



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Banana Kelly High School

High School X530

**965 Longwood Ave
Bronx
NY 10459**

Principal: Charlette Pope

Date of review: March 17, 2015

Lead Reviewer: Joshua Good

The School Context

Banana Kelly High School is a high school with 305 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 35% Black and 65% Hispanic students. The student body includes 15% English language learners and 26% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 71.2%.

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	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	Focus	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	Celebration	Developing

Area of Celebration

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

School leaders ensure that teachers across grade levels engage in structured professional collaborations. A distributive leadership structure is strengthening and leadership capacity is being intentionally built in grade and content leads.

Impact

The emerging use of an inquiry approach across the grade level teams is beginning to result in improved instructional practices.

Supporting Evidence

- Grade level teams meet twice a week, every other week, during the school day. These teams look at student work and conduct conversations about individual students with an eye towards improving student learning. Content teams also meet twice per week, though the teachers expressed this work is not as formalized or structured as the grade team work is. Teacher teams looked at the results of the January English Regents' exam and determined that focus needed to be on writing. The teams then created a 10-12 day writing cycle on thematic and critical lens essays. There were some examples of extended writing on bulletin boards and in student portfolios.
- Team leaders are provided development designed to improve their facilitative skills. The principal hired Teachers College to work in weekly sessions to specifically develop the team leaders. In these meetings team leaders are supported in developing agendas and identifying protocols for looking at student work. Beyond this coaches from the School Renewal Program work to build the capacity of team leaders. The literacy teacher team works with the Renewal coaches two times per week. The teachers indicated that the team practices they are developing are starting to be incorporated in other content areas.
- The ninth grade team, using the Writing is Thinking through Strategic Inquiry (WITsi) model outlined by Nell Scharff-Panero, looked at student work generated by the prompts "because, but, so," and identified student skill gaps. The teachers used a chart to tabulate student performance and determined the next step was to explicitly teach the strategy using the "but" stem and then bring additional student work the following week to evaluate.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Although some teachers are incorporating questions designed to promote rigorous thinking and student to student interaction across the classroom, teachers are not consistently asking high level questions that result in rigorous cognitive engagement and sustained student to student interaction.

Impact

Because students are not consistently given the opportunity to engage in academically rigorous conversations in a student-to-student format, students aren't able to develop deep conceptual understanding of the primary learning objectives and student work is generally of a low level. There is uneven engagement in rigorous tasks, and student work products do not consistently reflect higher order thinking skills.

Supporting Evidence

- The Principal iterated that she has worked in depth around building teacher capacity with regard to creating opportunities for student-to-student interaction in class. This work was evident in some of the observed teaching practice. An English teacher successfully used pre-printed conversation prompts to structure intentional student-to-student conversation. In the 11th grade English language arts (ELA) class, after the student responded to a question regarding what key controlling idea was embedded in the texts "The Most Dangerous Game" and "The Diamond Necklace," she explained her answer citing text and turned to another student and asked if he agreed or disagreed with her argument. He then responded in a sustained way to support her position and added additional textual evidence. In most classes however, students' responses were directed nearly exclusively back to the teacher. For example, a history teacher asked, "Who was Jacob Riis? We discussed him yesterday?" to which a student responded, "He took pictures of slums."
- Though some teacher questions were high level, such as the ELA essential question, "In what ways do victims empower themselves," in other classes, pedagogical practice was characterized by lower level questions and exclusively student to teacher discourse. As an example, in an American studies class, students were asked, "What are reform movements?" A student responded with a one-word answer, "a change." In another ELA class students were asked, "What thing did Emilia find and give to Iago?" followed by "What was Iago's reply when Othello demanded proof of his wife's disloyalty?"
- Teachers indicated that they do not know the reading lexile levels for their students and that, although they were unaware of the students' IEP goals, they could go online to get them. In some classes, English language learners (ELL) were regular classes and working as a separate group, trying to help each other, while speaking their home language. In a United States history class, the entire and identical learning activity (given to the English-speaking students in English) had been translated to Spanish, and students were attempting to complete their work completely in Spanish without the support of a bilingual teacher. In a science class, again without the support of a bilingual teacher, a group of five ELLs – one of whom spoke and read a little English - were given the exact same task, in English, as their English speaking peers.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

The school community has begun the process of creating and adapting Common Core aligned curricula across the content areas. Although the practice is inconsistent, some teachers are beginning to implement the instructional shifts.

Impact

In the four core disciplines, some teachers are starting to give rigorous CCLS aligned tasks. Curricula tasks, however, are not consistently scaffolded in a way that allows all students to be successful.

Supporting Evidence

- Beginning in 2013, the principal hired Teacher's College and the National Teachers Network to partner with her teacher teams to begin building curricula aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards in ELA and math. Then in 2014, in social studies and science. Currently the school is continuing the work of building curricula aligned to the Common Core. The school community used *EngageNY* as an anchor to ensure that the developed curricula were Common Core aligned. Rubicon Atlas is the structure used to house and distribute the curricula.
- Some of the curricular units being taught by the teachers are based on rigorous, overarching essential questions. As an example, an English teacher was implementing a unit around the question, "Are people motivated by emotion or reason?" Students were being asked to make connections among multiple texts for the purpose of drawing conclusions and making arguments in extended nonfiction writing. In a history class the unit guiding question was, "Did the Industrial Revolution have an overall positive or negative impact on society?" In this case, the unit terminated in an argumentative essay using evidence from documents and texts presented in class. While the school is beginning to use a checklist to evaluate the rigor of tasks they develop, many of the observed student tasks were multiple choice or short answer with little application to real life situations.
- Student subgroups are not regularly provided with the appropriate scaffolds and varied entry points that are necessary for them be successful in the learning activity. As an example in a Regents preparation class, all students were given the thematic essay assignment without any additional supports provided to students in identified sub-groups. In another ELA class all students were given the identical task of creating an essay around a controlling idea. In two other cases, groups of ELLs were not provided with adequate entry points into the learning.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

The school is in the process of creating structures for analyzing ongoing assessment data. Teachers are inconsistently using ongoing formative checks for understanding.

Impact

Because teacher teams are in the beginning stages of using assessment data to inform pedagogical practices and curricular design, students are not always provided with strategic interventions. Irregular formative checks for understanding by the teacher result in missed learning opportunities for students.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal developed a formal summative assessment calendar that includes initial diagnostic assessments, New York City Measures of Student Learning assessments, and mock Regents exams (given twice per year, once in December and again in April). Additionally, teachers give common assessments within the departments. The school captures summative assessment data on a “go green” chart that is used to classify student performance and progress. The department teams review the data and conduct item-analyses to determine patterns and trends.
- Teachers are in the beginning stages of using assessment data to modify instruction so that all students can be successful. Teacher teams, through the WITsi work, are just starting to regularly look at student work for the purpose of identifying student skill gaps and then planning the appropriate instructional shifts for all students including ELLs and students with disabilities. Content teams also are beginning to build systems for using data to impact instruction. After reviewing Regents data the ELA team determined that students needed more stamina for completing “on spot” extended writing projects. As a result some teachers are asking students to do sustained writing in class. An example of this was the ELA class where the teacher asked students to write an extended response to the prompt, “What are the differences between Melinda One and Melinda Two? Why do you think the author chose to portray Melinda in this way?” Additionally, math teachers indicated they use the math Regents rubric. This rubric was seen on bulletin boards with student work.
- The principal stated the school is beginning to use informal assessments and that she expects that teachers are checking for understanding through the group work and student discussions. She also noted that she was working on bringing a running record approach to the assessment process. In eight out of 11 classrooms visited, however, the teachers limited checks for understanding to whole group questioning, typified by individual students offering short responses. An example, in this exchange in a history class where, prior to moving forward with an in-class writing assignment, a teacher simply asked, “Why is defining the theme the most important part?” to which a single student replied, “That is why [*sic*] they are asking you.” The class then proceeded to the independent writing project.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

School leaders are in the process of creating a clear, consistent, culture of high expectations for all staff members. Teachers are inconsistently communicating high expectations for all students.

Impact

Although the community is beginning implement policies designed to raise expectations in order to promote staff and student learning, there is inconsistent communication of high expectations, especially to families and students.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal, through the observation process, conveys high expectations to teachers by providing calibrated, actionable feedback to convey high expectations to the teachers. She uses student work as part of the observation process to ground expectations and teacher learning in student products. Additionally she refers to prior observations to create a clear consistent connection in the ongoing feedback and expectations. For instance, in an evaluation given to a social studies teacher, after giving a rating on Danielson Framework 3c using several instances of low inference evidence, and after referring to a previous observation, the principal offered this expectation, “Moving forward, beginning the week of March 2, 2015, I expect to see evidence of pacing that allows for closure and student reflections. You may achieve this by posting the agenda with the structure of the lesson, allotting time for up to 10 minutes for the do-now and exit tickets.”
- The principal conducts student scholarship meetings with the teachers to set expectations around student learning. The meetings involve the teachers in engaging in a written self-reflection exercise based in questions such as, “Which students have you succeeded in engaging?” and “How will I work on my teaching in order to improve what I do?” However at times school leaders’ expectations for teachers are not high enough. As an example, in a Teacher Improvement Plan (TIP) provided, a teacher was directed by school leaders to set a goal of a 55% passing rate for students taking the Regents exam.
- Teacher teams, particularly in the WITsi work, are beginning to develop rubrics to make visible high expectations for all student work. Additionally the team is developing a WITsi tool to explicitly set expectations for students’ next learning steps. Some of the expectations around student work however remain low. As an example, in the reviewed samples of student work reviewed, there were final versions of extended nonfiction writing that had numerous academic and stylistic errors without the appropriate actionable feedback from the teacher.