



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

Bronxdale High School

High School X508

**925 Astor Avenue
Bronx
NY 10469**

Principal: Carolyne Quintana

**Date of review: April 12, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Daisy Concepción**

The School Context

Bronxdale High School is a high school with 441 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 4% Asian, 32% Black, 56% Hispanic, and 7% White students. The student body includes 5% English Language Learners and 21% 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 84.7%.

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 Findings	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 Findings	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	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use rubrics aligned with the school's curricula to offer a clear portrait of student mastery. Common assessments create a clear picture of student progress toward goals across grades.

Impact

The school uses common assessment checkpoints to ensure curriculum alignment and inform instructional decisions so that students demonstrate increased mastery. Students receive meaningful, rubric-based feedback aligned to the school's portrait of mastery.

Supporting Evidence

- Graduating students must complete a milestone, multi-disciplinary performance-based assessment project similar to a college thesis paper called the Capstone Project. This project requires students to use the skills developed over their 4 years at the school. Data from this project informed the decision to incorporate a similar culminating performance task at the end of each year, leading to increased student achievement.
- Common assessments include mock regents, end of unit assessments and a series of 10 checkpoints based on the city-wide Measure of Student Learning (MOSL) which measures traits in argument writing needed for Regents and college writing. These common assessments are embedded in each grade's Capstone Project and are used to adjust curriculum and instruction. For example, when the midline checkpoint was compared to the baseline, it revealed that students across all grades had increased in 6 MOSL traits. However, a more granular analysis led the school to discover that 85% of students were not meeting the trait of refuting counterclaims. Units across the school were refined to focus on counterclaims with class discussions requiring students to state how their claim is stronger than the counterclaim. Students are asked to defend or refute evidence. Worksheets were created as visual supports for struggling students. These worksheets require students to write the counterclaim and collect refuting evidence in order to prioritize and support their argument.
- MOSL checkpoints and end of unit assessments stored on Google Docs revealed that students in grades 9 and 10 struggled with the organization of ideas and using relevant evidence to support arguments. Teacher revisions included focusing on paragraph expansion strategies, focusing on the 5-paragraph essay, using evidence in discussion and, for students who need support, using structured paragraphs with sentence starters.
- Common rubrics across grades and content areas use NYC Performance Assessment in Writing as a base for all writing rubrics. In grade 9 rubrics do not focus on grades, but on mastery of criteria with students receiving two clear next steps tied to high leverage skills, such as command of evidence and counterclaims. One student shared that he is better able to make his point clearly when compared to his grade 8 essays.
- Students self-assess their progress monthly towards the Capstone Project using a Capstone rubric that measure content skills, presentation and professionalism among other measures. This is followed with explicit teacher next steps in content and skills.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

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

Impact

While the instruction at the school is appropriately challenging and entry points ensure that students demonstrate higher-order thinking in both work products and conversations, student discussion has not yet led to student ownership.

Supporting Evidence

- While students in a social studies class were engaged in the topic of genocide and demonstrated an understanding of the fact that millions of people were killed under the guise of civil war, they were unable to drive or further develop the discussion without prompts from the teacher.
- In a science class, students sat at tables with beakers containing cold water, hot water and warm water and dropped fizzing tablets in each beaker. Students used a stop watch to record how long the tablet took to dissolve in each of the beakers. Students charted their observation on graphs by using the elements of time and temperature as coordinates. Finally, students used their lab notes and observations to support or revise their hypothesis. Students were arranged by ability level as demonstrated by the questions at each one of the tables. In some tables, students were required only to summarize their findings. In another table, students were asked to apply their findings to the physical world by thinking about how items might weather more rapidly in a desert as opposed to the Antarctica.
- In an English Language Arts class, students were involved in literature circles. Students had read different books such as *Fences*, *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *A Raisin in the Sun*. Students were held to the task by a three column organizer called a Lesson Essential Question Evidence Tracker where students had to record their textual evidence as well as answer the unit essential question of “How does conflict shape our identity?” and the lesson essential question of “What has a bigger impact on identity-community or society?” The teacher opened the conversation by asking students to consider if families are always supposed to support each other. This question was used to elicit student discussion focused on analyzing complex characters and their conflicting motives. While students did discuss the conflicts that impacted the character Atticus Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird* and the relationship between Mama and Ruth in *A Raisin in the Sun*, the conversation stayed on the anecdotal level and did not led to a discussion that involved analysis of a central idea across books and characters. As a support, the teacher asked students in one group to make a connection to another book they had previously read. Students’ discussion was sparked and they began discussing how the conflict had shaped the identity Arnold Spirit the main character in *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian*.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to all staff and provide training to help them meet all expectations. School leaders and faculty communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness and facilitate home-school partnerships.

Impact

A culture of mutual accountability supports learning by all stakeholders. Strong parent-teacher collaborations support student progress towards college and career readiness expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's instructional focus is promoting student inquiry through questioning and discussion to lead students to mastery, so student mastery is a topic of professional development sessions, workshops, coaching and, teacher team conversations. This work is supported by daily morning meetings, where teachers and administrators look at samples of student work and data and how the work supports student progress towards mastery of goals. This includes looking at student writing to track the use of evidence and research to defend a position in preparation for the college essay and to record gains in student writing proficiency as detected via analysis of data from MOSL writing assessments. Teachers shared that post-observation conferences are tied to the instructional focus and the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, teachers participate in scholarship meetings and are asked to submit reflections about growth in their practice.
- Parents stated that the principal has very high expectations that are clearly communicated to them from day one. Parents shared that the school has a student-centered approach to education where the academic focus is on ensuring that students understand academic work and how it supports their post-high school careers. Parents spoke about the school's inquiry approach, through which students learn to question, research and use evidence. Further, parents reported that they are all required to team up with staff each year to help their children complete a Capstone project that begins in grade 9 and culminates in grade 12 with a formal presentation, and is a requirement for movement to the next grade. Others stated that continual support from all staff has ensured that students learn, improve their work and make and stay on the honor roll.
- Parents stated that through various parent engagement events, including curriculum workshops that mirror classroom instruction, they are well acquainted with school expectations. For example, parents stated that during Open School Night, they had to sit in a circle and use accountable talk to explore a topic and defend a position. They stated that this experience helped them understand expectations for high school and helped them see the connections of this work to both career and college requirements. Parents also stated that the school has a transparent grading policy and that the grading policy, transcript reviews, and data from the PupilPath online portal keep them abreast of how their children are progressing towards all expectations.

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	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

Students are engaged in a coherent and challenging curriculum that ensures college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- After looking at student work across grade 9 algebra classes, teachers noticed that students were able to provide the correct answers in many of the exams, but were not demonstrating the mathematical practices such as thinking abstractly and concretely. As a result, the school created a curriculum for a second year of algebra. This second year of algebra is specifically designed for students to develop mathematical fluency and demonstrate the mathematical instructional shifts, such as dual intensity, and practices, such as constructing viable arguments.
- A review of lesson plans revealed that across all subjects and grades, lessons are aligned to the Common Core and instructional shifts. In addition, lesson plans include essential questions, inquiry questions, and display the cross curricular connections for the grade towards the Capstone Project.
- Curricula across grades and subjects has been revised to ensure that they support the interdisciplinary capstone projects for each grade. For example, in grade 9 the project focuses on a science exit project and the skills for this culminating project are embedded in English Language Arts and math as well as science. For example, a lesson on weathering addresses the science standards, includes math standards, and requires students to select evidence from the lab experiment to support their decision in supporting or refuting the hypothesis.
- The mock and actual Global Regents results showed that students did poorly on the written portions of the thematic essays. As a result of low scores on the Global Regents, teachers realized that students were looking at time periods in isolation and were not making connections or identifying common themes across time. Teachers at the school decided to redesign units in both Global and U.S. History and connect these units thematically so that student could see the connections.
- Curriculum maps are revisited at the end of the semester and are revised based on student data that includes performance on end of unit exams, students' Lexile levels for differentiation of texts, and state assessment scores. Teachers make adjustments using a curriculum rubric. This rubric measures opportunities for students to practice argumentative writing, to use technology, to engage in major and minor assessments to demonstrate understanding, and to engage in research.

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 inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations promoting the Common Core and systematically analyzing key elements of teacher work including classroom practice, assessment data, and student work for students they share or on whom they are focused.

Impact

Through structured professional collaborations teachers are empowered to collectively analyze their practice and student data resulting in schoolwide instructional coherence, improved teacher practice and mastery of goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- The curriculum team is comprised of teachers across grade and department teams who work collaboratively using a tuning protocol to look at student work for evidence of student need and mastery. Teachers identify prerequisite skills for upcoming units and through the use of a curriculum rubric, ensure both vertical and horizontal alignment of curricula towards the interdisciplinary capstone projects at each grade level. For example, when the science department wanted to add a new science-specific protocol, teachers worked across the grades to ensure students understood connections to existing practices.
- Teacher work collaboratively to ensure schoolwide coherence. For example, when observations surfaced that grade 9 social studies wasn't using same discussion protocols as the rest of the grade, the team leader worked with coaches and teachers to ensure common practices.
- Teachers use the consultancy protocol to examine problems of practice. One of the problems of practice that teachers wanted to examine was how to ensure that their tasks were both rigorous and designed to ensure that students were able to demonstrate mastery. Teachers across disciplines assessed each other's tasks. Teachers stated that this work has been particularly helpful in strengthening their instructional practice. They stated that when teachers outside of their discipline look at their tasks, they are able to identify where students are being asked to think and how that activity or task is related to the student mastery goal. As a result, teachers state that they have become more reflective about their planning and end tasks. Teachers shared that by looking at their tasks, they noticed that there were places where students did not demonstrate mastery because there had been a misalignment between task and the intended mastery. They shared that this work created greater clarity in their practice and helped them norm alignment of task and mastery. A recent look at data has demonstrated that the majority of students in the school, including students with disabilities, have increased gains in 6 out of the 10 trait scores aligned to the MOSL assessment.
- Teachers submit reflective packets 2 times per year during which they provide a series of lessons, then identify a professional learning moment that changed their approach, and include new, revised lessons with student work that demonstrates the impact.