



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

**Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning**

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2014-2015**

**School for Excellence**

**High School X404**

**1110 Boston Road  
Bronx  
NY 10456**

**Principal: Carmen Bardequez-Brown**

**Date of review: March 18, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Claudy Makelele**

## The School Context

School for Excellence is a high school with 408 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 27% Black, 71% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 29% English language learners and 32% 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 75.4%.

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

## Area of Celebration

<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 vast majority of the teachers engage in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborative work, systematically analyzing assessment data and student work to promote the achievement of school goals via improved teacher practice and make key educational decisions for the student population.

### Impact

Instruction is uniform throughout the school as a result of school-wide efforts to engage students through improved teacher practice that is improving student performance.

### Supporting Evidence

- All of the teachers are members of both grade and department teams. Departments meet every other week to engage in inquiry-based collaborations. The teams have developed curriculum maps and performance tasks. During the team meetings, the teachers look at student work generated from shared lesson plans and strategies to highlight emerging trends. Team members are responsible for sharing best practices and strategies such as using a tuning protocol and other teachers give cool and warm feedback. Strategies deemed effective by the team are then adopted by team members, who then implement them in their classrooms. Administration attends every meeting and approves final decisions regarding curriculum.
- Five teachers are involved in the model teacher and lead teacher programs, and they analyze key elements of each other's and their colleague's classroom practices. They analyze classroom practice using a low inference transcript and strategies/student outcomes debrief protocol. As a result of the collaboration, these discussions and feedback enable the teachers to analyze practices and strategies and learn from their peers.
- Across teams, most teachers were able to articulate the instructional focus of annotation. During the grade team meeting, teachers analyzed student writing across content areas and discussed the strategies needed to be taught to enable students to improve their annotate skills across curriculum. For example, the grade 9 English language arts (ELA) teacher shared how the strategy of annotation has improved her students' writing craft by facilitating their use of evidence with quotes from the text. The ELA teachers shared that it is imperative this program be looped for the next three years in order to achieve consistent growth.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Developing**

### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to the curricula and beginning to reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula to enable all learners to be engaged in higher order thinking activities.

### Impact

The inconsistent provision of multiple entry points into the curricula leads to uneven engagement of students in all subject areas.

### Supporting Evidence

- Newly implemented instructional practices include School for Excellence methods of annotation, use of the Seven Habits of a Good Reader and the Writing Revolution. These strategies have been initiated in grade 9 to make the curriculum more accessible to all students including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities. The impact of these new initiatives has yet to be evaluated.
- All of the departments have interwoven discipline-specific reading strategies to support a literacy initiative school-wide in an effort to further reach and teach the 71% of students currently reading below grade level in the school.
- Teachers assign students inquiry projects twice a year. Through such projects, students develop their questioning and writing skills. Examples of such inquiry projects include a science project on water sustainability and a social studies project interviewing a local family about the prominent role they have played in the Bronx community over the years.

## Additional Findings

<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 staff, students and their families and the students receive public recognition for their achievements. Partnerships with community based organizations foster student leadership and enhance the school's guidance and advisement supports.

### Impact

Programs and student activities support the school's high expectations and contribute to mutual accountability for staff, students and families, providing students with a clear path towards college and career readiness.

### Supporting Evidence

- The culture of the school is enhanced by a warm, welcoming school environment decorated with plants, student work, and classical music.
- Each semester, the school holds honors award assemblies to recognize and celebrate student achievements. Struggling students participate in Fun, Enlightening, Energetic and Transformational (FEETZ) retreats to boost confidence and increase academic achievement.
- Student leadership is fostered through the student government, giving students a voice in the decision making process. Throughout the year, students participate in trips. Partnerships with community based organizations such as Dignity, Alchemy and Counseling in Schools support the students' socio-emotional needs. Students participate on athletic teams through the Public Schools Athletic League (PSAL) games. The students go to the opera once a year and the Met Opera Guild periodically visits the classes.
- Guidance counselors work with students on college applications and requirements. The school has a Bottom Line College Access program. Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) preparation courses are offered and free Federal student aid application workshops are held for parents.
- Advisories provide emotional support for students, helping them to develop their understandings of the pathways open to them for college and career readiness.

<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 the Common Core Learning Standards and integrating the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order thinking skills inconsistently across grades, subjects and for ELLs and students with disabilities.

### **Impact**

Although teachers are revising curriculum, the school's curricula decisions do not yet ensure coherence across all content areas and grade levels.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Teachers write lessons on a template using the Understanding by Design model, identifying essential questions, performance tasks, questioning and assessments geared toward higher order thinking. The lesson plans must include evidence of differentiation for ELLs and for special education students.
- The school examines course offerings and curriculum in order to tailor their programs to meet the needs of all students, especially their 29% ELLs and 32% of students with Individualized Education Program (IEPs). For example, since testing the students using the Read 180 Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) tests revealed that 71% of students were reading below grade level, the school adopted the Writing Revolution program. The program scaffolds the development of stronger writing skills, including argumentative writing skills as required by the Common Core Learning Standards. Writing Revolution is a new program that is currently being used for one grade, with plans to expand and adopt it across all grade levels if successful.
- The school has newly invested in programs such as Read 180, MyON Reader, Rosetta Stone, Flocabulary and Mind Play to support the needs of students struggling with literacy.

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

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula. The school uses common assessments to determine student progress toward goals.

### **Impact**

The school consistently uses data analysis to provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement and to guide adjustments in the curricular units to meet the needs of all learners.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Using the Skedula program, teachers create customized assessments for students. Mock Regents exams and midterms are administered to students using this program. Additionally, the teachers use Eduware/Test Wizard to create tests and monitor student progress. The school monitors students' reading levels by administering the Read 180 Scholastic Reading Inventory tests to gauge student progress.
- Teachers use rubrics to make the assessment criteria more readily understood by students and they provide checklists to accompany multi-step projects for students to monitor and assess their progress. All teachers regularly assess individual student understandings of each lesson's objective using exit slips at the end of each class.
- As part of their literacy curriculum, students regularly annotate across the curriculum using a prescribed method. The method is outlined on laminated cards that list step-by-step instructions for annotating. The cards can be found on every table in all of the classrooms. Annotation requires students to make their thinking visible, which in turn allows teachers to assess comprehension of content. The school has developed an annotation rubric to assess this skill.