



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

The Bronx School of Young Leaders

Middle School X331

**40 West Tremont Avenue
Bronx
NY 10453**

Principal: Serapha Cruz

**Date of review: March 2, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Tracie Benjamin-Van Lierop**

The School Context

The Bronx School of Young Leaders is a middle school with 402 students from grade 6 through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 1% Asian, 23% Black, 75% Hispanic, and 1% White students. The student body includes 17% English Language Learners and 22% students with disabilities. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 93.7%.

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 Finding	Well Developed
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	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	Celebration	Well Developed
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 Finding	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 Finding	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

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

Impact

Actionable and meaningful feedback is provided to students and teachers regarding student achievement resulting in all students demonstrating increased mastery.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use standards-based grading and an on-line platform, Engrade, to collect student assessment data and record progress of mastery. An example of a grade 6 report included student and class data that assessed student levels of introduction to a standard when it is first taught, exit slips, classwork, vacation packet assignments. The data results indicated which students made progress, needed re-teaching, and achieved mastery in English Language Arts (ELA) standards. Students also have access to Engrade reports, conference with teachers, and monitor their progress toward quarterly learning goals.
- Math fluency diagnostic data is used to identify expanded time and learning groups focused on number sense and operations. Teachers use the data from their diagnostic assessments to adjust their problem-solving rubric, which can be used across the grades and has resulted in the school being on track to meeting their student achievement benchmark target in math. The school has met their ELA benchmark data for the current school year which they attribute to progress monitoring. A review of the data informed teacher's instructional decisions to focus on text complexity, identifying multiple central ideas in a text, and supplementing current reading response questions with multi-layered questions that required students to demonstrate how one text feature contributes to the overall impact of an article.
- The principal notes that use of the New Visions data sorter has allowed teachers to identify trends and patterns with their students. The teachers are utilizing the data to indicate present levels and growth in ELA and math while also recognizing recent course grades in social studies and science. Due to the high needs of their student population, in specific, English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs), the school also establishes interventions and takes into consideration when tracking progress and adjusting instructional practices, and attendance over a three-year period. The faculty also uses the data sorter to monitor proficiency levels for state assessments in ELA and math over a three-year period. Teachers created a Google document to inform their planning including accommodations, modifications and supports needed to work with students who have varied learning styles.
- The school employs its assessment calendar to monitor student progress in ELA, math, social studies, science, and English language assessment for their ELLs including benchmark assessments in the fall and spring semesters.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry point into the curricula and student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact

Students are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher order thinking skills however, the strategic multiple entry points, levels of questioning and extensions into the curricula vary so that not all learners are able to engage in appropriately challenging tasks where they can demonstrate high levels of student thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms students engaged in discussions which transitioned into a writing activity that involved making claims, counterclaims, and summarizing. In a grade 7 class, students were expected to write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant experience using a Great Books text and *The White Umbrella* by Patricia W. Elliott. Students used an argumentative rubric to inform their writing as the teacher circulated the room and conferenced with students. Additionally, students who needed extended time were able to complete their essays at home in order to have them ready to publish by the end of the week.
- In a bridge math class, students worked in homogeneous pairings and heterogeneous leveled groups consisting of two high performing and two low performing students. The lesson's objective was to identify the parts of a number using a tape diagram. Students had access to calculators and dry erase tablets to demonstrate their thinking. There was an expectation that all students participated as the teacher called on students asking, "What is the problem asking us to do?" and "Explain the strategy you used to answer the problem." During the lesson, students had the option to work individually, with a partner, or with a paraprofessional as the teacher circulated the room checking-in with students. A student stated, "I know what to do in my head but I can't explain it." The teacher worked with her using the math problem-solving guide as a resource to assist her in explaining her thinking.
- Students in a grade 8 science class focused on independent reading using myOn, an online literacy resource, and other non-fiction texts of their choosing and were engaged at varying levels. When asked why some students were not reading, student responses included, "I wasn't reading because it's not interesting to me" while other students were able to connect why there were reading. There was no evidence of how the independent reading time connected to the content area, specific instructional strategies that were being taught, or how students were capturing their learnings from the reading.
- In classrooms visited, learning opportunities for students to engage in extension level activities other than peer assistance was limited, however, in review of instructional planning documents, activities and groupings for extension activities were indicated.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curricula	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

Coherence across grades and subject areas promotes college and career readiness for all students. Individuals and groups of students, including the lowest and highest achieving students, ELL's and SWD's, have access to the curricula and tasks and are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- School leadership and teachers have a full day of planning every five weeks to study the Common Core and align their upcoming units of study with the standards. During the planning session, teachers evaluate their tasks previously assigned and look at student work to assess progress toward mastery levels. A review of grades 6-8 ELA and math curricula revealed strong alignment to the Common Core standards. School leaders and teachers provide access to higher achieving students via curricula documents that vary in degree of difficulty ranging from tasks that require identification to synthesis and analysis. For example, a science unit on cell function and homeostasis included a research component for students to extend their learning and connect cancer research with the human body, digestion, circulation, and respiratory systems.
- Teachers use the Goal Access New Knowledge Apply Generalize (GANAG) lesson plan template which is aligned to their formative assessment student goals. Due to the large percentage of ELLs, 17%, and SWDs, 22%, teachers include strategies in their lesson plans that incorporate picture or objects, storytelling, and are partner-based. Teachers also use the Atlas Rubicon platform to work on and revise their units of study, and make adjustments to ensure there is coordination and coherence across grades and content areas. School leaders review all submitted units using the on-line platform and provide feedback based on specific criteria such as, goals being pertinent to the unit aim and standards, knowledge and skills are directly linked to enduring understandings, and evidence of planning is based on student assessment data.
- The school adopted Stanford University's, *Reading Like A Historian* social studies curriculum in order to increase student engagement levels in historical inquiry. Teachers have progressed in focusing their lessons on a central historical question and including primary and secondary resources for reading while also incorporating skills such as sourcing, close reading, corroboration, and contextualizing.

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 readiness and successfully partner with families to support student progress toward those expectations. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that systematically communicates a unified set of high expectations for all students.

Impact

There is a culture where clear, focused, and effective guidance/advisement supports are in place to ensure that students, including high-need subgroups, own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- The faculty engages families in on-going communication and events that support college and career readiness at each grade level. The school has a grade 5 open house for families of students transitioning into grade 6 to discuss the expectations and demands as they progress from elementary to middle school. Families have been introduced to Engrade and comment on its effectiveness regarding keeping them aware of their children’s progress. When asked by the reviewer, “How familiar are you with the expectations of the Common Core and how does the school support your learning as a parent?”, a parent responded in Spanish, as translated, “We talk so much about the Common Core and the school gives us so much information that I thought my brain was going to explode-- in a really good way!”
- A parent of a child with a disability reported that she has been battling with getting supports for her son since third grade and since he’s been at this school, her son has all of the supports he needs and is making progress. A parent of child in seventh grade stated, her child is involved in the TEAK Fellowship Program and she believes with the support of this program and the school, her son is “well on his way to a top high school and college.” Based on the 2014-15 School Quality Snapshot, 86% of the school’s former eighth graders earned enough high school credit in ninth grade to be on track for graduation which is above the district average.
- Students across subgroups and grades reported their access to professionals and organizations such as The Opportunity Network have inspired them to stay focused on high school and college. A student stated, “College awareness day was great! My counselor invited colleges to come that night to speak with us and now I know that Penn State has a great business program that I’d like to apply to and the grades I need to get to go there.” A student government representative expressed his monthly check-ins with the school leadership team allows him to be involved and understanding the importance of his position has contributed to his grades in class as well as his conferences with teachers and guidance counselor.
- Students commented on having the opportunity to select learning topics in class. A grade 7 student highlighted a final performance task where the class was able to choose from racism, immigration rights, divorce and single parent households and the effect it has on students.

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

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations that have strengthened teacher instructional capacity and promoted the implementation of the Common Core. Teacher teams systematically analyze key elements of teacher work including classroom practice, assessment data and student work for students.

Impact

Shared improvements in teacher practice has resulted in school-wide instructional coherence, increased student achievement for all learners, and mastery of goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- All team grade leaders keep an on-going Google document capturing meeting agendas and minutes for teachers to reference. The school also has a grade liaison who checks in with each grade team leader. Department team meeting agendas included review of student work in math, discussion of a professional learning opportunity on growth mindsets and productive struggle, unit plans on Atlas Rubicon, benchmark assessment data reports on schoolnet.org, planning day dates focused on curricula revisions and adjustments, end of marking period dates, and the remaining instructional days until the New York State Assessments.
- Teachers engage in professional learning and inquiry cycles including discussing creating classroom environments that promote academic excellence and how to utilize paraprofessionals in the classroom. Paraprofessionals are also members of the learning teams. Teachers across grades report the impact of their teamwork is providing consistency for how they work with students as well as how students are working across content areas. An ELA teacher stated, “We’re deepening the work. We’ve looked at how our curricula and lessons are aligned with the standards, using protocols, and getting feedback from each other.”
- Teachers believe the impact of their teams is improving their collective practice in meeting the needs of all students by focusing on including multiple entry points in their planning. “Students have options to use manipulatives and most of our lessons include accommodations, mixed groupings, and some classrooms include a challenge corner for students who are able to produce higher level work.” The school is closing the achievement gap in ELA and math as evidenced by their school quality snapshot for ELLs and SWDs with a rating of excellent and for lowest performing students with a rating of good. Additionally, students are on track to meet progress targets for math, scoring 2.14 and have already met the progress targets for ELA, scoring 2.20 as per the Renewal Benchmark Update 2014-15 report.