



Quality Review Report

2015-2016

Bronx Leadership Academy High School

High School X525

**1710 Webster Avenue
Bronx
NY 10457**

Principal: Ivan Yip

**Date of review: December 17, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Heidi Pierovich**

The School Context

Bronx Leadership Academy High School is a high school with 685 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 0% Asian, 31% Black, 66% Hispanic, and 1% White students. The student body includes 12% English Language Learners and 26% students with disabilities. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 81.7%.

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	Additional Findings	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	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	Celebration	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

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

All teachers are engaged in collaborative inquiry-based teams. Distributive leadership structures afford teachers and teacher teams the opportunity to make decisions about teaching and learning through the analysis and revision of curriculum and student work products.

Impact

The work of curricular revisions, frequency of meetings, and variation of teacher teams, provide all teachers with opportunities to engage in shared leadership and professional collaborations resulting in improved teacher capacity and student outcomes across the school community.

Supporting Evidence

- The school as part of the Learning Partners Pilot Program collaborates with six other schools to engage staff in learning lab intervisitations and provide actionable feedback to each other. As the pilot is in the first year the school has seen several outgrowths. They include increased teacher leadership to plan, implement, and facilitate professional development (PD), insight into its own implementation of the focus on questioning, engagement, use of data to determine the professional development in support of *Danielson Framework for Learning*, and a continual cycle of inquiry schoolwide to improve creating a student-centered classroom. Teacher leaders facilitate creating, implementing, and leading PD with Learning Partner schools and within their own school. Teachers have stated this has been one of the most powerful professional development activities.
- In addition to Learning Partners, teachers create, develop, and facilitate their professional development based on the data from *Advance* to focus on questioning and engagement. Two examples being implemented schoolwide include Q-Focus and VIP. "Q-Focus" is a method for students to develop their own Depth of Knowledge (DOK) questions and pose them during class discussions. "VIP" annotation strategy, which stands for "Vocabulary, Ideas, and Purpose", has students annotate texts, pull unknown words using a dictionary or context clues to determine meaning, and identify author's suggested ideas and purpose behind the information. Students explained how both strategies were used successfully in their classes.
- The vast majority of teachers sit on multiple teams, including department, grade, interdisciplinary, and common planning teams. Department teams meet twice each month using a protocol to look at student work and focus on professional development. In the math department, they established standards-based grading "to assess uniformly and implement a tracking sheet for feedback so students can see their growth and allowing us to give more targeted feedback and improvement." In a grade 12 English Language Arts (ELA) team meeting including special education teachers, they shared the results of daily intervisitation, tracking student-learning outcomes by following questioning, student-to-student discussion, and instruction. They then meet to debrief and discuss next pedagogical and curricular steps toward improvement. Grade teams meet three days per week and in a continuous conversation look at student work and data to revise lessons according to students' needs and have demonstrated improvement. Interdisciplinary teams have evolved as teachers from different subjects, including special education and English as a New Language (ENL), focus on targeted students' progress toward mastery. Teachers stated, "I'm growing professionally, more satisfied, and better meet my students' needs."

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

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

Impact

Although informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and the instructional shifts, across the vast majority of classrooms, all students do not yet own discussions that reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- The schoolwide belief is that students learn best “by being in control of their own learning and having the opportunity to delve deeply into a subject, to develop their ability to think critically, and use accountable talk stems to build off each other in discussion so that they are in charge of the classroom, while decreasing teacher-centered classes.” Each class visited had students involved in their learning, with opportunities to collaborate and discuss their thoughts in groups and whole class discussions, mirroring the school wide focus on Danielson’s questioning and discussion, leading to most students being engaged in the work.
- Close reading and annotation by students was evidenced across classes. In a grade 12 history class, in groups, students revised their paragraphs while discussing changes to meet their written document analysis, action plans, and peer feedback from the previous day. Similarly, in a forensics science class (including both general and special education students), all students working in data-determined groups read about blood spatter analysis from leveled texts. After reviewing a sample annotation, students worked together, used the “VIP” strategy for annotating, used context clues to find the meaning of vocabulary, some used computers for support, and all answered an exit ticket. All students were engaged in high-level work that was aligned to the standards and instructional shifts and some shared their thinking during the whole class discussion. In an advanced ENL – ELA support class, using a curriculum aligned to the students’ social studies curriculum, students worked in groups to answer essential questions about reasons for the Cuban Revolution. Although students were encouraged to challenge themselves with the extension task, early finishers decided instead to help others in their group. Discussion within groups was focused on vocabulary and annotation.
- Although accountable talk stems are employed, not all students own the discussions. In an honors grade 11 ELA class, students conducted a discussion regarding their close reading and annotation of Elie Weisel’s Nobel Prize speech, with all students engaged in deeply questioning the meaning of the text and the author’s messages, as students questioned and built off other’s comments. In an ELA grade 11 class, students used the “VIP” annotating method to read a nonfiction article and then draw parallels between it and *The Scarlet Letter*. Most students were able to contribute to the discussion, while some made the connections between the two readings. In a geometry Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, working in groups students were solving a multi-step task determining the tangent ratios to find measurements. Although some were involved in the discussion, not all had the opportunity to articulate their areas of confusion or clarity. Similarly, in a chemistry class though students answered teacher-directed questions after annotating text, not all students were engaged in the discussion, missing opportunities for all to own the discussion.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The school creates and adapts a coherent curricula aligned to the Common Core and the content standards, that are consistently reflected upon and refined to address the needs of all learners.

Impact

The school's commitment to analyzing student work and revising units of study to maximize coherency across grades and between subjects, and to meet all student needs, has resulted in curricula that causes them to think deeply, make connections among and between subjects, prepare them for the next levels of their education, and promote college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- Administration and staff collaboratively create and adapt curricula based on the Common Core Learning Standards and the New York State standards. The school uses *Collections Curriculum* for ELA, for math *College Preparatory Math (CPM)*, and resources such as *UpFront* and *NewsELA* for both ELA and social studies. One example of adapting the curricula is how the ELA and history teachers determined, based on data and Global Regent exam results that students struggle with writing thematic essays. To that end, the ELA and history departments collaborated to adapt their curricula to reinforce answering questions for thematic essays and supporting claims with textual documentation. To date, the ninth grade essays have shown growth from the baseline assessment.
- Teachers refine curricula based on student work, individually and in teams. Additionally, teachers shared that they are working with staff from other departments to plan and refine curricula based on data and authentic student work, such as the ELA and social studies departments as referenced prior, but ELA is also working with math and science. Consequently, a teacher stated and many agreed that as a result of inquiry work "we are more interdisciplinary than ever before." Subsequently, to ensure that curricula is interdisciplinary, planning incorporates consistencies via curricula that are coherent across the school with tasks regarding claims, evidence, inference, close reading, writing, the use of annotation and agreed upon instruction strategies, thus addressing student needs. Such instructional strategies include Q-Focus, VIP, and close reading using SCUBA. (scan for headings, graphics, and special fonts, circle confusing words, underline important facts, box names, dates, amounts, and places, and annotate).
- Teachers create unit plans, tasks, lessons, and pacing calendars using school wide adopted format and components. Unit plans include Common Core Learning Standards and/or New York State standards, big ideas, essential questions, tiered vocabulary, knowledge, skills, and reading and writing strategies, aims, as well as formative and summative assessments with rubrics and checklists. Lesson plans also use a commonly adopted format. Science units include interdisciplinary problem solving connections to math and technology. Social studies units include ELA standards in writing and reading, as is the schoolwide focus.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use common assessments that measure students' progress towards acquiring skills aligned to Common Core Learning Standards, rubrics, and a common grading policy aligned to the school's curricula.

Impact

The school analyzes assessment results to adjust instruction and curricula to meet student-learning needs. Uniform assessments provide a common lens and language to discuss student progress and inform instructional adjustments to advance student achievement, and teachers provide actionable feedback to students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use a schoolwide common grading system and Common Core-aligned rubrics to support student learning. Teachers and administration believe students should be able to revise and resubmit their work for a higher grade as they gain deeper understanding through actionable feedback. Students stated, "Teachers want you to revise your work for your own personal development and reach your goals." Furthermore, teachers' actionable feedback that includes rubric scores, actionable next steps, and 'glows and grows' supports students in reaching their individual goals for assignments. The extent to the 'glows and grows' varies from class-to-class with some written in-depth and some formatted as bullet points. Often, student work includes actionable peer feedback. Students stated that giving their peers feedback based on the rubric and checklists helps them improve their own work. Additionally, teachers collect data when meeting with students in groups, to determine next steps instructionally.
- Teachers create 'uniform' or common assessments that they state are "skill-based." The data from the uniform assessments has shown that incoming ninth graders have low scores on inference skills and write on a surface level. To that end, the school has adopted a focus on strengthening critical thinking skills through analytical reading and writing and using common rubrics for writing and accountable talk. Additionally, schoolwide teachers have adopted common instructional strategies to support student use of analysis and questioning, so that student work and data demonstrate student growth in these areas. Students know the foci, and noted that teachers targeted the key skills to help them learn how to write better, improve on the Regents, and prepare them for college.
- Most teachers employ the use of exit tickets and short quizzes to determine next steps instructionally as they discern which students need reteaching of certain skills within standards. Additionally, data-determined flexible grouping is employed in most classes to support reteaching and tiered reading assignments. Most teachers reflect on their lesson plans using a quadrant reflection for student outcomes. Teachers use these reflections individually and with their grade teams as they intervisit and complete the forms to discuss and determine next instructional steps. Most teachers incorporate the use of a variety of formative assessments and student and teacher reflections to inform their daily lesson planning, making adjustments based on student data and work products.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to staff and teachers engage in high-quality collaborative learning opportunities establishing a culture of professionalism. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that systematically communicates a unified set of high expectations for all students.

Impact

The entire staff takes ownership of their professional growth demonstrating a culture of mutual accountability. Students own their educational experience, successfully achieve high expectations, and are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- The administration provides consistent communications through a multitude of measures including weekly state-of-the-school bulletins, staff handbook, Learning Partners Pilot Program, and professional learnings toward achieving the schoolwide instructional goal of strengthening students' critical thinking skills through analytical reading and writing. Administration supports staff through a consistent cycle of observations and actionable feedback, which then informs the professional development plan, which is implemented by teachers and teacher leaders. Additionally, teachers intervisit each other's classes during their own time, then debrief, and determine next steps for instruction, as they create and own their professional learning opportunities. Administration ensures that teachers have common and free periods to meet. Teachers lead the Learning Partner Program professional learning work to intervisit schools, and as stated, "to strengthen our own pedagogy and positively impact student achievement."
- Teachers set individual goals toward professional growth aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* in the areas of questioning, engagement, and using data. These goals are also tied to weekly professional development opportunities displayed in a yearly plan. To ensure implementation of these new learnings, administration consistently observes classes to focus on new techniques and provide actionable feedback. This feedback is evident in teacher observations, both informal and formal as noted in *Advance*.
- The administration stated, teachers, students, and parents agreed that, "students do know and own their goals," which are kept in notebooks. A vast majority of students articulated their goals, and evidenced that they own their learning as they stated they track what they need to graduate, monitor their assignments through Skedula, and look forward to the posting of "good to be green," a student listing tracking progress. This allows teachers to guide students and provide feedback toward progress. Another student stated, "I check Skedula daily and the 'good to be green' posting by marking period, as this helps me to track my path toward graduation and so far I have all my credits and missing the Living Environment Regent."
- Students stated, and teachers, administration, and parents agree, that they have opportunities to revise and resubmit assignments. More than one student referenced that "We can redo our work and it is our choice, the teacher is not going to force you to do it; you have to want to help yourself" Teachers agree that usually setting timelines for resubmissions, supports students reaching mastery. Students and parents stated that teachers stay after school or meet at lunchtime to provide extra support or give extended time.