

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Bronx High School for Medical Science

Middle - High School X413

**240 East 172 Street
Bronx
NY 10457**

Principal: William Quintana

**Date of review: May 20, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Sabrina Cook**

The School Context

Bronx High School for Medical Science is a middle - high school with 472 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 35% Black, 55% Hispanic, 1% White, and 7% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 42% of the students enrolled and girls account for 58%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-14 was 93.8%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core

<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</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.	Celebration	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	Additional Findings	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.	Focus	Developing

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Curricula is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, and school leaders and teachers are in the process of integrating the instructional shifts. The school is beginning to plan tasks that provide students access to the curricula.

Impact

Curricula and academic tasks are beginning to promote higher-order thinking and college and career readiness for students.

Supporting Evidence

- Unit plans and curriculum maps include essential questions, enduring understanding, skills, assessment, resources, and priority standards. However, instructional shifts were inconsistently integrated into lesson plans. For example, an English lesson plan included a class discussion facilitated by students, partner work looking for evidence to support a claim, and using a graphic organizer to organize their evidence into a written short response. In contrast, a math lesson plan had students review a Do Now assignment to work on a handout.
- The school has identified writing across the curriculum using Depth of Knowledge questioning as one of their instructional goals. Most lesson plans include questioning that will be used; however, these questions ask for short answer responses. An English lesson plan included a graphic organizer that would scaffold up to more extensive writing, but in social studies, science, and math plans, tasks included low level questions with short responses.
- While skills listed in curriculum suggest that students will be engaged in cognitively challenging work, assessments generally ask students to demonstrate these skills at a low level. Questions embedded in planned tasks were at different levels; however the assessments listed in unit plans were primarily worksheets, quizzes and unit tests that called for lower level application of student learning such as multiple choice and short answer questions.

Area of Focus

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

Teacher teams are in the process of engaging in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations that engage in analyzing student data and work products.

Impact

Professional collaborations have not yet resulted in improved instructional capacity, student performance, and progress toward meeting school goals.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet regularly in both content teams and grade teams and engage in collaborative conversations about students whom they share. Discussions, however, do not follow an inquiry approach, and instead focus on administrative items. During a meeting, teachers were observed discussing open positions, upcoming school events, and upcoming professional development topics for a majority of their agenda.
- Teachers are at the beginning stages of giving feedback on instructional practices in order to improve student understanding. During a meeting, teachers looked at student work from a math assignment. Although the meeting had some structure (a facilitator, a note taker, and a protocol for looking at the student work being shared), the protocol that the team used was only verbally stated and then loosely followed. This resulted in limited feedback being given to the presenting teacher. Additionally, teachers reported giving feedback to one another in order to strengthen their practice and clear-up student confusion. However, they reported this work happens more informally as in asking a colleague "what do you think?" and less as a part of structured inquiry discussions.
- The school has a team that is focused on using an inquiry approach to strengthen curriculum and pedagogy, however, a small minority of staff members sit on this team. The team started as a curriculum team and changed into an inquiry team. Administrators report that this approach is a "work in progress" and that the school is "still in the process of learning how to use data to drive instruction."

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Across classrooms, pedagogical practices inconsistently provided multiple entry points into the curricula, and there is limited student engagement in meaningful discussion.

Impact

Inconsistent implementation of strategic questioning strategies leads to uneven engagement in appropriately challenging tasks and hinder student engagement in higher order thinking in student-centered discussions.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, discussions reflect uneven levels of student thinking and participation. One of the school's instructional goals is elevating the rigor for questioning. Administrators report that questioning techniques include creating space for accountable talk in classroom conversations as an important method to help students generate ideas, think critically, and deepen their understanding of the content. However, while teachers posed high level questions, these questions did not facilitate student-centered discussions. In social studies classes, a math class, and an English class, teachers posed verbal questions to the class, but individual student volunteers answered.
- School-wide instructional strategies that promote student discussion were inconsistently used. The school has been working on using higher level questions that require explanation or re-directing questions so that the discussion centers around students, encouraging dialogue between peers, and getting students to use DOK question stems. Although an English teacher re-directed questions and encouraged dialogue between peers by pairing students, in other classes, students sat in groups and pairs but worked independently on worksheets. Furthermore, in a science, a math, and a social studies class, students completed worksheets that posed a series of rote questions/problems and they worked independently to complete them. In these classrooms discussion was limited to interaction between the teacher and the students.
- Teaching strategies inconsistently provided multiple entry points leading to uneven engagement in challenging tasks. Active student engagement is part of the school's instructional core and administrators report that through the use of technology, differentiation, protocols, and graphic organizers, they are focused on meeting students where they are in order to get them where they need to be. However, these strategies were not employed across classrooms. Additionally, although students consistently followed teacher direction, active engagement in appropriately paced work products that reflected high levels of thinking and participation was uneven. One student reported that he could be more challenged if the pacing of his classes was faster.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Common assessments are in place. Across classrooms, teachers' assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding.

Impact

Teachers are not yet effectively using data from common assessments to adjust curricula. Varied use of checks for understanding hinders the implementation of targeted instructional adjustments to ensure all students' needs are being met.

Supporting Evidence

- The school is at the beginning stage of using data from common assessments. The school administered New York City Performance Assessments. Teachers reported that they are beginning to work collaboratively to norm, grade, and analyze the data from these assessments; however this work is not yet happening at the school-wide level.
- Across classrooms, the use of strategies to check for student understanding was limited. Although when asked, teachers could articulate check for understanding strategies that they have used, strategies to gather data on student understanding in order to make adjustments to instruction were not observed during visits to classrooms. During classroom visits, teachers relied on informal verbal questioning as the primary strategy for eliciting student understanding. In all classrooms observed, teachers posed verbal questions to individual students, groups of students, and the full class, however, this strategy elicited information from one student at a time.
- Peer and self-assessment was limited across classrooms. No students were involved engaging in peer assessment, and only one teacher asked students to informally self-assess by asking them to look at the answers they were getting and compare them to their answers from an earlier activity.

Findings

High expectations around instruction are not consistently communicated to staff and feedback to students regarding their preparedness toward the next level is inconsistent.

Impact

Systems of accountability that support teachers in progressing towards instructional expectations are developing, and feedback to students and families regarding their progress towards the next level is uneven across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Instructional expectations for individual teachers and teacher teams are developing, resulting in inconsistent implementation of strategies to support student achievement. Administrators reported a focus on questioning, and there is evidence of a focus on questioning in curriculum and student tasks. Teachers reported that some teams use common assessments and others are just beginning to use them. Some teachers and departments use portfolios and some do not. One teacher reported that certain grades or content areas are implementing many instructional practices; however, "it is not the entire school."
- There are practices in place to inform students of their progress, however most practices are isolated among a few teachers and are not yet implemented school-wide. Teachers reported that some teachers utilized an online grading system, that some teachers send out progress reports, and that some teachers utilize portfolios in order to give students feedback on their individual progress. Although students reported getting feedback on their work, students reported that if they wanted feedback on their overall performance in a class they ask a teacher during class, after class, and via email.
- While a path to graduation and the next level is communicated with students and families, some school-wide practices inhibit students from individualized progression. The school has a course catalog which details the courses students need to take in order to graduate. Students remain with the same class throughout their time at the school and all take the same courses outlined in the catalog. While most students reported being happy with their classes being self-contained, one student wanted to take additional higher level courses and is unable to do so because programming is not individualized. Parents reported that students were no longer taking College Now courses because the school wants them to focus on passing the Common Core exams. Parents and students also expressed their interest in more extracurricular opportunities.