



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

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**Bronx Bridges High School**

**08X432**

**1980 Lafayette Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10473**

**Principal: Nelsie M. Castillo**

**Date of review: January 8, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Richard Cintron**

## The School Context

Bronx Bridges High School is a high school with 313 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 8% Black, 82% Hispanic, 2% White, and 6% Asian students. The student body includes 82% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 85%.

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

Leadership and staff successfully partner with families to support student progress towards high expectations connected to college and career readiness and provide effective guidance/advisement support to ensure that all students are prepared for the next level.

### Impact

The school has created true partnerships with parents and students that has resulted in strong trusting relationships and increased student achievement

### Supporting Evidence

- Parent workshops are driven by parent needs and designed to partner with parents as they support their children as students and new arrivals to the country. Workshops include topics such as understanding the Common Core Learning Standards, immigration and the legal system, how to communicate with teachers and the school's support staff through Pupil Path, and the college application process. Parents spoke to how the school has been instrumental in creating a community of parents who help each other and see the school as a strong ally for their entire family. The school's parent coordinator works collaboratively with the parent association to ensure that all parent communications and workshops are provided in multiple languages to serve the school's large multinational community of newly arrived immigrants.
- During a student meeting, students spoke to how teachers and guidance staff challenge them to take advantage of opportunities such as Advanced Placement (AP) classes, as well as additional classes needed to obtain the highest possible diploma option. Students, parents and teachers spoke to how the schools Family Group program, which consists of every adult adopting ten students for their entire school career, has been instrumental in helping students and their family members succeed in school, become adjusted to life in a new country and to view the school as a safe place for their entire family to find support. Students spoke to how they regularly set goals and discuss them within their Family Group and how this process has helped them to become more responsible and to take ownership of their own learning.
- The school's Youth Development team, which consists of two guidance counselors, three social workers, the attendance coordinator, the parent coordinator, and the dean of culture play an integral role in helping to ensure that all staff members are aware of all students' issues and concerns and can regularly communicate and support students on a daily basis. The team publishes a daily Youth Development Digest, which informs the entire adult community of all student interactions with the team, communications with parents, student attendance and lateness concerns, updates on where students stand with regards to the college application process, outcomes of parent meetings and requests by parents or suggestions by the team for one to one or group interventions for individual students.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.1 Curriculum**

**Rating:**

**Developing**

### Findings

Curricula across all subject areas are not yet aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards and academic tasks do not consistently emphasize rigorous higher order thinking skills across grades and subjects.

### Impact

Students are not consistently challenged with high level tasks that might push student thinking and promote college and career readiness for all learners.

### Supporting Evidence

- A review of curriculum documents revealed that targeted supports for students who struggle are not always specific nor are they consistently seen across all subject areas. For example, while some teachers identified grouping students heterogeneously as a way to support all students there were no indications of how support would be provided besides the actual grouping.
- Conversations with the school leadership as well as a review of curriculum documents revealed that the school is still in the process of aligning curricula in all core subject areas to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards and integrating the instructional shifts. The school is currently in the process of developing a common language and evaluation system to measure rigor and is using ATLAS, an online curriculum mapping resource, to build coherence across all grades and content areas.
- Student work products and accompanying tasks displayed in the corridors and in the classrooms visited did not consistently demonstrate high levels of rigor or alignment to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies and scaffolds inconsistently provided multiple entry points into the lesson and student discussion reflect uneven levels of student understanding.

### Impact

Across classrooms, there are missed opportunities to engage all learners in consistent challenging tasks and higher order thinking, thus hindering students from exhibiting their work at high levels and being integral to their learning.

### Supporting Evidence

- Although students were asked to work collaboratively across all classrooms visited, not all students were actively engaged in the discussions within their groups and some students were unable to articulate the work of the group and show a full understanding of the material being covered. For example, in a science class where students were studying the difference between liquids, solids and gases, several students in one group could not explain why the group's answer was correct after they had completed the assignment. In a History class, students were given several different articles to read but were unclear how they would be using these articles beyond just trying to determine the main idea from them.
- In classrooms visited, questioning strategies to promote higher levels of student thinking and discussion were inconsistent. Some teachers asked only low level recall questions that did not ask for students to strategically think or to extend their thinking. For example, in an English Language Arts class the teacher asked several questions requesting students to recall the definition of different vocabulary words before eventually providing the definition for them.
- Although the principal indicated that teachers were in the process of encouraging student to student discussion and allowing more wait time to better support students as they reflected on questions asked by the teacher and their classmates, these practices were not consistently seen across all classrooms. In a science classroom and an additional social studies classroom, as the teacher circulated around the room assisting various groups, when students asked the teacher questions, instead of redirecting the questions back to the group or to the rest of the class to promote student thinking and discussion, the teacher simply answered the questions and moved on.

**Findings**

Teachers create assessments and use rubrics aligned to the school curricula to provide students and teachers with actionable feedback. Data from student work products is used to adjust curricula and instruction.

**Impact**

The school's use of common assessments, data analysis and feedback allows teachers to determine student progress toward goals and adjust instruction accordingly to meet the needs of all students.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The school administered their own baseline assessments at the beginning of the year in reading, writing and math and used the results to drive curricula and instructional decisions. For example, the English department redesigned their curricula to focus on informative, narrative and argumentative writing and worked with English Language Learners teachers to redesign rubrics to better support the schools large population of students who are new to the country. The social studies department adopted the same argumentative writing rubric that was developed by the English department in order to ensure coherence across the school.
- The use of rubrics, accompanied by specific targeted actionable feedback from teachers to students, is an established ritual for improving student achievement across the school that the principal, teachers and students were able to speak about. Student work displayed in hallways included rubrics with identified areas of strength and areas of growth. Students spoke to how they regularly use rubrics in class and with homework assignments and how teachers confer with them to provide next steps.
- Every six weeks, common end of unit assessments are administered in all core subject areas and data is used by teachers to make adjustments to curricula and instructional practices. During a team meeting, teachers explained how after studying the results of students latest end of unit writing assessments, they would be introducing model papers to students across all grades to ensure that students could first identify examples of strong writing and use these papers as a guide when developing their own writing or when self or peer assessing.

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

Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students who they share. Distributed leadership structures allow teachers to have a voice in key decisions across the school.

### **Impact**

The work of teacher teams has strengthened teacher collaboration resulting in improvements to pedagogical practices and a stronger voice in key decisions affecting supports for student achievement.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Instructional strategies, determined by teacher teams and related to school-wide areas of focus, were seen in all classrooms. For example, in all classrooms visited, students were purposefully grouped to allow for differentiated support and where appropriate, students were using rubrics to peer or self-assess.
- Teachers spoke to how the principal meets twice a month with all teacher team leaders to discuss student data, observation trends and to collaboratively plan professional development connected to those findings. Teachers spoke to how this regular practice of collaboratively seeking teacher input has led to a change in culture and contributed to teachers having a more active role in the direction of the school. For example, teachers spoke to how they worked collaboratively with the administration to design the school's new professional learning cycle which runs every four to six weeks and ends with students taking common end of unit assessments. They also discussed how they worked collaboratively with the administration to create additional opportunities for whole group, small group and individual professional development by partnering with Metamorphosis for math support and SIOP to support with English Language Learner strategies.
- Teachers meet twice a week in their teacher teams to analyze student work and discuss specific instructional strategies related to increasing student achievement for struggling students. At an English language arts teacher team meeting teachers discussed how certain students were struggling with citing evidence from the text in their writing. Teachers then agreed that they would all implement a strategy called "I.C.E." which stands for introduce, cite, and explain and that they would visit each other's classrooms to observe its effectiveness.