have set clear expectations for leading students towards mastery of the IB Learner Profile.

### Supporting Evidence

- Parents expressed an appreciation for the high academic expectations demanded by the staff and school's leaders. They shared that progress reports, text messages, conferences, handbooks and phone calls kept them informed of the staffs' expectations for academic standards. They added that supporting workshops on academic and cultural topics, allowed them to contribute to the school's culture for learning. Parents also added that even though their youngsters had an Individual Education Plan, that the staffs' expectations were for their children to meet the performance expectations for the Common Core Learning Standards. The School-Based Support Committee members and Guidance Counselors were acknowledged for their on-going support with providing critical information for assisting families with academic support and college and career materials.
- Students in grades seven through twelve explained that in their learning environment, the expectations are that they live by and or demonstrate the principles of the "IB Learner Profile." Students were clear that they were expected to embody being, "Knowledgeable, thinkers, communicators, principled, open-minded, caring, risk-taking, balanced and reflective." In one 8<sup>th</sup> grade English class, the teacher was heard asking students, "Which IB trait do you think this lesson addresses?" Students' sounded, "Thinking, communicating!" Said teacher was also heard challenging students to, "Take a risk and answer the question." Students identified as ELLs and SWDs, in this 8<sup>th</sup> grade class were observed meeting the challenge of risk-taking to support their learning for the next level.
- Teacher team members explained that the school's cultural expectations for students being knowledgeable, demonstrating thinking, communicating, being principled and open-minded, caring, risk-taking, being balanced and reflective, is an expectation for all students. Embracing those traits, they maintained, will help support them in becoming successful at the next level. They added, in planning lessons, students are encouraged to inquire in Chemistry, take risk by creating their own interpretation of text in English, reflect on content in Social Studies, and communicate understandings in mathematics. Effective communication of these core values provides a framework for high expectations in the learning community.

<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 vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations. Teacher teams are systematically analyzing key element of teacher work including classroom practice, assessment data and student work.

### Impact

Teacher teams clearly articulate how they implement structured professional collaborations to analyze student work, that inform decisions for creating strategic student work groups, as well as adjustments of their professional practice.

### Supporting Evidence

- Using the rubric (descriptor) for a compare and contrast essay task, members of a teacher inquiry team were heard discussing the performance outcomes of six 11<sup>th</sup> grade students essays. Samples of the students' work were reviewed. Students' represented those who performed, "High, medium and low" on a scale of 1 through 7. The stated purpose of the session's inquiry was to, "Compare the IB rubric for English and Social Studies, and determine the level of analysis each student demonstrated in their paper." Teachers were heard discussing the students' self- assessments and peer grades of the selected students. Team members also discussed the norming of rubrics as a step to increasing instructional coherence and informing their professional practice. Team members explained that reviewing these six students' work, to determine their performance on writing coherent analysis, would help them identify learning gaps. This team's investigation, they added, would help with classroom grouping to ensure all students are achieving, and receiving information for their next instructional steps.
- Grade level teacher teams meet to discuss the academic performance of targeted, impact and focus groups. Group goals were identified by the Common Core and or content standards students must master, based on the grade level curriculum. Interim data was compared to baseline data in math and English to identify students' progress. For example, teachers used an excel spreadsheet to log the math and English performance ratings, levels and growth rate of their ELLs and SPEDs populations. Discussions on specific skills students did or did not master, became the foundation for revising units, lesson plans, instructional tools, and re-teaching. Teachers' shared ratings that showed ELLs and SWDs making academic progress in math and English in 6<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Teacher teams systemically review student work and administrative feedback to inform teaching practices. Teachers expressed that looking at students' work products often resulted in a change of classroom practices. The practices that were informed were the following: Increasing time for students to have content discussions in science; allowing students to own their own notes in mathematics, increasing student-centered opportunities in social studies, and reassessing groupings in English. These changes in practice were considered as steps needed to improve student learning.