



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2015-2016

**Bronx Design and Construction Academy**

**High School X522**

**333 East 151 Street  
Bronx  
NY 10451**

**Principal: Abigail Lovett**

**Date of review: March 3, 2016  
Lead Reviewer: Rod Bowen**

## The School Context

Bronx Design and Construction Academy is a high school with 578 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 1% Asian, 24% Black, 71% Hispanic, and 3% White students. The student body includes 14% English Language Learners and 26% students with disabilities. Boys account for 80% of the students enrolled and girls account for 20%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 81.4%.

## School Quality Criteria

<b>Instructional Core</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</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>Celebration</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 <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	<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>
<b>School Culture</b>		
<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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>		
<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:**

**1.1 Curriculum**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and thoughtfully integrate a balance of informational and literary texts. Rigorous habits and higher order skills are consistently emphasized across grades and subjects.

### Impact

Curricular decisions build coherence and promote college and career readiness, as all students have access to rigorous and engaging tasks, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

### Supporting Evidence

- Planning documents for a Career and Technology Education (CTE) course included an investigation activity whereby students would collaborate to read, interpret and apply code regulations, while a social studies lesson plan focused on primary sources including readings pertaining to imperialism, alliances, nationalism and militarism.
- English Language Arts documents from two different grades both highlight a focus on students exercising the ability to distill cogent evidence from text. In one case, students would gather text evidence of characters' identities and social statuses. In the other planning document, students are to identify and interpret quotes from a text in order to support a written argument.
- A humanities curricular map noted that planned activities would leverage the following desired student thinking: write annotations that make clear understanding of text, use evidence that clearly relates to and supports arguments, and use concise and focused language.
- A unit plan for a course entitled *Morality* lists websites as resources for students charged with doing research, including online articles on topics such as stem cell research, medical marijuana, immigration and euthanasia.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Developing**

### Findings

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

### Impact

There is uneven student engagement in appropriately challenging tasks and limited demonstration of higher order thinking in student work.

### Supporting Evidence

- In a math class, students worked in groups to deepen their understanding of the distributive property and distinguish between sum and product in calculating the area of rectangles by using rectangular tiles. However, most groups engaged in the collaborative task were not clear on exactly what they were supposed to do. One student commented, “I think we have to make one of these,” while pointing to a diagram in her textbook. When the teacher asked students to stop, none of the groups had successfully completed the first aspect of the task and one group had not started.
- Students in a CTE class wired a series circuit so that motors turned on only after another was activated. Most were engaged in the task and problem solved or asked for assistance as needed to get the circuit to work correctly. When asked about a real world application of this specific skill, a number of students were unable to provide a circumstance where the skill would be applicable. However, in a Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning class integrated with geometry, students were overheard collecting data, assessing pipes and calculating flow rates. When asked what size pipe he’d select for a job, a student replied, “With the flooring that we have, it will work with 1¼” pipe, but I’d use 1” because it’s less material, and that means it’s cheaper.”
- A teacher asked questions that could have prompted discussion in a science class such as “What are some of the problems that would stop a cell from dividing?” However, students merely responded directly to the teacher with phrases and words such as mutation and cancer. There were few opportunities for students to build upon each other’s thinking or engage each other in dialogue during this part of the lesson, which was a review of what had been previously taught in the unit.
- In a social studies class, students wrote for ten minutes in response to the prompt, “Give an example of a society that has used geographic features to their advantage.” A number of students wrote about the geographic feature rather than a society’s use of it. For example, a few students wrote about the Sahara desert’s dry, hot weather.

## Additional Findings

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

Across classrooms, assessment practices are aligned to the school's curricula and are used to determine student progress.

### Impact

Students and teachers receive actionable feedback regarding student achievement and teachers use this information to adjust curricula and instruction.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers and students utilize rubrics provided by New York State, like the Document Based Question essay rubric, as well as the school developed Argument Essay rubric. The need for a school wide argumentative writing rubric was informed by student data and has provided a cohesive foundation for argumentative writing across all four grades.
- When discussing how they would improve assignments if provided the opportunity, most students were able to give clear next steps based on feedback they had received. Examples include "My classmate said I did a good job of providing evidence but I should pick better quotes to support my claim", "I didn't have enough information" and "I have to be clear about when I'm using my own words or quoting someone, so I have to use quotation marks."
- Pre- and post- tests are used in math classes to track student progress before moving to the next unit. Samples provided illustrated a targeted student's growth in his ability to identify and solve linear equations.
- A sample math tracker indicated a 20% increase in student proficiency in the Common Core geometry standard that addresses students' ability to visualize representations between two- dimensional and three-dimensional objects. Standards identified by data analysis inform instruction on practice and fluency days.
- Benchmark assessment analysis in a social studies course revealed that map reading and geography skills were areas in need of improvement for many students. As a result, the teacher utilized tabletop maps as part of a do now activity and asked questions that purposefully incorporated map analysis tasks throughout the subsequent unit.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations regarding teaching and learning to staff. School leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations to families that are connected to a path to college and careers.

### Impact

School leaders provide training to staff and there is a system of accountability for teachers to meet the school leader's expectations. Parents have an understanding of their children's progress on a path to college and career readiness.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers are expected to purposefully engage students by providing them with opportunities to make their thinking visible. The professional development and instructional support plan clearly define engagement as students' ability to write, speak about and create visual representations of their thoughts, ideas and questions.
- Observation feedback aligned to the school's focus on student engagement included questions and suggestions. Examples include "Could kids explain the picture by identifying the most important section?", "Have students explain their thinking; do with all of them, not just a few", "Students were discussing in back group when you came over, and then they relied on you" and "How do we know students are able to reflect on this learning?"
- Parents stated that there are three scheduled meetings over the course of the year that focus on credit tracking. In addition to report cards and progress reports, parents referenced emails, backpacked letters, postal mail and monthly newsletters as effective means of ongoing communication regarding college and career readiness. The *Next Step* section of one of the school's monthly newsletters reminds parents about City University of New York (CUNY) applications and the need for them to send copies of their financial documents as part of the college application process.
- The school community also uses an online grading and communication system. One parent stated, "I log on and stay on top of all of my daughter's work; her assignment completion, test and quiz scores, everything."

<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 structured inquiry-based professional collaborations that promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards, including the instructional shifts. Distributive leadership structures are in place to build teachers' leadership capacity.

**Impact**

Instructional capacity of teachers is strengthening. Teachers have a voice in school decisions that affect student learning across the school.

**Supporting Evidence**

- A student work protocol participant note-taking sheet requires that department members analyze the task, analyze individual student work, surface gaps and identify implications for instruction. In analyzing the tasks, teachers address how they are aligned to the relevant Common Core Learning Standards. Guiding questions within the protocol include “Is the student showing mastery?”, “If yes, how do you know?” and “If no, what concepts or skills are they demonstrating?” This section of the protocol also asks, “What work would you expect to see to show student mastery on this task?”
- Although team members did not follow the protocol with fidelity during the observed meeting, they did discuss how the skills connected to the instructional shift focused on text-based answers could inform the analysis of images. They also identified the Common Core writing standard aligned to the task, as the assessment required that students write arguments to support claims using sufficient evidence. In addition, they determined that student mastery of the standard in the given task should consist of a three-paragraph essay consisting of a well-developed claim, evidence of revisions and citation descriptions or the interpretation of the elements within a work of art that supports their argument.
- Instructional leaders are teachers identified to make a number of decisions that impact teaching and learning across the school. Teachers developed strategies for collaborative learning, the professional development calendar, and the looking at student work protocol. In addition, house leaders coordinate the planning of parent outreach events as well as grade level behavior and grading expectations.