



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

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

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2014-2015**

**Bronx Park Middle School**

**Middle School X556**

**2441 Wallace Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10467**

**Principal: Dillon Prime**

**Date of review: April 1, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Jeremy Kabinoff, Ed.D.**

## The School Context

Bronx Park Middle School is a middle school with 404 students from grades 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 33% Black, 55% Hispanic, 6% White, and 6% Asian students. The student body includes 15% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 93.0%.

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

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. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that systematically communicate a unified set of high expectations, and provide guidance supports to all learners.

### Impact

Systems and structures for communicating high expectations to staff and structures for professional learning opportunities ensure a culture of mutual accountability for meeting those expectations. Voluminous advisement reinforcements ensure that all students are prepared for the next level.

### Supporting Evidence

- The principal communicates high expectations to staff through the Bronx Park professional development plan calendar as well as by providing frequent cycles of observation and feedback, and a system of ongoing reciprocal communication. For example, teachers and staff articulated that school leaders share written, verbal or email feedback immediately following an informal or formal observation. In addition, teachers stated that the administration has promoted an informal "open door" policy where they have ongoing and consistent professional conversations with the principal and assistant principal regarding instructional goals, teacher pedagogy, and student data and/or student work.
- Principal's expectations around the Danielson Framework led to an intensive training program that occurred in the summer prior to the current school year. All staff participated in a series of retreats that focused on Danielson elements 1e, planning, 2d routines and 3b questioning. In addition, the training focused on designing curricula with a focus on the Depth of Knowledge as well as student data trends from the previous New York State English language arts and math exams.
- Principal and staff established Student Led Conferences, replacing traditional Parent/Teacher conferences, which occur on a quarterly basis, four times a year. Students guide their parents through a presentation of their learning using a portfolio of student work with teacher feedback. Students demonstrate ownership of their learning by making arguments about their strengths, weaknesses and goals using evidence in the work they have selected. Parents evaluate their child's conferences using checklists and guiding questions. Families also receive an array of data including progress reports, report cards, reading and math testing results, and "Professionalism, Reflection, Innovation, Determination, and Empathy" P.R.I.D.E. core values data to further evaluate their child's learning.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

Teacher practices across classrooms are aligned to the curricula and reflect coherence around a set of beliefs regarding how students learn best. Across classrooms, tasks and discussion strategies provide students with opportunities to engage with peers.

### Impact

Teacher practice across classrooms that is informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts, includes the assignment of high-level tasks 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 "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. For example, in a sixth grade math class students worked in groups and evaluated each other's work based on the concept of solving an array of Common Core-aligned word problems from Engage NY. Similarly, in a grade 8 social studies classroom students engaged in group discussions and shared their perspectives on segregation. Also in a sixth grade class, students engaged in turn-and-talk opportunities and shared their viewpoints on the topic of "Too many laws and social rules only got in the way of living naturally".
- Students consistently engaged in independent or group practice, but classroom visits demonstrated inconsistencies with regard to teachers modeling for their students. For example, in the grade 6 Social Studies class, the teacher modeled for students how to cite evidence from the text and support his argument and then students worked in flexible groups to practice. However, in another Social Studies upper grade classroom, the teacher did not model the task assigned practice and although students were in groups they did not understand how to proceed, leaving the teacher to model from group-to-group.
- Also, there is evidence of agreed-upon hand signals used by students when engaged in group discussions or whole class share out sessions and was seen across all classroom visits. This school-wide practice, established by the Principal and the instructional team, gave students who did not receive an opportunity to share to participate in the discussion by giving hand signals responses on "I agree or disagree".

## Additional Findings

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

The principal ensures that the vast majority of teachers engage in consistent and on-going inquiry-based structured professional collaborations that promote the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards as well as the 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 inquiry-based professional collaborations strengthen teacher pedagogy, resulting in school-wide instructional coherence and increased student achievement for all learners. Opportunities for distributed teacher leadership ensure that teachers play an essential role in key decisions that affect student achievement.

### Supporting Evidence

- The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured, professional collaborations as evidenced by the school's wide array of teams including instructional leadership team and school leadership team. The teams review student data, establish professional learning opportunities, communicate with families, and develop plans of action to promote academic rigor, student achievement. For example, the grade 6 academy team looked at student Lexile levels to determine actionable next steps with regard to reading progress. They meet 2 days a week, formally, as well as informally throughout the day. Teachers demonstrated that progress has been made based on the grade 6 "Mastery Tool" and assigned advisors consistently reach out to parents with regard to their child's progress in reading.
- The principal and assistant principal established the development of designated academy leaders. Through facilitation of the academy teams, these teacher leaders engage in goal-setting with an alignment to school-wide goals and the school's instructional focus, as well as the development of action plans in order to achieve the school's goals. The academy leaders are responsible for implementing a variety of protocols within their teams to drive instruction and student achievement including tuning protocols for looking at student work, data-review protocols and inter-visitation protocols. In addition, academy leaders receive coaching through the Teacher Leader Program focusing on protocols, analyzing data, establishing professional learning opportunities and turn-keying essential information and professional development to staff.
- Academy leaders, teacher leaders and teachers stated that they have an influential voice in key instructional decisions and stated that their perspectives and findings are taken into consideration. As an example, teachers stated that they share their findings with staff and administration every Friday during the instructional team meetings and assist in the curricular adjustment process.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### **Findings**

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use assessments, rubrics and grading policies that are aligned to the school's curricula. The school uses common assessments to create a clear picture of student progress toward goals across all grades and subjects, track progress, and adjust curricular and instructional decisions.

### **Impact**

The school's assessments, rubrics and grading policies offer a clear portrait of student mastery and demonstrate actionable and meaningful feedback to students and teachers regarding academic achievement. The school's assessment structure enables all learners to demonstrate increased mastery.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- The principal and staff established a cohesive, school-wide promotional policy requiring the students to show evidence of passing of all core subjects, student work demonstrating Common Core Progress of 3.5 or higher on a 4-point rubric, student assessments demonstrating progress on school-wide assessments, and student performance on standardized tests. In addition, the school-wide promotional policy addresses English language learners and special education students as well as students who place on the school's Honor Roll. Teachers analyze the data quarterly and have determined that there is an increase of students passing the post assessments by 10% in English language arts. Also from this analysis teachers determined that there is an increase of students with special needs who improved on the post-assessment by 10% as well.
- The principal and staff established the development of pre/post-test cycles for each major unit of study and all core disciplines. In each core subject, students take a pre-test during the first week of the unit, and a post-test on the final day of the unit. The student data is recorded via an online grade-book, Kickboard. In addition, the school implements the Performance Series Assessment for mathematics and reading quarterly. This data is analyzed and used to inform academic intervention services (AIS) and daily classroom differentiation activities within the classrooms.
- The principal established a "Mastery Assessment Tool" that monitors and tracks student performance on specific common core aligned standards upon the conclusion of when the standard is taught. The online program, "Kick Start" enables teachers to upload the results of student work instantly onto the tracking tool. Teachers use the data to create re-teaching opportunities in small flexible group instruction, specific data-determined grouping, and academic intervention.
- Teachers provide feedback to students regarding their next learning steps, as evidenced by students who were observed using task-specific or classwork rubrics to check against their work. Additionally, there was evidence of student work posted inside and outside classrooms with rubrics and actionable feedback. For example, processed writing papers had rubric-based feedback as well as notations on the rubric. In an English as a Second Language class, posted student work demonstrated feedback by their peers based on the rubric. Likewise, in the same class students worked in pairs and evaluated each other's work based on the lesson's rubric.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards integrate the instructional shifts and tasks within curricula emphasize higher-order skills across grades and content for all students.

### Impact

Lesson and unit plans, across grades and content demonstrate coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students. Additionally curricula and tasks include Common Core aligned objectives, essential questions and culminating tasks that ask students to engage with higher-order skills such as analyzing and synthesizing information.

### Supporting Evidence

- The faculty and staff began mapping Common Core-aligned interdisciplinary units of study during a series of bi-monthly retreats where the staff meets during the summer with emphasis on looking at curriculum via Atlas Rubicon, an online warehouse to maintain school-created curricula, as well as delving into assistance around the Danielson Framework. Teacher teams and the administration review unit plans, promoting coherence, using the “Tuning” protocol and provide feedback and/or adjustments during the process.
- Unit and classroom lesson plans demonstrate evidence of the school-wide focus on embedding literacy using close reading along with annotation and argument-based writing in all subject areas. Teachers plan using the Understanding by Design unit plans, to ensure that the end assessment and teaching are in alignment. Further, teachers utilize Hess' Depth of Knowledge level 3 and 4 activities and performance tasks, to promote student engagement in higher-order thinking and discussion. For example, a grade 7 science lesson plan demonstrated evidence of the embedded literacy, a school-wide focus, by planning questions for students to find the central idea of the text, based on information about human impact on the Adirondack Mountains. A grade 8 social studies lesson plan requires students to respond to a scenario prompt based on segregation and cite evidence to support their stance from previous anchor texts.
- Teachers and staff work collaboratively to promote a high level of rigor based on Depth of Knowledge to ensure that higher-order skills are emphasized across grades and content areas for all learners, including English language learners and special education students. For example, a social studies lesson translated in Arabic and Spanish required students to respond and defend their citation on whether or not the quotes from Albert Einstein or George Bernard Shaw agreed with the Daoist belief that "Too many laws and social rules only got in the way of living naturally and following the Dao. Therefore, the best rulers were those who ruled the least." Another example derived from an ESL lesson plan has students score each other's work from the assignment's rubric and engage in discussion from their peer feedback.
- For daily lessons, the school uses the G.A.N.A.G. lesson structures including goal setting, accessing prior knowledge, new information, application, and generalizing. Lesson plans in many cases, reflect attempts to engage students with disabilities and English language learners. However a curriculum review reveals that evidence of rigorous and higher-order tasks across classes and subjects are not coherently embedded to provide all learners opportunities to demonstrate their thinking.