



# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**Bronx Delta School**

**Elementary School X392**

**650 Hollywood Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10465**

**Principal: Daniel Racic**

**Date of review: April 15, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Karen Ames**

## The School Context

The Bronx Delta School is an elementary school with 80 students from grade Pre-K through grade kindergarten. The school population comprises 7% Black, 64% Hispanic, 23% White, and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-14 is not available due to new school status.

## 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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Developing</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>Developing</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>Developing</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>Celebration</b>	<b>Proficient</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>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

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

Leadership, teacher teams, and staff successfully communicate expectations connected to college and career readiness with families to support student progress and to offer ongoing and detailed feedback and guidance supports to prepare students for the next level.

### Impact

Collaboration among all community stakeholders fosters ongoing communication of high expectations to staff and families resulting in a clear path to increased student achievement and college and career readiness

### Supporting Evidence

- The school offers a website that provides communication about school events, curriculum, homework help, and online instructional resources. Weekly e-mail blasts are sent to staff and families with school updates and tips to support students' academics. In addition, curriculum celebrations occur at the end of each unit where parents are invited to view student work, see demonstrated strategies for working at home, and preview tips for the upcoming unit of study.
- Bronx Delta staff members engage in a number of initiatives to report student progress towards college and career readiness. Parents spoke enthusiastically about the frequent communication and regular reports they receive on their children's progress with tips on how to help their children at home. Report cards are sent every 8 weeks with child-specific next steps, including differentiated online resources. In addition, parents expressed that there were opportunities to speak to the principal on a one-on-one basis to support them in working with their children at home.
- Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations for all students and offers ongoing feedback. Bronx Delta has a set of expectations communicated daily to all its students: Do what is right; Exercise purpose in all we do; Love learning; Try, and try again; and Achieve goals together. These expectations are reinforced through the school's PBIS program, Second Step that provides students with explicit socio-emotional instruction supports. Feedback is provided to students via conferences including a visual summary of next steps. In addition, students have built-in checklists on their writing papers to help remind them of the expectations for completing the task and to provide a mechanism for self-assessment.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Developing**

### Findings

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

### Impact

Across classrooms, there are missed opportunities to engage all learners in consistent challenging thinking and participation thus hindering students from exhibiting work at high levels of thinking.

### Supporting Evidence

- Although the principal shared the school's instructional focus as to increase student engagement, there was uneven evidence in classrooms visited of student engagement and participation. Across classrooms there were missed opportunities for students to engage in extended discussion, guided by higher order questions, to work through a problem or explain their thinking. For example, in a kindergarten math class, students were asked to compare shapes and complete the worksheet on page 399 of the workbook. When they were done, several students shared in a whole class setting.
- Although teaching points that conveyed standards-aligned instructional goals for the lesson were observed, student discussion was limited and consisted largely of individual students raising their hands to give short responses. For example, in a kindergarten writing class when a student offered an answer, the teacher's response was, "Good. Write that," thus limiting the opportunity for extended thinking.
- Questioning strategies to promote higher levels of student thinking and discussions were inconsistent across classrooms. In a social studies kindergarten class, the teacher asked students to review the job list from career day and choose a job they would like to do and explain their reasons. As students got back to their tables the teacher reiterated the question, "Which job would be the best for you when you grow up? Why?" Students discussed their preferences with their classmates. However in other classrooms there were missed opportunities to engage students in cognitively challenging interactions. For example, in a kindergarten writing class, the teacher asked, "What does the word 'elaborate' mean?" One student raised his hand and responded to add more information. The teacher did not ask for students to talk with their partners first before answering or to elaborate on their responses nor asked for other students to validate the given answer.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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### Findings

School leaders and faculty are in the process of aligning curricula to CCLS and integrating the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks reflect planning to provide students access to the curricula and tasks and cognitively engage a diversity of learners.

### Impact

The current lack of planned curricula and academic tasks in all content areas results in minimal student access to the curricula and minimal cognitive engagement of a diversity of learners

### Supporting Evidence

- The school elected to use Teacher's College (TC) Reading and Writing Program as the basis for their curricula in kindergarten. Teachers created thematic units of study that corresponded with an old version of TC units; therefore, there is a need for revisions for full CCLS alignment and appropriate depth and pacing. In addition, teachers are working in developing units of science, social studies and the arts for the cluster teachers. The Pre-k curriculum is not fully developed, and it is planned to follow the Creative Curriculum. For example, classroom teachers worked during last summer with a consultant from Generation Ready to modify the TC curriculum to fit the needs of their students. However, the practice of informing curricular decisions for all learners through the in-depth analysis of data and student work is not yet a systematic practice.
- Although curriculum documents are structured to reflect Common Core Standards, academic tasks do not always facilitate students' ownership of their learning. For example, a review of writing units shows there are no specific instructional tasks to assess the objectives of each lesson in the units. In a kindergarten writing unit, the essential understanding is, "Writers write to teach others what they know how to do well." The unit provides a set of objectives aligned to the standards with a list of vocabulary definitions and skills to master. The unit does not offer an opportunity for students to assess or self-assess what has been learned. Additionally, there were few opportunities for students to analyze or synthesize material taught or engage in meaningful discussion.
- Teacher teams meet twice a week to modify and adjust instructional tasks. Using the Tuning Protocol teachers review student work and modify tasks to create additional supports for all learners or for a specified sub-group. For example, teachers have created individualized word walls, academic vocabulary reference sheets with visual imagery, daily lesson objectives, represented with icons as well as words, and individual sight words lists. Since the school is in its first year, teachers review exemplar student work from Teacher's College and check for alignment and rigor embedded in student tasks.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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### **Findings**

The school is in the process of developing rubrics and grading policies to align with the school's curricula. The use of 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**

- Teachers use a variety of assessments, checklists and rubrics in their classrooms; however, they are not consistently aligned to school's curricula. 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 to employ a tool to measure progress. Across classrooms visited the use of rubrics was loosely aligned to curricula and most rubrics were generic.
- Although teachers provide suggestions for student improvement, feedback inconsistently suggests next steps based on specific, leveled rubric criteria in order to indicate how students can move to the next level. Most writing pieces contained a writing checklist numbering five items: *I stayed on one topic; I told lots of facts about my topic; I used nonfiction text features; I added to my writing to tell more; and I edited to make my writing easy to read.* A review of student work folders noted no written teacher feedback.
- Teachers have begun to set up systems to look at student work to inform adjustments to instruction. For example, after analyzing a reading unit of study teachers used a reflection protocol to consider changes for the future. During the implementation of a unit, teachers keep conference binders and clipboards to easily record and memorialize varying levels of student mastery. Teachers create lists of potential goals and next steps for groups of students based on the latest data results and work with students in groups to provide feedback towards mastery of those goals. However, a formal, systematic way to track student progress and the impact of teacher work is still evolving.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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**Findings**

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations that promote the achievement of school goals and strengthen the instructional capacity of teachers. Leadership structures provide a means for teachers to have input on key decisions about curricula and teaching practices.

**Impact**

The work of teacher teams has strengthened teacher collaboration resulting in improvements to pedagogical practices and student progress on assessments. Shared leadership structures build capacity to improve student learning.

**Supporting Evidence**

- During a team meeting, teachers reviewed math student work using the Tuning Protocol. At the beginning of the teacher team meeting observed, teachers engaged in examining student work using a protocol where participants engaged in observations, held group discussions and asked clarifying questions. This work was informed by the results from their last assessment data. Teachers discussed the work samples and elicited strengths and struggles noticed on the samples. As next steps, teachers discussed the skills and processes needed to scaffold the next instructional task including the development of a math word picture checklist to attach to students notebooks.
- The principal ensures that teachers engage in ongoing professional collaborations in the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts aligned to the school’s instructional goals, promoting improved teacher practice and progress towards student goals. Teams of teachers meet in grade level meetings, across-grade teams (Pre-K and K) and as a child study team to identify and discuss specific areas of concern with individual students. Grade level teams meet formally twice per week on Mondays and Thursdays. During these meetings teachers engaged in reviewing student work and making adjustments to their curriculum by monitoring for alignment to the CCLS.
- Bronx Delta as a new school has engaged in professional collaborations since their early planning stages. Before September, teachers participated in a two-week intense professional development series where instructional practices, curriculum resources and roles and responsibilities were discussed. Every staff member at Delta has a voice, and all feel empowered to take on new tasks. Teachers are engaged in professional reflection, supporting one’s another’s growth by completing a professional development survey that determines teachers’ need. For example, the school developed a series of roles with defined responsibilities, and teachers reviewed the titles and accepted a role based on their preparation and passion. Some of the roles are Writing Chair, Reading Chair, ELL Support, Field Trips Coordinator, School Celebrations, and Intervention Specialist among others.