



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Bronx High School of Business

High School X412

**240 E 172nd Street
Bronx
NY 10457**

Principal: Vincent Rodriguez

**Date of review: April 15, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Cyndi Kerr**

The School Context

Bronx High School of Business is a high school with 339 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 35% Black, 63% Hispanic, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 30% English language learners and 24% special education students. Boys account for 58% of the students enrolled and girls account for 42%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 79.0%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	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	Developing
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		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	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	Additional Findings	Developing
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	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	Celebration	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Grade team leaders and teachers engage in structured inquiry-based teacher teamwork and consistently examine student work and data.

Impact

Improved teacher practices are spreading across the school along with increased student performance, especially in writing. Team leaders build their facilitation skills and are involved in school level decisions.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal encourages teachers to take on leadership roles and provides support for them to develop the necessary skills. Teachers College is working with grade team leaders to build capacity in facilitating meetings and using data. These coaches also work with the grade team leaders on a regular basis to prepare for weekly grade team meetings. The principal reports that grade team leaders are more confident in their teacher leadership roles.
- Ninth grade teachers across content areas are working weekly on the Writing Is Thinking strategic inquiry team (WITsi) supported by the School Renewal Team coaches in using writing strategies for helping students improve their writing and acquisition of content. Teachers use a tracking sheet to identify skill attainment in writing across classrooms and make decisions about giving feedback and determining next steps for their lessons and work with the students. During the teacher team meeting visited, teachers discussed how the targeted students had reached mastery in three out of the four subject areas and how students have increased their writing ability to communicate key relationships among concepts and use of textual evidence to support ideas. The teachers viewed the tracking charts they had filled out using student work to illustrate where students had gained mastery and where students were still struggling to make decisions about designing the upcoming content assessments.
- Other teachers are adopting the WITsi strategies even though they are not part of the formal WITsi training. Special education teachers are now meeting to learn about these strategies and the English department has turn keyed the stage one strategy of using the stems, “because, but, so” as writing prompts which allow students to demonstrate their thinking and teachers to assess their learning.
- At grade team meetings, teachers analyze Regents exam results as well as course passing rates and use assessment rubrics to identify patterns and trends in student work products. One pattern that was common across grades and content was lack of domain specific academic vocabulary in student writing.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices, although beginning to align to the belief that students learn best through active engagement with content, reflect inconsistent use of scaffolds and entry points.

Impact

Classroom discussion and student work show uneven levels of higher-order thinking, participation and rigor.

Supporting Evidence

- Some teachers utilize reciprocal teaching as a strategy to increase engagement and accountability for learning. One teacher guided students in summarizing text and asking questions of their fellow students to understand a chapter from *The Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*.
- One teacher utilized the annotation strategy as a scaffold for students in a social studies class. Students read about Mayans and annotated text to write a response using the “because, but and so” strategy, while other students used a peer editing checklist to give each other feedback.
- In a science classroom, students performed an experiment in groups of four, however roles were not clearly defined and all students were not engaged in the work. The students were asked to analyze blood types collected from a mock crime scene to determine which suspect should be arrested for a crime committed. However, several student groups had one student doing the work while other students were disengaged or had no role.
- In one math classroom visited, none of the students completed the Do Now assignment and students were unable to explain what the lesson objective meant to them. In another class, the students were actively engaged in a task that required student-to-student discussion on the various forms of equations (slope-intercept, table, and graph). Students discussed their thinking, critiqued reasoning of peers, and asked the teacher questions. However, across classrooms, most discourse observed was teacher-to-student, student-to-teacher.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

School leaders and faculty are in the process of aligning curricula to Common Core Learning Standards and are beginning to embed increasingly rigorous tasks and scaffolds within curricula.

Impact

Lessons and units across grades and content, reflect increasingly Common Core aligned objectives, essential questions, and some instructional shifts. Although the school is beginning to implement curricular scaffolds for English language learners (ELLs), the tasks inconsistently emphasize higher order skills, rigorous habits, and cognitive engagement.

Supporting Evidence

- All lessons and units reviewed reflect essential questions, and instructional and language objectives. For example in an earth science lesson plan, the essential question was “Would scientific insight on Dhaka’s plate boundaries influence the citizens’ daily life?” The content objective was “Students will be able to: Do a close read and annotate article in order to respond to the prompts” and “What characteristics are present in Bangladesh that would result in widespread chaos in the event of an earthquake?” The language objective was “Students will be able to: Respond to the prompt using complete sentences citing evidence from the text.” The principal stated that teachers use a checklist to determine task rigor but some teachers stated that they don’t consistently use it. The math department uses the rigor checklist as a reference guide when creating lessons, explicitly answering questions such as, “Does the task use and encourage precise and accurate mathematics, academic language, and representations (picture, symbols, equations, expressions, models, etc.)?” “Are students required to demonstrate a balance of mathematical procedures and deeper conceptual understanding?”, “Are students provided opportunities to apply the mathematical concept(s) to situations of increasing complexity?”
- Teachers are beginning to plan and implement scaffolds for ELLs using beginner Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE) ELL scaffolds. For example, curriculum binders included teacher modified, centrally provided ELL tasks specifically designed to provide access for ELLs. The binders serve also as a portfolio of student work and are used for instructional planning based on differentiated student needs.
- Many tasks require low-level thinking such as recall and retell. Results from a curricula audit at the school indicated that instructional tasks across classrooms evidence inconsistent rigor and focus on higher order skills development. School leaders have begun to address these findings at staff meetings to engage teachers in discussing and deciding next steps, especially in terms of the recommendation for focus on depth of skills, over breadth.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

The school is developing in their use of common assessments practices and beginning to implement on going checks for understanding to measure students' progress.

Impact

Despite the emerging use of common assessment data, teachers and teams do not consistently use assessment results to adjust curricula and instruction for meeting the identified needs of students. Additionally, inconsistent use of ongoing checks for understanding during delivery of instruction and use of student self-assessment result in limited feedback to students regarding their learning needs and next steps.

Supporting Evidence

- Department teams create and use common assessments such as midterms and end-of-unit tests. Results of these assessments are reviewed by one of the assistant principals but not consistently used to make modifications to units, tasks, and lessons. The school is beginning to develop their use of common assessment to measure student progress and adjust curricula and pedagogy. In the ninth grade, the WITsi team is working closely with the school renewal coaches to implement common assessments and tasks across the curricula. The resulting student work was analyzed using a Looking At Student Work (LASW) protocol to uncover specific skills where the students needed further growth. The ninth grade team was observed discussing the next steps in implementing a common assessment. For the ninth grade teachers this work is beginning to result in ongoing assessment and regular adjustment to instruction. Additionally, because of teacher input, the school wide grading policy was amended to weight classroom projects at 40% of the overall course grade informing new planning and assessment practices.
- Some teachers have students conduct peer and self-assessments but this is in very limited form and scope at this point in time at the school. Students in global history studying Mayan civilization used a sentence checklist to give each other feedback to correct their statements using the “because, but, so” strategy. A student was observed revising a sentence after being given feedback by his peer.
- In a twelfth grade English class, the teacher circulated the room, conferring with students to help them clarify their thinking in completing the assigned task and in a ninth grade social studies Integrated Co-Teaching class, the teachers checked in with students, reading their written work, and giving specific feedback to guide improvement in their writing. However, across classrooms, there was inconsistent use of entry slips, exit slips, strategic questioning and other checks for understanding to inform lessons adjustments.
- Feedback to students about their progress and areas of strength and needs is not specific. For example, feedback on student work observed on a bulletin board said, “Well prepared, rewrite your work and complete your work.”

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Teachers and teams are establishing a culture of learning that is beginning to communicate high expectations. A system for feedback to families and students and guidance and advisement supports are beginning to emerge to support a pathway to college and careers.

Impact

Emerging feedback and advisement supports that include clarity and detail are beginning to help students and families understand progress toward goals and necessary preparation towards successful achievement of graduation, college, and careers.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses Skedula to record student grades and progress reports. Parents have access to this program; however, some parents reported that the transition to ninth grade was challenging. The school mails and backpacks progress reports to parents and sends a phone message to alert parents that progress reports are available. Parents interviewed reported that the school also makes phone calls to follow up with lateness, skipping and academic progress so that parents can follow up with their students.
- The school prominently posts current student progress to graduation (not identifiable by name) in posters labeled, "Are your credits and Regents green?"
- Guidance staff participate in grade team meetings to support teachers in keeping students on track toward meeting expectations for successfully completing academic work and attending school. The principal also shared that the guidance staff administered a student personal interest survey to support how they provided college and career advisement.
- During the students meeting, students reported unevenness in high expectations communicated by teachers. Students interviewed stated that while some teachers "challenge us and give us a lot of work, some do not." Additionally other students shared that "Some teachers show and tell us how to complete an assignment and some get frustrated when you don't understand." "Some teachers use pupil path so we know what are grades are and some do not."