# Quality Review Report

# 2014-2015

**The Bronx Mathematics Preparatory School**

**Middle School X375**

**456 White Plains Road**
**Bronx**
**NY 10475**

**Principal: Anya Munce**

**Date of review: April 29,2015**
**Lead Reviewer: Dr. Karen Ames**

# The School Context

The Bronx Mathematics Preparatory School is a middle school with 276 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 34% Black, 63% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 11% English language learners and 29% special education students. Boys account for 53 % of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 90.0%.

# School Quality Criteria

| **Instructional Core** | | |
|---|---|---|
| *To what extent does the school…* | **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** | **Developing** |
| 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** | **Underdeveloped** |
| 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** | | |
| *To what extent does the school…* | **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** | | |
| *To what extent does the school…* | **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** | **Underdeveloped** |

# Area of Celebration

| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: | Proficient |
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**Findings**
School leaders and staff have established a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to students. Leadership and staff successfully communicate expectations connected to college and career readiness with families to support student progress.

**Impact**
Collaboration between all community stakeholders fosters ongoing communication of high expectations to staff and families resulting in a clear path to increase student achievement and college and career readiness.

**Supporting Evidence**

- There is a nurturing environment which is composed of several structures supporting both the academic and the socio-emotional needs of the students**.** The school stresses Anti-Bullying and Respect for All elements. Students pledge to tolerance and respect each day. There is a Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program solidly in place which is backed by a staff handbook and extensive family outreach.

- Monthly family letters, mass voice messages, family workshops and reminder texts keep families informed of class work and learning standards. Weekly grade conferences are scheduled for families to discuss students' academic progress. The work the staff conducted at the Center Guidance Support has reduced the number of levels 4 & 5 infractions as defined by the Department of Education and addresses persistently dangerous notifications.

- Positive Behavior supports include, but are not limited to: a School wide System, Restorative Circles, Life Space Crisis Intervention, Character Education (Advisory) across the grades. In addition, there is PBIS and the BRONX M.A.T.H. (Making Good Decisions/ Achieving Academic Excellence/ Treating Yourself and Others with Respect/ Helping Others to Succeed) Point System. There is an Academic Intervention Service program established to support students' academics. In addition, support for high school articulation begins in the sixth grade.

- The school works in collaboration with the entire community to support students' well-being through social-emotional supports, such as a comprehensive guidance program, social/emotional staff training in "Teaching without Chaos". This training involves a series of modules that ask teachers to establish best practices for behavior in the classroom and the school community. Establishing best practices include establishing a ladder of referral within the school for socio-emotional supports for students.

- The advisory class includes workbooks which address issues of distraction, time management and scheduling to teach students self-regulation strategies.

# Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 1.2 Pedagogy | Rating: | Underdeveloped |
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**Findings**
Teaching strategies do not provide multiple entry points into the curricula and do not support rigorous tasks that promote high level thinking skills for all students. The majority of teachers do not implement targeted instructional supports for students with disabilities or English Language Learners.

**Impact**
There is lack of engagement in appropriately challenging tasks and little demonstration of higher order thinking skills in all student work products. Students are not meaningfully engaged in rigorous tasks and high level discussions and there are few opportunities for learning extensions in the majority of classrooms.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Although there are student learning objectives included in lesson plans, in the majority of classroom visits, students were not able to articulate what they were learning and why they were learning it. In the grade eight English language arts (ELA) classroom, students were working in stations on various activities that were unrelated to the teaching point. The tasks did not engage students and did not require critical student thinking or discussion.

- In the grade eight math lesson, students were working in groups on problems related to square and cube roots. All students had the same assignment including those that were working in a pull aside group with an English as a Second Language (ESL) push-in teacher. There were no extensions or supports for higher level students or students with disabilities. There were no checks for understanding and the conference notes were blank.

- In the grade six science classroom, the students were working in groups to apply reciprocal reading strategies. All of them were given the same article entitled" Why do plants lean towards sunlight". The article was not a good source to use because it was not written in non-fiction format and did not include text features. Students had difficulty with the academic vocabulary and most had difficulty reading the passage. In addition, their science notebook journals were empty and students said they had not done many lab investigations.

- Although students worked in groups in most classes visited, there was no substantiating data to support the groupings. In only one ELA classroom observed, students were purposely grouped based on Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) levels to analyze the structure of a poem.

# Additional Findings

| Quality Indicator: | 1.1 Curriculum | Rating: | Developing |
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**Findings**
Curricula and academic tasks do not as yet offer a coherent continuum of rigorous habits and higher order skills for all learners including English language learners and students with disabilities. Planning and refining curricula and performance tasks using student work and assessment data varies across grades and subjects.

**Impact**
Although there is some modification of curricula to align with student needs, supports are not consistently tailored to meet the needs of specific student subgroups. Therefore, not all students are consistently challenged with high level tasks pushing their thinking, and promoting college and career readiness.

**Supporting Evidence**

- While instructional plans in the sixth grade show Universal Design for Learning from Special Education Student Information System (SESIS) support to address the needs of students with disabilities, lesson plans and other academic tasks in other grades lack rigor. For example, during classroom visits several tasks presented were worksheets with multiple choice possibilities, rather than tasks with scaffolding or tasks with visual supports. Tasks were inconsistently differentiated for students in the sixth grade classes.

- Mathematics curricula lack consistent attention to available data from *I Ready* as evident in the lack of scaffolding per specific domains. For example, in mathematics units overall math level, number and operations, algebra and algebraic thinking, measurement and data and geometry concepts were not properly addressed as the bulk of students in one grade six class were below grade level based on the *I Ready* results data.

- Curriculum maps in grade eight in ELA were presented and showed accommodations for students with disabilities that were not appropriate. Samples of accommodations shown such as translated texts or using five words from Word Generation to write a summary were not appropriate. Sixth and seventh grade curriculum maps with accommodations for students with disabilities or ELLs were not presented. Rigorous habits and higher-order skills were also inconsistent for ELLs and students with disabilities across grades and subjects, especially in the grades 7 and 8.

- Curriculum maps for other core subjects did not consistently demonstrate accommodations for ELLs or students with disabilities. Also, instructional maps for electives, such as technology, art, or physical education did not demonstrate entry for ELLs and students with disabilities beyond general education curricula means.

| Quality Indicator: | 2.2 Assessment | Rating: | Developing |
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**Findings**
The school is in the process of developing rubrics and grading polices to align with the school's curricula. The use of daily checks for understanding, and common assessments to measure student progress towards goals is at its initial stages.

**Impact**
Rubrics and grading policies are not yet fully aligned with the school's curricula providing limited targeted feedback to students. Results of common assessments are inconsistently used to adjust curricula and instruction.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Reviewed lesson plans and class observations demonstrated inconsistent checks for understanding across the grades and across content areas. Exit slips were rarely present. Consistently, informal and formal observation reports stated that the majority of teachers were evaluated "developing" in the area Using Assessment in Instruction. Ongoing formative assessment and checks for understanding were not observed consistently.

- As a result of inconsistent formative assessment and a seeming lack of attention to data such as *I Ready* in Math, daily or weekly student grouping was misaligned to current data and student instructional needs. This was particularly evident with students with disabilities and ELL students who, in some cases, were in the same instructional groups or small groups since they had been in from the beginning of the year.

- Teachers use a variety of checklists and rubrics in their classrooms; however, they are not consistent across grades and subjects. Teachers are at the initial stages of looking at student work across grades measured against a standards-based rubric as a way to norm scoring criteria and employ a tool to measure progress. Across classrooms visited, the use of rubrics was loosely aligned to curricula and most rubrics were generic. As a result, teacher feedback to students varies from content area to content area and is misaligned to the curriculum.

| Quality Indicator: | 4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development | Rating: | Underdeveloped |
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**Findings**
A minority of teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach. Student work/data analysis within teams is not typically used to improve curricula, teaching and learning.

**Impact**
The work of teacher teams has not fostered meaningful collaborations that result in improvement to students learning outcomes. Teacher team meetings do not lead to shared improvements in teacher practice and/or increased student achievement for all learners.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Review of teacher team agendas revealed that teachers meet sporadically due to an adjustment to the program to increase time for academic services to students. The majority of meetings are not planned nor do they employ an inquiry approach. Many of the agendas focused on trips and organizational topics.

- The math team meeting that was observed did not have an agenda. The teacher who facilitated the meeting brought a copy of a blank grade six math test and asked the other members to predict what struggles sixth grade students would have taking this test. The other members of the team did not bring student work to the meeting as was requested.

- During the second teacher team meeting, teachers admitted that they rarely use student data in math or science and they do not follow protocols for looking at student work. They said they rely on the data specialist to provide student assessment results.

- Teachers said that with the exception of Teachers College Renewal School professional development, the school did not provide learning opportunities to improve teacher pedagogy. Teachers do not spend meeting time sharing best practices or planning and facilitating professional development.