



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Belmont Preparatory

High School 10X434

**500 East Fordham Road
Bronx
NY 10458**

Principal: Stephen Gumbs

**Date of review: January 14, 2015
Reviewer: Mimi Fortunato**

The School Context

Belmont Preparatory is a high school with 381 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 31% Black, 65% Hispanic, 2% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 44% of the students enrolled and girls account for 56%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 89%.

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	Proficient
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	Proficient
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	Focus	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	Celebration	Proficient
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	Additional Findings	Developing

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The principal consistently communicates high expectations aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching to the entire staff. The principal has created opportunities and support through professional development, and has implemented a system of accountability for those expectations. School leaders and staff provide ongoing feedback to families regarding the school's expectations, and student progress towards college and career readiness.

Impact

Structures for communication of expectations, weekly professional development trainings and systems of accountability, as well as ongoing reciprocal communication with families foster a culture of high expectations for members of the school community.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal communicates high expectations regarding professionalism, instruction, communication, and other elements of the Danielson Framework for Teaching to staff through a staff handbook and a weekly *Principal's Bulletin*.
- Teachers assess their performance using a needs' assessment based on Danielson Framework for Teaching, and are expected to identify goals as well as benchmarks and track their progress. Frequent cycles of observation by school leaders provide ongoing feedback to teachers regarding their progress towards professional goals.
- Professional development is provided to all teachers to support them in meeting the school's expectations for professional growth. For example, teachers recently participated in a workshop titled, *Strategic Use of Scholarship Data to Meet the Needs of Students and Foster Collective Ownership for Student Progress*, and followed this professional development with work in their teams.
- School leaders and staff share with families the expectations for students' college and career readiness through ongoing workshops designed to help parents and students understand what is necessary for students to graduate from high school ready for college. For example, 9th grade parents and their guardians were invited to participate in a *Fresh Start Meet and Greet* where parents had the opportunity to meet the faculty and staff and learn about the school's expectations for college and career readiness. 10th Grade parents participated in a recent *Meet and Greet* where they received information regarding college and career readiness and the college search and application process.
- The Pupilpath online grading program provides parents and students with on-demand access to live data regarding student attendance and performance. Parents shared that they appreciate the access to Pupilpath, the frequent communication from teachers, and the principal's weekly positive communications celebrating events in the school community.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments and rubrics aligned with the school's curricula, and some teachers use the resulting data from student work analysis to provide feedback to teachers and students regarding student achievement and to adjust curricula and instruction. However, grading policies are not consistent across content areas. In addition, as formative assessment practices and the use of student self-assessment vary across classrooms, checks for understanding do not consistently lead to effective adjustments to meet student learning needs.

Impact

As grading practices are implemented inconsistently across classrooms, students are not always clear regarding how their progress has been measured. In addition, varied use of checks for understanding and the inconsistent use of student self-assessment impedes effective instructional adjustments in some classes.

Supporting Evidence

- Some teachers collaboratively develop common assessments and task specific rubrics to drive instructional adjustments, and use the results to drive support for individual student needs. For example, the math and Living Environment teacher teams are engaged in the ongoing process of refining assessments and rubrics, and those teachers use the resulting data to identify student learning needs and inform next instructional steps. However, teacher teams in other content areas are emerging in these practices, and do not yet meet consistently to collaborate on assessment development and outcomes analysis.
- Departments have developed content specific grading policies that incorporate formative and summative assessment elements such as classwork, participation, exam and quizzes, projects, homework, and labs. However, as these grading policies vary across content areas, and formulas contains a number of redundant elements, the information provided to teachers and students does not reliably provide a clear assessment of mastery of learning standards. For example, teachers are expected to develop grades for student participation and classwork in each lesson. However, teachers across classrooms were observed using different systems and grading practices. For example, some teachers were observed using a system of check and check + to grade students during class, while others were not observed noting formative assessment regarding student participation data during lessons.
- Teacher feedback on some student work provides next steps to move students from one level to the next, and most feedback is aligned to a task specific rubric. For example, rubrics displayed on bulletin boards throughout the school provided feedback to students regarding next learning steps, and in the English as a second language classes, the assessment process includes student reflection and self-assessment. However, rubrics varied across content areas, with some reflecting a 0 to 2 point scale, and others a 1 to 4 point scale. In addition, students shared work that provided evidence of varied assessment and feedback practices. For example, a 10th grade English essay assignment was graded using a 0 to 2 point rubric and asked the student to complete a reflection and self-assessment checklist. However, a Physics assignment was marked with a numerical grade and teacher feedback consisted of checks, with no actionable feedback provided to the student outlining next learning steps.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

School leaders ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts, and curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills for a variety of learners.

Impact

Consistency in planning for rigorous curricula and tasks promotes college and career readiness for all learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities, across grades and subject areas.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers have developed curricula across all content areas promoting coherence in the grade 9 through 12 continuum. Curricula across subject areas are consistently aligned to Common Core Learning Standards, and plans for integration of the instructional shifts. For example, an Algebra lesson on identifying and describing the differences in the representation of a function when parameters change asked students to make sense of the problems presented, use appropriate tools strategically, model their solutions, and articulate their reasoning. A Living Environment lesson on the transportation of molecules without the use of energy, planned for students to organize research and present their findings to the class.
- The majority of teachers utilize a common lesson planning template that includes elements such as the Common Core Learning Standards addressed, resources, aim, do now, and the lesson sequence. These templates offer a clear structure, and includes spaces for the introduction, instruction, student practice, and formative assessment.
- The principal has established key instructional goals, including a writing goal that students complete a minimum of six essays in English, two expository/research essays in history, and participate in one literacy rich task in math, and a goal of engaging students in structured pair/group/cooperative activities such as Socratic Seminars, student led presentations or book talks. Teacher unit and lesson plans provide evidence of planning to engage in writing activities in English and social studies, and in pair and group activities across content areas.
- Teachers plan lessons that provide a high level of rigor across classes and that emphasize higher-order skills across grades and content areas for all learners, including the school's population of English language learners and special education students. For example, an English as a second language lesson (which had been developed collaboratively with the teacher and a Learning and Drama Project (LEAD) teaching artist) provided students with access to the novel *A Raisin In The Sun* through a performance activity. In this class, students were observed performing a staged reading of the novel under the co-direction of the English as a second language teacher and the teaching artist. In a self-contained Living Environment lesson for special education students, student groupings were developed through an analysis of Lexile reading levels, and students were provided with tools such as google docs as they worked in pairs to complete their research on Mono Lake organisms and designs of food webs. In this class, an English language learner was also provided with translation support of a para-professional, ensuring that all learners in the class were engaged in the high level task.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teacher practice consistently reflects coherence around a set of beliefs regarding how students learn best, informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts. Across classrooms, student work products and discussion reflect high levels of student participation in tasks and discussions.

Impact

Teacher practice across classrooms provides all learners, including English language learners and special education students, with opportunities to engage in rich discussions and produce meaningful work products, supporting student progress towards learning goals.

Supporting Evidence

- Most lessons observed followed a consistent model, providing students with a do now, mini-lesson, guided practice and independent or group practice. These lessons reflected coherence across grade levels and content areas regarding the school's beliefs that students learn best by engaging in shared learning experiences with their peers. Lessons consistently asked students to engage in independent or group practice, and in English and social studies, students were asked to cite textual evidence to support their thinking. In math, students were given opportunities to demonstrate their thinking and justify their answers. These instructional strategies ensured that all learners, including English language learners and special education students were engaged in appropriately challenging tasks.
- In the majority of classrooms visited, students were engaged in tasks that provided them with opportunities to present their learning to their peers, or act as facilitators in the learning process. For example, in a Forensics class, students presented their findings on case studies in which the outcome of the case was determined by hair, fiber, and fingerprint evidence analysis. In an Advanced Placement U.S. History, in which students were preparing for a symposium, a student facilitated a lesson on immigration that she had planned, leading her peers in a shared reading and class discussion.
- Across classes viewed, there was evidence that student work products and discussions reflected high levels of student thinking and participation. For example, in a Global Studies class, students participated in a Socratic Seminar in which they debated which of Gandhi's tactics was the most influential in leading a non-violent movement. In this class, students facilitated the Socratic Seminar, engaged in peer evaluation using a task-specific rubric, and presented their claims supported by textual evidence, referring to three documents that they had read and annotated prior to the Socratic Seminar. In an Algebra lesson on forming and solving linear equations, a do-now and mini-lesson was followed by student group work, providing students with opportunities to work collaboratively and discuss possible solutions to matching situations with the equations. However, there was limited student ownership of discourse in full class discussion across classrooms, with a teacher-student-teacher pattern of teacher to student interaction.

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

Some teachers engage in content area professional collaborations that promote the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts, and support curricular alignment to the school’s instructional goals. A distributive leadership is emerging, where some teachers co-facilitate team meetings and are engaged in instructional decisions focusing on improving student learning.

Impact

As all teachers are not fully engaged in structured professional collaborations using shared protocols to analyze student work and assessment data, growth in pedagogical practice and leadership capacity is hindered.

Supporting Evidence

- The Living Environment and math teachers meet regularly in content specific inquiry teams to analyze assessment data, identify student need and inform goals for students. For example, the Living Environment team of three teachers was observed utilizing an inquiry approach to analyze a collaboratively developed summative assessment, identify student need, and determine next instructional steps. Through an items skills analysis of the assessment, the team determined that many students could not distinguish the differences between animal and plant cell membranes. Teachers planned for re-engagement lessons and tasks designed to support student understanding of this key understanding. The math team meeting agendas and minutes provided evidence of collaborative inquiry using assessment data to inform next instructional steps. However, teachers across content areas shared they do not yet utilize a protocol for analyzing student work, and they do not regularly meet in grade level teams to identify cross-content academic needs to inform next shared instructional steps.
- Some teachers shared that they meet regularly to collaboratively plan lessons. However, other teachers shared that they are not available to participate in these meetings due to scheduling conflicts and other assignments. In addition, agendas of teacher meetings presented for review included general items such as, “Discuss the final writing task for Romeo and Juliet”. Although notes and next steps were included as headings in the minutes of this meeting, these sections appeared blank.
- Teachers on the Living Environment and math teams shared that they rotate facilitation of team meetings, and have opportunities to determine next instructional steps in their classes. However, the assignment of the lead teacher role varies, and there is no established ongoing forum for lead teachers to share team progress towards shared goals with school leaders. In addition, teachers across content areas shared that the School Leadership Team (SLT) meets infrequently, limiting teacher opportunity for voice in key school-wide instructional decisions.