



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

Bronx Collegiate Academy

High School X227

**240 East 172 Street
Bronx
NY 10457**

Principal: Darryl White

**Date of review: April 6, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Daisy Concepción**

The School Context

Bronx Collegiate Academy is a high school with 398 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 1% Asian, 24% Black, 74% Hispanic, and 1% White students. The student body includes 24% English Language Learners and 25% students with disabilities. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 80.1%.

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 <i>Framework for Teaching</i> , aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	Additional Findings	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	Focus	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	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career to families and support student progress toward those high expectations. Staff establishes a culture for learning that systematically communicates high expectations for all students.

Impact

The clear, unified set of expectations for career and college readiness that is known by all members of the school community with on-going feedback and guidance results in students being prepared and supported for their next level.

Supporting Evidence

- Parents monitor student progress through on line programs such as Skedula and Pupil Path in addition to the emails and phone calls from the school. Many parents stated that the principal has personally held academic conferences, transcript reviews and provided college advisement for their students. Parents proudly spoke about student involvement in the National Honor Society. The school internship program prepares students for the workforce, and offers overnight trips to various college campuses for the students. Additionally, this program provides students the opportunity to participate in the College Now program at the City University of New York.
- Parents stated that the school provides a very clear message that parents are partners in preparing all students for career and college. Many of the parents are recently arrived immigrants and new to the American education system. Parents shared that they have become familiar with the curriculum and the expectations the school has for their children through the many workshops that are offered. Two families, one from Africa and one from the Dominican Republic, spoke enthusiastically about the concentrated English support given their children that made it possible for them to participate in Saturday College courses. Both parents were proud to share the college acceptance letters they received for their children. Another parent whose child was constantly absent because of a medical condition shared that the school partnered with his medical team and now the student is regularly attending school and participating in college classes as well.
- Students stated that immersion into college readiness begins during the Summer Bridge orientation program. The school believes in a team approach for college preparation and application process. Guidance counselors and teachers partner with students and their families to ensure students meet graduation requirements and are ready for life beyond high school. Students shared that the partnerships with various colleges allowed them to participate in Advance Placement courses. School internships allow students to see the connection between what they learn in school and the world of work. A student in the honors program shared how the school programs motivated her to stay focused on preparing for college. "In 9th grade we had an overnight trip to a college and that opened up my eyes. I thought to myself, I better get it together if this is where I want to be." Students spoke about how going on trips to colleges have exposed them to different ideas and possibilities. One student stated that he became aware of engineering on a college trip. His goal now is to attend that university and become an engineer.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school uses common assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas. Assessment practices include ongoing checks for understanding.

Impact

While the school uses common assessments to adjust curriculum and ongoing checks for understanding to adjust instruction, there are missed opportunities to make students aware of their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- Results from a grade nine, literary performance task revealed that only 21% of students were approaching standard on this assessment. Data from recent common assessment revealed that 51% of students received a score of level 3 or higher on the unit assessment for argumentative essay. Teachers decided to leverage the strength of the argumentative essay to improve student performance in the literary essay by asking students to gather evidence of characterization in *Romeo and Juliet* to convey the central ideal. This approach was used in conjunction with the *Writing is Thinking* paragraph expansion strategies.
- End of unit assessments in both English Language Arts and in social studies indicated that students struggled with complex texts and as a result had difficulty with demonstrating cause and effect. Modifications were made to both the curriculum and instruction. Social studies units were arranged thematically to allow students to explore essential questions in a manner that connected cause and effect between time periods. Units were also refined to include complex sentence frames to guide student conversations. Additionally, tasks were modified to include more questions requiring synthesis of information. The school adopted a unified writing format focusing on developing the connection between the evidence and the claim resulting in a higher January Regents pass rate for both subjects.
- In an Algebra class students worked on calculators to solve problems related to systems of inequalities. The teacher conferred with several students and noticed that students had not labeled the axis on their graph. He also noticed that students had not listed the answers as coordinate pairs. The teacher stopped the class and asked students to label the graph. He reminded students that this was a crucial step. While this observation resulted in a mid-class adjustment and in regrouping of students, there was a missed opportunity for students to become aware of their next step themselves rather than through the teacher. This unit was being retaught because the performance task revealed low performance scores mainly due because the students did not label the graphs correctly.
- In a Global History class focused on the Age of Exploration, the checks for understanding focused primarily on clarifying misconceptions in the various texts. The teacher made adjustments by leading students to re-examine the texts. While students were able to connect racial ideologies in this time period with other time periods, the questions did not lead students to understanding their next step in connecting this theme to their final task.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Curricula and academic tasks are planned using student work and consistently emphasize higher-order thinking skills.

Impact

Students are immersed in rigorous tasks that have been refined using student work resulting in all students having access to the curriculum. All students including English Language learners and students with disabilities are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- Tasks from a tenth grade unit on the Holocaust reflect requirements for students to read various texts and critically analyze sources. Another task centered on students writing a thematic essay on Fascist and Communistic ideology and its impact between World War I and II. Essential questions including, “What led to the aggression of Hitler and the Nazi Party?” and “Why did the actions of this military lead to the establishment of new world issues?” are included in the unit as well. All students are engaged and required to complete these rigorous tasks.
- A review of planning documents revealed that tasks include multiple access points to ensure that all learners are engaged in higher order thinking. For example, a Living Environment unit on biodiversity includes jigsaw activities where students work in pairs to collect supporting evidence. The lesson plan includes a preview of academic vocabulary as well as providing access to videos, glossaries and concept maps. Writing support for struggling students is provided through a paragraph expansion practice which is part of the Writing is Thinking Strategic Inquiry (WITsi).
- Teachers reviewed student work samples on graphing equations with two variables and found that students struggled with points of interception and with understanding the concept of slope. While these concepts are being retaught to increase student mastery, there have been modifications to lessons to ensure that student misconceptions identified by teacher teams during inquiry are addressed. Students will be required to work independently first and use a Think, Pair and Share to discuss the problems with a partner to justify their answers. Students with individual educational plans will be provided with graphs where the x and y axes have already been labeled to provide them the needed support to access this part of the curriculum.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices and student discussions are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best.

Impact

Instruction at the school results in engaging students and providing learning opportunities that led to high levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- Making Thinking Visible, the instructional focus for the year, was observed across classrooms. Classroom activities required students to engage in core routines such as Think, Pair and Share. Classroom environments included wall charts that recorded class discussions. Models, and historical artifacts such as primary source documents, time lines and concept maps were present in classrooms. Additionally, classroom displays contained many charts with explanations, definitions, transitional words and strategies for students to use to support their independent work. All students are expected to write down their ideas and gather notes before having conversations so that they can concretely present their thinking to others
- In a Living Environment class students worked in groups to gather information about the biome that they were studying. Students engaged in discussions centered on the impact that the non-living factors in the biome have on the animals that live there. Students also discussed soil conditions and the role it played in plant growth within the biome. When asked why they were studying this, one student said that this was connected to their previous lessons on evolution. Another student added how the environment impacts the animals that live there and Darwinism supported the importance of the role of the environment and the part it plays in plant and animal adaptations.
- In an Advanced Placement social studies class students were studying the rise of rich merchants due to the lack of a centralized government in Europe. Students had read several primary sources from the medieval ages in preparation for their individual presentations. Presentations were open for questions and answers and resulted in class conversations where students challenged each other. Students went back to the document, lifted a line of text as evidence for their claim and explained their interpretation of how it impacted this time period. For example, one student presented the facts that led to the age of Enlightenment in 1370. Another student agreed with the presentation and added information regarding the diminishing power of the church which controlled education during that time period.

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations where they analyze assessment data and student work for students they share.

Impact

Teacher collaborations have strengthened teacher practices, promoted the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards and are resulting in accelerated student progress and increased performance.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has multiple teacher teams that focus on school goals when they meet. One team is focused on a lesson study. Another team is focused on reviewing the supports needed to provide accessibility for all students when engaged in the performance tasks they are to complete. Teachers develop lessons and visit each other’s classes to determine the impact of the lesson on student work. The grade nine and grade ten team are focused on working with the Writing Is Thinking (WITsi) strategy and improving writing across the content in these grades. In a meeting with teachers, they stated that while the focus may look like it is different across the grades, what tied it all together was their school wide focus on improving writing. Teachers feel that sharing their work has enabled them to learn from each other and strengthen their own practice. For example, by their looking at student work and focusing on students’ ability to cite evidence has led to the adoption of WITsi strategies across grades.
- In one teacher team meeting, teachers examined the short responses students wrote on a social studies assessment. They wanted to determine the impact of their strategy for vocabulary development through drawing pictures. They noticed that many students were unable to demonstrate an understanding of the word Monopoly beyond the game that the majority had knowledge of. Yet, in another class, while students were able to answer questions about the Normandy invasion they struggled to draw the picture. The teachers decided that this strategy was not always successful and while it might work for some students it was not the best strategy for all students. As a result, more explicit instruction of content terms and key vocabulary were introduced at the beginning of the unit.
- Teachers in the grade eleven inquiry team focused on improving paragraph expansion on the Document Based Question essay. This resulted in a 28% increase in the Global History in January 2015. Data from the English Language Arts regents indicated the pass rate also improved by 15% for this same time period providing additional strong validation of the impact of the collaborations they undertake.