



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

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**Bronx International High School**

**09X493**

**1110 Boston Road  
Bronx  
NY 10456**

**Principal: Joaquin Vargas-Vega**

**Date of review: November 18, 2014  
Lead Reviewer: Sheila S.-Gorski**

## The School Context

The Bronx International School is a high school with 414 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 24% Black, 72% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 90% English language learners and 9% 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 82%.

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

## Area of Celebration

<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

Across the school, teacher teams methodically analyze and use student and teacher work and data, to inform key decisions that affect student learning across grades and content areas.

### Impact

The strategic work of teacher teams guides instructional decisions that ensure student mastery of goals and strengthen the school's instructional practice. Leadership structures are rooted in building teacher capacity essential to leveraging instructional changes across the school.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet twice per week to examine student work, refine academic tasks to fully align them to Performance-Based Academic Tasks (PBATS) that ensures students understand expectations for rigor in thesis statements, deeper analysis of complex text, and insightful connections. The work of teacher teams informs the school's partnership with Internationals Network for Public Schools in creating standard-based graduation portfolio units and aligning the common core student work to that of the Internationals Network.
- Grade teams use a, "Looking at Student Work Collaborative Analysis Protocol", to analyze student strengths and needs, such as what the work shows that students are able to do and what is missing in the work in relation to the outcome. Teams measure how their assessment opportunities show student thinking, knowledge, skills acquired, and mastery of goals. An example of student mastery for grade expectations and expected graduation dates is data from the school's most recent Quality Snapshot citing 84% of students in grade 9 and 81% of students in grade 10 earned enough credits to be on track for high school graduation.
- Teacher teams use outcome reflections, a process to discuss the percentage of passing rates, to plan and implement changes, and design next steps. For instance, during a teacher team meeting, teachers discussed providing multiple opportunities for students to share their understanding and engage in productive struggle via writing an explanation of their work, showing their work, or in mathematics by computational work products.
- During a teacher team meeting a mathematics teacher presented a brief background of student work. The teacher submitted a mathematics vignette to show three students' understanding of a problem presented requiring them to examine an accompanying box-and whisker plot indicating the cost of 12 CD's in dollars. Students were asked to decide if the statements made were true. The team then engaged in an analysis of what the students were able to do and what was missing. The student data showed that the first student was able to articulate an explanation of his work. The second student was able to identify what was right and what was wrong, but lacked justification and the third student was able to identify the maximum and the minimum range with justification. The team reflections include vocabulary expansion and instructional adjustments on justification.

## Area of Focus

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

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the school community, encourage ongoing feedback, and hold a system of accountability. There is a focus on working together with families and their understanding of the school's expectations, their roles and support.

### Impact

School leaders and staff promote high expectations and offer its constituents support toward meeting those expectations. However, the school is in the process of extending its responsibility to its families to ensure that in partnership families and students fully understand the school's expectations linked to college and career preparation.

### Supporting Evidence

- Personalized professional development is depicted in what the school calls, a “working professional development calendar” based on sharing of best practices to inform outcome reflections. For instance, teachers use a peer observation feedback sheet for intervisitations. Teachers highlight the lens and focus for peer visits making comments, questions and reflections, and engaging in professional discourse.
- Teachers, the guidance team, the counselor for internships/ career and technical education coordinator, and college advisor, and College Now, support students in transitioning into higher education. The senior institute composed of grade 12 students is responsible for presentations of academic work portfolios five times per year. During the senior year students are required to successfully partake in the, “Pathways Portfolio” process. Supported by a teacher each senior organizes and presents a portfolio of projects, reports and samples of work indicative of mastery of content areas to a panel of teachers and students. While parents were informed of such student support services and are satisfied with the support, they were unclear of their roles in providing support to their teens to assist in preparing them for the next level.
- During a parent meeting, parents expressed that the school regularly communicates by phone call, back-pack mail and email; however they also stated a need to partner with the school in areas that increase their understanding of how to support their teens regarding availabilities of future college and career choices and funding sources.
- The school features an internship program requiring all seniors to complete a one-year internship where students experience the work field. The goal of this program is to provide students the opportunity to explore a career of interest, and work competencies. Placements include small companies, schools, health clinics, local hospitals, community-based organizations, and New York City government offices. The school's work with students has earned them acceptance letters from numerous colleges and universities, such as, Bard College, Hofstra University, and New York City College of Technology.

## Additional Findings

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

All curricula are aligned to Common Core and content Standards and integrate key instructional shifts in tasks, regularly using student work to make curricular refinements.

### Impact

The school has made purposeful decisions to ensure coherence of units of study across content areas, and student work analysis informs curricular enhancements, so that a diversity of learners has curricular access.

### Supporting Evidence

- Content area teachers align scope and sequence to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate key instructional shifts in cycles of learning. For example, teachers have done a crosswalk between the English language arts for grades 9-12 scope and sequence and the Common Core Learning Standards, aligning them in every band for each grade level. Common core related skills align in the same manner as the scope and sequence moves up through the grade levels.
- Content area teacher teams work together to reassess the scope and sequence for each subject and to refine, align, and integrate key instructional shifts. Teachers memorialize their yearly curriculum maps on Google docs to share across grades and content areas. Curriculum maps include a column highlighting common core alignment to indicate where the unit and lesson plans appropriately bridge to standards. Teachers also post their units, and daily lesson plans illustrating common core alignment.
- Teachers spoke of refining curriculum and instruction to develop a common language, build conceptual understanding, and literacy practices incorporated into lessons, so staff and students are able to use and understand the work in spite of the student's linguistic abilities. An example includes, highlighted words in units used to facilitate comprehension of the concept of heroes and heroism driven from the curricula assigned text, Joseph Campbell's Hero Journey or Mono-Myth that include: heroes, heroism, heroic, and hero.
- All lesson plans include common core standards, a language objective, flexible groupings, differentiation and skills that will be learned or explored. Also included are assessments, a procedure, aim, a "prepare and model", a group practice, a share and a wrap-up or summary. Built into unit study and lesson plans are scaffolds, annotation techniques, multiple graphic organizers, writing prompts, and transition words.

**Findings**

Teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reveal a set of beliefs about how students learn best, leveraged by the Danielson Framework for Teaching (DfT), and multiple points of entry. Students engage in challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking in their work products.

**Impact**

Across classrooms various strategies including, scaffolds in both English and the native language, and key instructional shifts, consistently lead to entry points that prompt deep reasoning, so that all learners including the school's particular subgroups have numerous opportunities to produce meaningful work products.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Across the school teachers share a set of beliefs that addresses how students learn best and the needs of their 90 percent English language learner (ELL) population rooted in the tenets of heterogeneity, experiential learning, language and content integration and collaboration. The school's beliefs are defined within the classrooms where observations of practice depict real-life application, language acquisition embedded in content texts, and tasks that highlight the school's focus on question scaffolds built into all lessons, close reading, language use, and annotation strategies.
- The majority of classrooms across grades and content areas depicted student groupings collaborating and contributing to group work. Each group understood their roles and responsibilities within the group. For example, in a grade 12 Integrated Co-teaching (ICT) English class students were engaged in a six-week study and analysis of numerous types of heroes and were asked to show their understanding of the complex nature of heroes and heroism, as well as summarize an article using the "five finger" strategy. Students seated in groups developed the important points or big ideas in five statements and then in their own words and using their hand templates, wrote a possible topic in the center of their palms. The lesson reinforced annotation strategies, and students supported each other, highlighting, underlining, making markings on their leveled texts. Scaffolds, included video/audio support for content information, writing prompts, multiple writing graphic organizers, class-time support of the writing process, editing templates, and small group support between peers and teachers.
- In a grade 10 American History class, an introductory lesson on action research began with a language objective. Students engaged in oral presentations stemming from the five student group collaborations using problem-solving techniques, and negotiated a plan on how to solve a societal problem. Student choice of topics of real-life and relevant issues include: teen pregnancy obesity, bullying, illegal immigration, and sexually transmitted diseases. Student's roles were agreed upon and each knew the expectation for their part in the presentation. After each presentation, the student audience had the opportunity to ask a clarifying question or an inquiry question. These prompted student discourse and engagement of further inquiries and came to a closure with the anticipatory set for the next day's lesson.

**Findings**

Across classrooms teachers use common assessments and rubrics aligned to the school's curricula and regularly monitor student progress in all subject areas.

**Impact**

Data analyses afford teachers and students actionable feedback that inform instructional adjustments and improve student achievement toward goals across grades and content areas.

**Supporting Evidence**

- During a teacher team meeting, teachers described their school as an outcome-based school where all teachers use a mastery/outcome-based assessment system throughout the content areas. The outcomes are aligned to the CCLS, particularly in mathematics and English language arts (ELA) departments. Additionally, science teachers use the same content outcomes for a unit of study. Similarly, other disciplines also use common content outcomes in their units that are reflected in curriculum maps.
- In all classrooms, teachers use common core and/or content area aligned rubrics to provide feedback to students toward progress and mastery of goals. In a grade 11 chemistry class students studying a virus structure were asked to describe and explain the life cycle of a virus. The teacher circulated the classroom conducting individual conferences, assessing progress of the study. Using an outcome-based rubric, proficient students define the structure of a virus, the Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) and the Ribonucleic Acid (RNA) of a virus. They also define the host and virus relationship, the responses of the human body to a virus and the spread of a virus. A highly proficient student defines and explains the life cycle of a virus, its attachment, entry, replication, assembly and lysis or the breaking down of a cell, and release. A student not meeting the requirements is marked as, "Not Yet" and is given support to assist in meeting the proficient level. Assignments, grades and revisions total the overall outcome. Across the content areas all teachers use similar rubrics aligned to the discipline study.
- The school uses EdPerformance with skill trackers as a baseline assessment to determine student reading levels and monitor language and literacy progress. Teachers use this data to create student groups or classes for language and literacy to address linguistic needs for students who are either newly arrived or have been in the United States for a short time, and those in need of further literacy skills.
- Teachers use an online mastery based assessment system to afford students feedback toward goals. Students are also able to view their progress and engage in conversations with teachers toward their academic progress. Via this system teachers determine areas of student needs, and design instructional support tailored to those needs. For instance, student outcomes have prompted adjustments in placements for Tier 2 student groupings composed of small classes with built-in academic interventions.