

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**Bronx Compass High School**

**High School X561**

**1980 Lafayette Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10473**

**Principal: Stacy McCoy**

**Date of review: March 13, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Carron Staple**

## The School Context

Bronx Compass High School is a high school with 332 students from grades 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 37% Black, 60% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 8% English Language Learners and 28% special education students. Boys account for 63% of the students enrolled and girls account for 37%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-14 was 83.0%.

## School Quality Criteria

### Instructional Core

<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</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>Developing</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>Proficient</b>

### School Culture

<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>

### Systems for Improvement

<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>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

**Quality Indicator:**

**3.4 High Expectations**

**Rating:**

**Well Developed**

### Findings

School leaders are consistent in how they communicate high expectations to the school community and have established a culture for teaching and learning that are connected to a path of college and career readiness.

### Impact

Instructional support, along with strong guidance and advisory structures lead to student progress and provide students and their families with important information that allows them to make informed decision about college and careers.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers have a set of clear expectations and structures that they work with and that are aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, to ensure high expectations are being met. They have daily planning, curricula and assessment sessions, and work in a variety of professional modes such as mentors, teacher leaders, coaches that results in a high level of success in teaching in learning across the school as evidenced by their meeting minutes, newsletters, observation reports and discussions with staff, students and parents.
- Students and their families receive ongoing feedback to help them understand their progress towards expectations and graduation, and every student, parent and teacher receives a handbook of expectations and a yearlong learning plan by grade level. Parents reported that the school faculty was very invested in their children and provided numerous reports about their progress that included phone calls, emails, text messages, the online grading system, progress reports, parent meetings and informational sessions. One parent stated that she was happy she transferred her daughter to Bronx Compass from a private school because she felt the support was more individualized and caring and that her child was not just a number. Students spoke highly about the teachers being supportive and helpful and providing them with rigorous work that makes them feel they can attend any college and be successful. Both parents and students stated that the school is like one big family where everyone works together to ensure that the environment is positive, respectful and a place where you want to learn and grow.
- The school's daily advisory program supports students with their goals, homework, reports, and school expectations. Learning targets are discussed with all students individually and in small groups, and individualized conferences are planned with students and their families. Students receive personalized feedback via Google docs and are able to communicate directly with advisors and teachers about their work and grades, creating multiple opportunities to meet expectations.

## Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching is uneven and inconsistent with the school's beliefs about how students learn best. Class discussions and work products reflect uneven levels of student understanding even when lesson plans are specifically designed to promote higher-order thinking and participation.

### Impact

In some classes, there are limited opportunities for students to actively engage in thoughtful discussions or to produce a high-level work product because the teacher either has difficulty in fully implementing the intended plan or becomes very teacher-directed, thus hindering students from demonstrating their skills or mastery.

### Supporting Evidence

- The principal and teams of teachers assert the belief that students learn best when cognitively engaged. However, in some classes there appears to be a disconnect between the lesson plans which reflect high expectations and the actual execution and delivery of that plan, resulting in limited experiences that are not differentiated, scaffolded or cognitively engaging for the students.
- Across some classes, teaching strategies clearly integrate multiple entry points and scaffolds for all learners. For example, in one integrated team teaching class, the general education teacher and the special education teacher both facilitated a highly interactive and rigorously challenging lesson that was student-centered and varied. Every group had a different region to cover, but the over-arching goal was for every student to use archaeological evidence to explain the "Out of Africa" theory of human migration and to respond to competing theories of human development based on whatever region they were assigned. Students used multiple resources, including a timeline and other artifacts to determine where they belonged in evolution and history. All students were actively engaged in discussions and academically debating where things belonged citing text-based information and their knowledge of content. The two teachers circulated from group to group and pushed students to think and use their resources, thus making this a very interactive and hands-on class where every student could participate in multiple ways and show evidence of their learning.
- In another class, the Biology teacher was very teacher-directed and asked low-level questions not aligned to the principal's expectations about utilizing DOK level four questions. In this class, the teacher asked students, "What are we doing today?" She received one response. Then she asked, "What is a transfer task?" for which she received another response from the same student. Next, the teacher began to ask closed questions in rapid-fire pace, such as "Organs make up what?", "We have what in our bodies?" "We need what to survive, to live?" Students were required to verbally fill in the blank and appeared very bored and disinterested, causing engagement to be low with participation coming from the same students. The most engaging part of the lesson was the video of train pushers trying to get everyone on a train in China, but it was played multiple times leaving the students without sufficient time to discuss the connection to the lesson and complete the exit ticket, consequently leaving the teacher with limited information about what students learned and if she had achieved her objective.

## Additional Findings

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.1 Curriculum**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

Curricula across grades and subjects are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate instructional shifts.

### Impact

Unit and lesson plans are designed to promote college and career readiness and ensure a diversity of learners, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities have access to engaging and rigorous academic tasks.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders ensure that curriculum is aligned to the Common Core learning Standards, personalized, and designed to cognitively engage all students. Tasks are mastery-based and designed using the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) chart with emphasis on the highest tier. Every unit of study includes mastery tasks that are complex in nature, with scaffolds and differentiated strategies for all learners using the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) model.
- Curricula and tasks across all grades and subjects are created to challenge all students including English Language Learners and Students with Disabilities. An example of this can be seen with a Global 9 student's task where a special needs student had to defend a position using logical reasons, support his argument using evidence from sources and demonstrate his content knowledge and analysis of the text. Several supports were used to help him achieve his learning targets, such as color-coded annotated essays, a 3-D graphic organizer, and a mini-lesson on how to read with a specific lens. Consequently, this student was successful in meeting his learning targets and earned a proficient score aligned to the rubric.
- Teachers plan lessons and units of study that push students to engage in using higher-order thinking skills, and require students to use what they learn to solve real world problems and produce work meaningful work products that demonstrate their mastery and understanding. Targeted questions and tasks are planned to push student thinking. For example, in the math discipline students practice rigorous habits such as attending to precision, making sense of problems as they engage in the process of problem solving, using multiple steps to submit written solutions and to present the process of problem solving to the class. As a result of deep analysis, creating spreadsheets, function reports, systems and graphs, students develop high-level skills that allow them to participate in math competitions and prepare them for college and careers.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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**Findings**

The majority of teachers are engaged in looking at student work via a structured protocol and use various forms of student data to inform their inquiry work. Distributed teacher leadership is embedded throughout the school.

**Impact**

The work of the teacher teams guides instructional decisions to ensure that instructional practice is strengthened and students build mastery. Leadership structures are rooted in building teacher capacity and are essential in leveraging instructional changes school-wide.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teacher teams meet daily to promote the implementation of the CCLS and instructional shifts, examine student work, refine academic tasks and ensure that students understand the expectations of the Common Core. The work of the teacher teams fosters instructional coherence, and improvement of outcomes for students as evidenced by school data reports.
- Teacher teams consistently meet weekly and provide a data-based rationale and analysis of student work that informs their decisions and allows them to adjust their practices to meet the needs of all learners. For example, during a teacher team meeting, the teachers were working on common core assessments for algebra and were discussing what skills should be part of each assessment. Teachers used Engage NY to see their Algebra 1 track and looked closely at their curriculum to gauge if their assessments were aligned. After examining Engage NY, they decided to adjust a particular unit on graphing and functions and determine what skills, standards and learning targets should be associated with the unit, and what the transfer task should be.
- Distributive leadership structures are embedded school-wide, and all teachers participate in inter-visitation to observe best practices, improve teacher practice and their delivery of instruction. Teachers reported having an integral voice in all school decisions and feeling valued for the ideas and structures they contribute to the school such as integrating technology, and developing the advisory curriculum.

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

Across classrooms, all teachers use common assessments and rubrics that are aligned with the school's curricula. Teachers check for understanding and provide students with actionable feedback regarding their work products so they can attain mastery.

### **Impact**

Mastery-based learning tasks coupled with rubrics provide actionable feedback to students making them aware of their progress and next steps for achievement.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- School-wide mastery rubrics are designed and used to diagnose the initial knowledge and skills of students, determine which learning targets, content, concepts and vocabulary they have grasped mid-unit, and gauge if the culminating product is relevant and makes real-world connections to demonstrate their understanding. All rubrics created are student-friendly and used on an ongoing basis coupled with actionable feedback from the teacher on what revisions need to be made to earn a professional or master product grade. Students discussed using these rubrics to guide their work and explained how it helped them to move from the beginner and apprentice levels on to the higher master level.
- The school designs mastery-based assessments that align to both the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and real work products with an authentic audience. The main summative assessment for the school is the student exhibition where students present their portfolio of work. Although the school participates in Regents, the principal does not believe that regents exams are a valid summative measure of learning, therefore she insists that teachers are hyper-focused on students mastering 3-4 learning targets per unit that require the following tasks: a diagnostic exam, a mid-unit assessment, a unit product, a unit test and a unit transfer task. The summative tasks are product-based and represent how the school believes students learn best, which for them is by design, production, and presentation of meaningful work.
- Formative assessment strategies observed included small group conferences, discussion questions, entrance and exit tickets, and self and peer assessment. The school utilizes these common assessments so teachers can quickly respond to students, modify instruction where needed and support students as they develop self-awareness of the criteria needed to make progress and be successful.