



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

The Bronx Mathematics Preparatory School

Middle School X375

**456 White Plains Road
Bronx
NY 10473**

Principal: Dyon Rozier

**Date of review: April 19, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Heidi Pierovich**

The School Context

The Bronx Mathematics Preparatory School is a middle school with 252 students from grade 6 through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 2% Asian, 34% Black, 63% Hispanic, and 0% White students. The student body includes 17% English Language Learners and 26% students with disabilities. Boys account for 57% of the students enrolled and girls account for 43%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 89.4%.

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 <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	Underdeveloped
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	Celebration	Proficient
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	Developing

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

High expectations are consistently communicated to staff through the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, training, and ongoing communication. The school communicates expectations to students and families and keeps them abreast of student progress toward college and career readiness.

Impact

The school maintains a system of accountability toward expectations amongst staff and helps families understand student progress toward those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- Administration provides staff with consistent messages regarding expectations including the Weekly Newsletter. The Weekly Newsletter informs staff about expectations both inside and outside the classroom. Administration delineated school goals, action plans, and next steps in the opening day professional learning session and in the staff handbook, setting the tone throughout the year. Additionally, administration provides the protocol for teachers to create unit plans using the Understanding by Design (UbD) model, performance tasks, and rubrics.
- There is the professional learning committee (PLC) that facilitates the creation and presentation of professional development to their peers, conduct inter-visitations, and share best practices. To monitor the implementation of these professional learning sessions, a system of follow-up includes professional learning cycles with frequent classroom observations and actionable feedback, as well as coaching from administration and outside consultants to ensure that staff is working toward the school's achievement goals.
- Beyond the weekly parent engagement contact, via phone, email, or in-person meetings, staff also communicates with the home through an online grade book called PupilPath, the parent and student portal. This supports families in understanding students' progress toward college and career readiness. Most students stated that they check PupilPath often; a few said at least once a week, and others said especially after submitting a big assignment. Some teachers send home "good news" notes congratulating students for positive actions. In addition, teachers provide parents with monthly newsletters regarding upcoming instructional content, tips, and homework help. To this end, parents stated that they are very pleased with the level of communication from the teachers and administration.
- Parents explained about the support they receive with the high school selection process through workshops, high school fairs, and tours, and the support of the guidance counselor with completion of applications. One student stated and others agreed, "There are meetings with the counselor, one-to-one, and it has been very helpful." Students also explained that the counselor took them to the Bronx high school fair to help them see some of their choices. Students spoke about attending the upcoming college and career days later this spring, where they will listen to many presentations by people from different careers.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Underdeveloped

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies typically do not provide multiple entry points into the curricula and do not support appropriately challenging tasks to meet the learning needs for all students. Student work products and discussions reflect a general lack of student thinking and participation.

Impact

As a result, there is lack of engagement in appropriately challenging tasks and little demonstration of higher-order thinking skills in student work products. Students are not meaningfully engaged in high-level discussions, and there are few opportunities for support into the learning with scaffolds.

Supporting Evidence

- The grade 6 and 7 humanities teachers all taught the same lesson, called Bend 1, Lesson 2, while the eighth grade humanities used Bend 1, Lesson 3, both with Common Core Learning Standards focused on grade 7. Thus, students were not engaged in appropriately challenging tasks in grades 6 and 8. On the other hand, in a grade 7 humanities class for students with special needs, the teacher used the same lesson but added opportunities for students to pair-share and demonstrate their thinking and provided them with an additional explanation of the parable's connection to the research all students were to conduct. The other classes did not provide scaffolds or extensions for their students.
- Providing students with scaffolds or multiple entry points to understand vocabulary was minimal across classes. In both a grade 7 math integrated co-teaching (ICT) class and a grade 7 math class for students with special needs, students had issues understanding the difference between experimental and theoretical probability. Similarly, in a grade 8 science class, students expressed confusion around the vocabulary words "independent and dependent variables" being used for a lab; the teacher tried to clarify verbally, but students' confusion remained. In a humanities class, students were grouped by Lexile but, when asked, they did not know what Lexile was or why they were grouped in that manner.
- Pacing across classrooms left students without the opportunity to complete an exit slip, so teachers missed the opportunity to gather data to inform instruction. In four of the classes visited at the end of the period, three did not conduct any summary or exit ticket. However, one grade six humanities class did provide a summary share out for the whole class instead of an exit ticket, but it continued beyond the bell. As students shared what they learned about teen activism, Malala, and power note-taking, they stood and spoke to the teacher, even as a few added on to the previous speaker. The share-out was teacher-directed and moved from teacher-to-student and back again.
- Providing students with opportunities for discussion was minimal. In a grade 7 humanities self-contained class, students had a couple of opportunities to pair-share and then share whole class as they gained understanding of the parable. Similarly, in an ICT grade 7 math class, students shared in pairs as co-teachers walked around conferring with students and noting on clipboards. Yet, in a grade 6 humanities class, students were told to pair-share, but it did not occur. Although two teachers set timers for activities, the buzzer went off and the activities were either extended or the teacher talk continued. In one class, the teacher talk continued until the end of the period, leaving students without time to conduct a lab.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Although curricula and academic tasks reflect planning, these documents inconsistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills.

Impact

Across grades and subjects, curricula and academic tasks unevenly provide access and supports to cognitively engage a diversity of learners, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers have begun to implement the workshop model approach to unit and lesson planning. In most unit plans, the elements of the workshop model include, but are not limited to, connect, teaching point, active engagement with independent writing, mid-workshop teaching, closing, link and share, and assessments. Additionally, staff is beginning to incorporate reading and writing across the curricula, along with academic vocabulary and argumentative writing, and as such these initiatives have not yet been implemented across the school.
- Even though the school's total population includes 26% students with disabilities and 17% English Language Learners, the academic tasks in lesson plans do not consistently support diversity. The math lesson plans include tiered independent practice differentiation to provide access for all learners. However, the humanities lesson plans for grades 6, 7, and 8 were on the same topic of researching teenage activism for all three grades. The eighth grade lesson, which is Bend 1 lesson 2, appears to be a day ahead of the sixth and seventh grade, which were on Bend 1 lesson 1 and were identical. The sixth and seventh grade humanities lessons were planned to meet students at the seventh grade level, leaving sixth grade with the wrong grade level standards. Furthermore, all grades of the humanities lesson plans had no evidence of scaffolding for these learners, although grades six and seven did list groups by Lexile level but not what to do in those groups. Curriculum maps include unit, number of days, Common Core Learning Standards, essential ideas, investigations, and assessments. However, the curriculum maps reviewed do not present accommodations for ELLs or students with disabilities. These lesson plans and curriculum maps do not provide all students with opportunities of access into the tasks, limiting student potential for academic progress.
- Staff reviewed their unit and lesson plans to provide time for targeted re-teaching of key standards prior to state testing. To this end, administration set forth five expectations for these curricular revisions that included the workshop model with a highly targeted mini-lesson, student engagement with text, and problem-solving, Lexile-leveled group work, opportunities to make their thinking visible, and active reading and thinking. For example, the eighth grade math teachers decided to revise the lesson order and condensed some material so that they could reteach ratios and proportions as well as algebraic reasoning.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments and rubrics that are aligned with the curricula, but teachers' assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

Feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement is limited, and teachers inconsistently make effective adjustments to meet students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Along with Measures of Student Learning, staff uses Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) three times a year to assess students' reading levels. A report demonstrates a comparison of the beginning and middle of the year's DRP scores. Sixth graders took the test only during the mid-year sitting so do not have comparative data as yet. Although three seventh grade classes demonstrate an uptick in scores, the remaining one grade 7 and three grade 8 classes show decreases, with one grade 8 showing flat scores. Staff used DRP data to select students for focused literacy instruction to support growth prior to the New York State assessment, yet no summative data was produced to measure growth from this extra learning time, nor as a predictor of performance on the state test. While some lesson plans show students grouped by Lexile level, there is no comparative data showing how these groups have improved student achievement. In addition, there are grade rosters of students' comparative scores for the DRP, but there is no demonstration of how this data is used to inform daily curricular or pedagogical decisions. Similarly, class comparison reports from pre- and post-test scores show that students improved on certain questions, but not how this data was used to inform the next instructional steps.
- Teachers use rubrics and checklists to support students in knowing next steps, but not always knowing how to improve their work. In student interviews throughout the day, some students knew how to use a rubric or checklist to support their learning and how to reflect on next steps. Although most student work receives a grade, checkmark, and often a congratulatory "great job," often work either received no score or received feedback without a score. A student received feedback but no score on an essay and stated, "This bothers me because I had done so much work but received no grade." Furthermore, the feedback provided to students is not always understood, and therefore cannot be actionable. A student read the feedback for his narrative, "Elaboration on your ideas will improve your ability to write effectively." Yet, the student did not understand the meaning of "elaboration" or "effectively," and so the feedback was neither meaningful nor actionable.
- The staff and administration have started using assessment during instruction and have accordingly provided staff with professional development on best practices. However, the implementation of these practices and checks for understanding as formative assessment during teaching was uneven. In a math class the teacher asked, "Is flipping the coin theoretical probability? Why?" and walked from group-to-group with a clipboard, taking notes about participation and behavior; but it is not clear how this information was used to inform instruction during the class. A few teachers also used the clipboard data collection but without making effective adjustments during instruction. On the other hand, in a grade 6 humanities class, the teacher stated that 7 of 27 students were ready to move on to the next step but did not regroup students, as is the school wide expectation, to reteach those who needed more time on task so others could move on.

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

Teacher teams inconsistently analyze assessment data and student work for students they share or on whom they are focused in inquiry teams. Distributed leadership structures are developing to support leadership capacity building.

Impact

Since teachers are developing in making key decisions that affect the student learning across the school, the work of teacher teams does not yet typically result in improved teacher practice or progress toward goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- Distributed leadership is beginning to be evident in that each teacher team has a team leader who has not yet been trained but facilitates each grade team meeting. One teacher stated and others agreed, “As the lead I get to sit with administration, put forth our opinions, and for the first time we are being heard and given power to make decisions.” Teachers select common readings and use that to focus their learnings and their use of research-based instructional practices for incorporating writing across the curriculum. Additionally, there is a teacher team that is conducting a book club reading to support positive school community. On Mondays, teachers design and deliver the professional learning along with the coaches and administration around the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Teachers also receive support from outside consultants for both literacy and math.
- Teachers are starting to use an inquiry approach for looking at student data and to use the information to determine next steps in their teaching and supporting student needs. But this is a new process, as observed during the teacher meeting when they conducted their first inquiry cycle. First teachers shared sections that “really stood out to them” from a common professional reading, but they did not make a decision based on these sharings. Next, they looked at assessment of grade 6 standards and looked at the gaps in learning by class and standards, vocabulary, trends, and extensions. They finished with next steps to bring research-based strategies to re-teach the gap areas. However, teachers are not yet able to demonstrate how these analyses demonstrate support for the needs of or progress toward goals for groups of students.
- Teachers spoke about how working in teacher teams has improved their instructional practice since they each teach all three grades for each subject. Since they teach all three grades, they have found it necessary to share best practices and planning. One teacher stated and others agreed, “I have never taught English until this year, and common planning work with the team is fantastic. We pull from each other; one is strong in assessment and another with curriculum, and [they] have made me a much stronger teacher in English.”