



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Bronx Leadership Academy II

High School X527

730 Concourse Village

Bronx

NY 10451

Principal: Katherine Callaghan

Date of review: February 12, 2015

Lead Reviewer: Joan Prince

The School Context

Bronx Leadership Academy II is a high school with 515 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 35% Black, 61% Hispanic, 1% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 14% English language learners and 23% 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 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

The school has established a culture for learning that communicates high expectations and other elements of the Danielson Framework for Teaching to the entire staff. The school has established effective and targeted outreach around a set of high expectations for all students connected to a path toward college and career readiness.

Impact

There is a culture of mutual accountability using elements of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. All constituents contribute to a culture of learning and high expectations where students, administration, faculty and families support each other to make progress towards graduation and toward college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- Each teacher meets with an assistant principal supervisor or the principal weekly for support and coaching. In addition, teachers work together through inquiry cycles in grade level teams or department teams. Guidance and deans meet once a week and there are one-on-one meetings with the teachers and the principal if needed. Teachers set long-term goals at the beginning of the year to further their own learning. As evident through agendas and discussions with teachers and administration, professional development is consistent and is used to build knowledge of the Common Core Learning Standards, the Danielson Framework along with an emphasis on Webb's Depth of Knowledge levels in questioning skills.
- All students take a class called College Seminar once a week. In the class they learn about colleges, skills they will need for college and the application and financial process. College counselors teach the tenth to twelfth grade students so each will be known well by graduation. This also supports the recommendation that all counselors write and assist in the matching of students with the best school possible for each individual student.
- Classes in English and math strive for college readiness, emphasizing a score of 75 on the English Regent as a minimum and an 80 on the integrated Algebra exam. Students are celebrated when they reach the marker and tutoring for extra help is offered prior to retaking the exam.
- The school administration and faculty meet with the parents and families of 9th graders to share their goal of college-readiness and some of the school supports that are in place. The parent coordinator, dean, guidance and attendance team leaders have worked with students and families to ensure students are at school and earning the credits they need for graduation and college.
- There is a senior internship program allowing seniors who have achieved a high academic status to design their own learning experience. They are held responsible for creating detailed, hour-long presentations for panels including parents, community members, school staff and other students. The principal stated that this program gives students some of the non-academic skills they will need when they attend college. Some internships have led to part-time jobs and students are empowered to learn for themselves.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Teacher pedagogy is aligned to the curricula and reflects a coherent set of beliefs about student learning that is informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts. Teaching strategies provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact

The alignment of pedagogy to curricula and the use of scaffolding and effective questioning strategies, along with multiple entry points, enable all learners to be engaged in appropriately challenging tasks. Student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation in most, but not all classes.

Supporting Evidence

- Based on the philosophy that students learn best through engagement, rigor and meta-cognition there has been a major focus on Domain 3B from the Danielson Framework: student engagement and discussion. Because pedagogy is aligned to the curricula and informed by the Danielson Framework, students are reading grade appropriate texts or higher and teaching strategies such as questioning, scaffolding supports and multiple entry points are present in lessons, such as exit slips, graphic organizers and vocabulary assists.
- The administration meets with each teacher once a week for planning, feedback from class visits and other support. Although the administration has provided support on techniques such as turn and talk, think/share/pair, wait time and discussion sentence starters, these practices were used across classrooms but not the vast majority of classes, leading to missed opportunities for all students to engage in productive discussions. In classes visited, most were engaged in small group collaborative work, but these practices did not always align lesson objectives with instructional activities to have in-depth learning opportunities to support student subgroups and struggling learners. There is use of scaffolding to meet the learning deficits of students with disabilities, English language learners and struggling learners. Multiple entry points were available to students so that academic tasks were challenging. In a 10th grade English class observed, groups of students were working to complete final projects on *A Raisin in the Sun*. There were peer check-ins and conferencing with the teacher. The opportunities for more advanced students through extensions were limited; these students were assisting others. The principal stated that there was a focused professional development on shared techniques of engagement, rigor and planning essential questioning into lesson plans to include all learners.
- Teachers look to improve their lessons through their work in department and grade level team meetings and through inter-visitations with feedback. Student groups each had rubrics, language prompts if needed, and in a 9th grade English class visited, sentence starters with the directions that all answers have to be full sentences were used. Teachers in all eight classes visited were conferring with groups and checking for understanding by using medial summaries and exit slips. Students were justifying responses by citing textual evidence, had peer interactions and focused on backing up their statements. Teachers made connections to the real world by explicitly connecting concepts to everyday experiences and encouraging inquiry.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

All curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. Higher order skills are consistently emphasized for all learners across the grades and content areas.

Impact

The school's curricular decisions build coherence and rigorous habits for all learners. Across grades and content areas, academic tasks push student thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- Curricular maps provide evidence that the school develops rigorous academic tasks through the adaption of all instructional materials. Reading, writing and content area units of study integrate the Common Core, instructional shifts and Webb's Depth of Knowledge questioning skills. Planned strategies include tiered academic vocabulary, fluency, multi-step problem solving in numeracy, argumentative writing and text-based responses. Unit plans in all content areas illustrate multiple designs of academic tasks with scaffolding and entry points as well as extensions for the advanced learners. The 10th grade Global History class uses visuals, pictures and symbols to convey meaning about WWII. The lesson was on propaganda and engaged students in high-level discussions about feelings and the use of slogans to promote a specific agenda.
- The entire staff, along with the administration, is working to ensure consistency of the curriculum maps across subject areas. Grade teams and departments have aligned the Danielson Framework to the curriculum with strong motivation to look at the school assessment practices in more detail. The principal is aware that looking at data, and holistically looking not only at performance tasks but rubrics and student work, will help build coherence to promote higher order skills into lessons. There is an outcomes committee to codify the practices of mastery-based grading for creating exemplars and to create an expert-base at the school, since there are thirteen new teachers.
- Curricular and academic tasks planning are revisited to ensure active engagement for all students. To this effort the school worked on refining unit maps with a lens of increasing student thinking and interest. Extensive professional development on the curriculum has informed the staff in greater alignment of lesson planning to the Common Core and the Danielson Framework.
- The math curriculum has been designed with the use of word problems in all grades. An emphasis is placed on critical areas and depth of understanding through interactive lessons, research-based instructional approaches and best practiced that use differentiated instructional resources to ensure success for all students.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school uses common assessments and tracks student progress in order to adjust curricula and instruction. There are ongoing checks for understanding that are used strategically to drive instruction and push students to think critically.

Impact

Teachers are assessing student learning in all subjects, across all grades to target interventions, to vary scaffolds and to share instructional planning in order to meet all students learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- All students observed exhibited an understanding of how rubrics guide their efforts. Teachers practice assessment processes to provide checks for understanding and actionable feedback. Teachers use both interim assessments and unit tests aligned to their curriculum and the Common Core. The interim assessment systems are aligned to the Measures of Student Learning (MoSL), which the teacher then evaluates. Performance tasks create another opportunity for students to be engaged while being assessed for skill mastery. Academic intervention services and tutoring are often arranged if needed.
- The principal shared that, “The school is a mastery-based grading school; each unit has six outcomes with rubrics that students are assessed on throughout and at the end.” The assessments provide actionable feedback and formative data that are used to adjust instruction and help teachers to reflect on past teaching as well as revise and update if a majority of students missed one or more outcomes.
- Classroom teachers provide for ongoing checks for understanding through peer- and self-assessment procedures, leading to effective lesson adjustments. Students use outcome rubrics to self-assess and see where their strengths are and where there are challenges to be addressed. In a grade 11-12 chemistry class examining solid liquids changing into gas, some students were struggling to make the connection to kinetic energy, so the teacher pulled the class together to respond to different questions to help explain through imagery.
- Baseline and diagnostic assessments are used at regular intervals. Gathering data and presenting this information to monitor each student’s progress over time is embedded into the teacher team practices. Rubrics, on student work products, all had actionable feedback. In a grade 10 Global History class, teacher suggestions on graded rubrics included comments to motivate further research on propaganda or to prompt further higher-order questions for the next step. Teachers take conferring notes and do student quick writes to make on-the-spot teaching decisions to push critical thinking and more depth of knowledge.

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

Distributive leadership structures are embedded so that there is effective teacher leadership. A shared vision has let teacher team work to be data driven, inquiry-based and targeted.

Impact

Teacher pedagogy and student outcomes are strengthened through effective teacher leadership. Teachers have a key role in the decision-making process, resulting in a collaborative professional learning community.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers are engaged in an extensive, teacher-led process of inquiry through instructional rounds. Teachers have created their own protocol for looking at work, their own agendas and schedules that include teachers observing each other and providing feedback. Best practices are shared and the teachers discussed the trust that has been developed between teacher and administration. This has created an open and collaborative space for inter-visitations, sharing of lessons and unit plans.
- Teacher stated that all decision-making is shared and that distributive leadership structures have formed as a result of high expectations for students and a culture of professionalism and tone set by the principal. There is a process of teacher mentoring to help less experienced teachers that is scheduled at teacher team meetings.
- Teacher teams systematically analyze key elements of teacher work including classroom practice, assessment data and student work. Teacher collaboration in subject areas and grade level teams meet once per week. However, it was stated that they also meet during their own time often before school, during lunch and after school. As observed at a history teacher team meeting, teachers across grades analyzed student work and supported each other by providing feedback on next steps and a change in a protocol that informs instruction. Specifically, a protocol was formulated to support teachers with coaching meetings where each meeting consists of debriefing classroom visits, observations, co-planning, discussion on curriculum and assessments, and where notes are taken and kept in teacher notebooks.
- The teachers also review school-wide professional development, which helps to set new professional goals and give administration feedback on what is needed. Teacher teams are working on incorporating the Webb’s Depth of Knowledge across all subjects to further critical thinking skills in academic tasks.