



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

**Bronx East High school for Law and Community
Service**

High School X439

**500 East Fordham Road
Bronx
NY 10458**

Principal: Michael Barakat

**Date of review: March 4, 2015
Reviewer: Mimi Fortunato**

The School Context

Bronx High School for Law and Community Service is a high school with 389 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 25% Black, 69% Hispanic, 2% White, 1% Asian students, 1% American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 1% Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander. The student body includes 16% English language learners and 24% special education students. Boys account for 46% of the students enrolled and girls account for 54%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 84.0%.

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	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	Focus	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	Additional Findings	Proficient
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	Well Developed
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	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations for professionalism, instruction, communication, and other elements of the Danielson Framework for Teaching to the entire staff, and provide training to support staff in meeting those expectations. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that systematically communicates a unified set of high expectations, and provide guidance/advisements supports to all learners.

Impact

Systems for communicating high expectations to staff and structures for professional development ensure a culture of mutual accountability for meeting those expectations. Extensive guidance supports ensure that students are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal communicates high expectations to staff through a *Staff Handbook*, frequent cycles of observation and feedback, and a system of ongoing reciprocal communication. For example, teachers shared that school leaders share email feedback immediately following an informal or formal observation. In addition, teachers stated that they have frequent professional conversations with the principal and assistant principals regarding shared instructional goals, their classroom practice, and student scholarship reports.
- All teachers develop Individual Professional Development Plans (IPDP) that contain SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, timely) goals aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching (DfT), and track their progress towards highly effective practice across the DfT domains. For example, a Special Education teacher's IPDP contained a goal of increased student pass rate for English from 71.43% to 75%, and for Integrated Algebra from 50-% to 60%. This plan included specific strategies included providing students with weekly progress reports and make-up days as well as structured test corrections in class. All teachers' IPDPs also include an alignment to the school's instructional goal of data-driven instruction, and outline teachers' collaboration with colleagues in the development and refinement of formative and summative assessments.
- The instructional team is engaged in ongoing professional development and collaborations such as the Professional Learning Communities (PLC) team work in which school leadership and teachers assume mutual accountability for meeting established expectations. For example, all teachers meet in content specific PLCs where they collaboratively develop team goals, and track team progress towards established goals.
- Students shared that they receive support from their teachers in establishing goals, and in the college search and application process. For example, juniors and seniors participate in Junior and Senior Seminar classes where they identify possible college choices, and prepare for and complete their applications with support from the guidance team. City University of New York (CUNY) classes are taught through the College at Home program, and students have opportunities to take a wide range of Advanced Placement classes in school and college classes at Fordham University. In addition, the school provides students with on-demand access to real-time data through Pupil Path and Skedula. Students shared that they are expected to assume responsibility for their progress and access this data to gain information regarding their progress towards graduation.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies aligned with the school's curricula. In addition, teachers' assessment practice across most classrooms reflects the use of checks for understanding and students self-assessment. However, the school wide grading policy contains some redundant elements, and varied checks for understanding are not yet embedded in all classrooms.

Impact

A system of using assessments to provide teachers and students with actionable feedback promotes an understanding of student progress towards goals. However, as the school grading policy lacks clarity, teachers and students may not always be clear regarding students' progress in all elements of the policy. As feedback from some teachers is not always actionable, students may not be fully aware of next learning steps. In addition, as varied and effective checks for understanding are not yet embedded in all classrooms, some teacher practice does not yet provide for effective instructional adjustments to meet some student learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers have developed a school-wide grading policy that incorporates formative and summative assessment elements such as assessments, homework/projects, and classwork. However, as this grading policy contains redundant elements, the information provided to teachers and students does not always provide a clear portrait of mastery of learning standards. Teachers across classrooms were observed using a system for calculating the classwork grade, which is updated by most teachers on the online grading system on a weekly basis. However, some teachers were not observed noting formative assessment data regarding classwork during lessons, and in a few classes, students were not able to articulate how their classwork grade was calculated.
- Teachers provide feedback to students regarding next learning steps, and in most classes, students were observed using task specific or classwork rubrics, as in an English class. In addition, documents provided for review provided evidence that English teachers provide students with opportunities for peer- and self-assessment. However, in a few cases, student work reviewed contained no reference to a rubric, and was marked with red checks and a numerical grade. As the practice of providing students with actionable feedback, next steps, and an opportunity for self- reflection is not yet established in all classrooms, students are not always aware of next learning steps.
- Across classrooms, teachers check for understanding through individual or group conferencing during independent or group practice time. For example, an Algebra teacher was observed conferencing with individual students and providing clarity regarding the task as well as targeted instructional guidance. A special educator in an Integrated Co-Teaching English class was observed working with a group of students as they crafted their response to a writing task. However, checks for understanding did not always take into account the content and task, and in a few instances, was limited to asking the full class a question regarding understanding. For example, in a social studies class, the teacher asked the class, "How else would the world have been different if the US had not intervened after World War II?" and continued to ask the same question as students' responses clearly indicated a lack of understanding of either the question or the expected response.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts, and that curricula and academic tasks emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills and promote college and career readiness for all learners, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities.

Impact

The school's purposeful decision to build curricular coherence provides all learners with challenging curricula, and promotes college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers have developed or adapted 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 plan for integration of the instructional shifts. For example, the school has adapted the Agile Mind Intensified Algebra curriculum that incorporates student collaboration as a strategy to solve problems. In a Chemistry lesson plan on identifying the presence of acids or bases, the plan noted that students would be given opportunities to share their findings and justify their solutions in group debate. Teacher unit and lesson plans reviewed provided evidence of planning to support student skill in reading complex informational text, in assessing and citing textual evidence, and in building student skill to engage in rigorous tasks.
- The majority of teachers utilize a common lesson planning template that includes elements such as the Common Core Learning Standards addressed, resources, essential question, warm-up, and the lesson sequence. These templates offer a clear structure that promotes curricular coherence, and includes spaces for the motivation, resources and materials, instruction, medial summary, student practice, and formative assessment.
- Teachers work collaboratively to promote a high level of rigor across classes to ensure that higher-order skills are emphasized across grades and content areas for all learners, including the school's population of English language learners and special education students. For example, an Intermediate English as a Second Language lesson planned for students to identify the purpose and audience for writing, to brainstorm ideas for writing an informational summary using a graphic organizer, to organize their ideas by completing the outline, and to articulate their ideas for the introduction, body, and conclusion of an information summary. In an Integrated Co-teaching Algebra lesson plan on solving linear inequalities, the teachers planned for the diverse learners in the class "to graph solutions to linear inequalities in one variable on a number line, to solve linear inequalities in one variable using tables, graphs, algebraic operations, and to graph solutions to compound linear inequalities in two variables on a coordinate plane."

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teacher practice across classrooms reflects coherence around a set of beliefs regarding how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts. Across classrooms, tasks and discussion strategies provide students with opportunities to engage with peers.

Impact

Teacher practice across classrooms includes the assignment of high level tasks and strategic grouping to ensure a high level of thinking and participation in meaningful work and peer-peer discussions.

Supporting Evidence

- Most lessons observed followed a consistent model, providing students with a warm-up, 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 classes observed, 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 were engaged in investigation and exploration, and in collaboration with peers.
- 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 an Advanced Placement English Literature class, students were reading *Heritage* by Countee Cullen, and the teacher grouped students in expert groups as they prepared to share their understanding of aspects of the poem with their home groups. In a 9th grade English lesson, students were engaged in interviewing their peers in mock interviews, with all students participating as a potential applicant or employer.
- Across classes viewed, there was evidence that student work products and discussions reflected high levels of student thinking and participation. For example, in an Algebra 2 class lesson on solving proportional word problems, students were observed utilizing the ALEKS online math program as they independently progressed through a series of scaffolded math problems, while other students worked in a group with the teacher on solving related math problems. In an Advanced English as a Second Language class, students were observed reading to one another from the text, *Fallen Angels*, completing graphic organizers in which they responded to questions on the theme of the text, and shared their responses in their groups

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The principal ensures that the vast majority of teachers engage in ongoing content area professional collaborations that promote the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts, and align practice to the school’s instructional goals. Distributed leadership structures are embedded, and provide teachers with opportunities to build leadership capacity.

Impact

Structured professional collaborations strengthen teacher practice, resulting in school-wide instructional coherence and increased student achievement for all learners. Opportunities for authentic teacher leadership ensure that teachers play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers are engaged in ongoing professional reflection and collaborations, utilizing School Reform Initiative or teacher created protocols to reflect on teacher practice, analyze assessments, and refine practice aligned with the school’s key instructional goal of data – driven instruction. Teachers use a four step protocol to review teacher created assessments, share recommendations for revisions with their colleagues, administer the assessment, and collaboratively analyze student outcomes. For example, the English language arts team was observed in a shared reflection and analysis of a writing assessment writing task on the topic of a character’s response to change based on a reading of *Fences* by August Wilson and two scholarly articles. In this shared reflection, members of the team utilized a teacher created *Redesigning Protocol* based on the School Reform Initiative’s *Examining Assessments Protocol* to share feedback to the integrated co-teaching pair of teachers who had created the assessment.
- Teacher leaders facilitate department meetings; guidance counselors facilitate grade level meetings, and teachers assume an integral role in supporting colleagues in instructional decisions that impact student programming and curricula development. For example, teachers have been engaged in curricula design and revision, and have been instrumental in decisions regarding the implementation of the Agile Mind and ALEKS online math program, and Collections, a 9th through 12th grade English curriculum, and in developing common rubrics and assessments. Teachers shared that these structured collaborations have strengthened teacher practice. ADVANCE data provides evidence of gains in Danielson Framework for Teaching (DfT) Domain 1: teacher effectiveness in planning & preparation, and Domain 3: Instruction, with 52% of teachers showing an improvement in their classroom practice as measured by one or more components on the DfT. In addition, teachers noted improvement in achievement for all learners. For example, students in the graduating class of 2015 have moved from 47% to 61% on track for graduation based on credit accumulation and Regents passing rates.
- Teachers stated that they that they have significant voice in key instructional decisions and stated that their perceptions and findings are taken into consideration. As an example, teachers shared that they had redesigned the school schedule to ensure sufficient time for professional collaboration, and teachers developed the school’s grading policy.