



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

Banana Kelly High School

High School X530

**965 Longwood Avenue
Bronx
NY 10459**

Principal: Asya Johnson

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

The School Context

Banana Kelly High School is a high school with 232 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 0% Asian, 35% Black, 63% Hispanic, and 1% White students. The student body includes 13% English Language Learners and 34% 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 71.5%.

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	Celebration	Proficient
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	Developing
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	Additional Findings	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:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

School leaders and faculty adopted selected curricula to ensure that they are providing instruction aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. The curricula and tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher order skills.

Impact

The school's adoption of aligned curricula enables staff to make purposeful decisions with the goals of school-wide coherence and college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- The administration and teacher leaders work collaboratively to support the staff to adjust the Common Core-aligned adopted programs, *EngageNY* for English Language Arts (ELA) and math, to ensure that all students' needs are met. For social studies and science, the staff uses the *New Visions* curricula.
- With a student population of 13% English Language Learners (ELLs) and 34% students with disabilities, school leaders and teachers made the intentional decision to ensure that each lesson plan clearly addresses the objective. To that end, teachers frame lessons by answering three questions, "What are we doing?" "Why are we doing it?" and "Where are we going?" Additionally, lesson plans include strategic grouping with student names, skill levels, and rationale for working independently or in pairs. Modifications for special populations are thoughtfully made with attention to the teacher assigned and the type of adaptation based on students' needs. A review of unit and daily lesson plans indicates that teachers plan with the end in mind. They determine the culminating task with the essential ideas and then plan what students need to know and be able to do. In addition, some staff members hold a Socratic seminar at the culmination of units and have adopted common sentence-starters, graphic organizers, discussion protocols and trackers, and other supports for students to use during and after the seminar. The teachers believe that participating in the Socratic seminar provides students with important college and career readiness skills, especially the ability to provide evidence as they discuss an idea.
- Teachers' plans indicate the use of the workshop model. Each plan includes the Common Core Learning Standards, the New York State standards, instructional objective, the Do Now, the mini-lesson, the learning activity, closure, and homework assignment. Each component is timed. Essential questions to be answered at the end of lessons and units are evident across grades and subjects. After inter-visiting classrooms and reflecting on what was observed, teachers and administrators determined the need to pre-plan tiered critical thinking questions and plan for possible student misconceptions. Although some lessons include critical-thinking questions, only a few include possible misconceptions. Many Do Now tasks often include intentional academic vocabulary exercises or past Regents questions. Most lessons contain small group leveled activities with lists of partners or group members. Leveled worksheets are developed for students with special needs and ELLs in their home language. Graphic organizers, sentence and paragraph stems, and discussion protocols are provided as well. Curriculum maps give evidence to thoughtful planning of assessments, rubrics, checklists, and scaffolds to ensure access to the curricula by all.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned and beginning to reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best. While some teachers use teaching strategies that engage students at all levels, some lessons neither incorporate rigorous tasks nor immerse all students in deep peer-to-peer discussions linked to complex texts.

Impact

As a result of the inconsistent engagement of students, there were missed opportunities to deepen learning by all students via challenging tasks and discussions that consistently demand higher-order thinking across all disciplines.

Supporting Evidence

- The administration and staff believe that all students learn best through the workshop model and through the instructional focus that is based on the following theory of action: “If teachers and staff engage students in rigorous units of study that promote questioning and discussion techniques, then students will have opportunities to engage... [in] tasks that allow them to challenge one another’s thinking, use accountable talk, and make citations of evidence to substantiate a claim or counter claim.” The pedagogy is becoming aligned to this instructional focus.
- Teachers in some classrooms engaged students in challenging tasks, such as reading texts to cite evidence to respond to assigned tasks, while others were provided multiple entry points to support completing the assignment. In an ELA class where students were engaged in reading *Romeo and Juliet*, the teacher reviewed vocabulary, two students read aloud the prologue, and then the teacher posed questions regarding Romeo’s and Juliet’s deaths. All students used a leveled text. In another ELA class, students were placed in data-determined groups whereby they had assigned roles, such as group leader and recorder, but a few students sat alone and were not regrouped. Students were to discuss and refer to evidence to find the main idea as a prelude to creating claims and counterclaims for a research paper. Sentence stems were part of the handout for all. In an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) social studies class, all students had the same material but were in multi-leveled groups so that students could support each other in completing the task.
- In a social studies class, students participating in a Socratic seminar were to use accountable talk stems, cite and analyze evidence from text, ask probing questions, and use “talking tokens” to support participation. Although students had used leveled texts to support their knowledge base and several students used accountable talks stems, only one student used evidence to support his claim, one student posed a question to her peers, and only 9 of 18 students spoke during the time of the visit. In a science class, groups used leveled texts for four lab stations. However, in only one group did the discussion reflect high levels of student thinking and engagement. At the closing, the teacher posed a question related to the learning objective. One student shared her answer and called on another student to add to her comments. Student-to-student discussion during the labs was uneven, even though two students were able to speak to the objective.

Additional Findings

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 do not consistently make effective adjustments to meet students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Although the staff and administration have determined that checking for understanding is a school-wide area of focus and have created student participation and discussion trackers, it is not consistently in place across grades and content areas. Although teachers track student discussion and participation, the use of this data to inform instruction in the moment was observed once in the classes visited. The teacher tracked students' responses while moving from group to group, called the whole class together, and asked them to explain the intention of their discussion and a possible outcome. Students responded that they would begin to write a research paper. This redirection grounded them in the purpose of the activity. The use of a thumbs-up assessment for understanding was evidenced in two other classes visited. However, not all students participated in this quick assessment, thus limiting the teacher's understanding of what further support may be needed.
- Although teachers create or tailor rubrics and checklists to meet their students' needs, actionable feedback is not always provided to students. The student work on bulletin boards demonstrated positive comments and rubric-based comments; conversely, student work in folders and notebooks ranged from a score or checkmark, to no mark or comment. Some feedback includes positive comments that are rooted in the rubric along with a goal. For example, comments were in evidence such as, "Good job, very clear. Next steps, vary your vocabulary, use words like 'later', 'next', 'afterwards', etc." Although the student also received a score, it is unclear what aspects of the task were "good or very clear." Some feedback clearly shows what was done well: "Good Job! You showed precise and thorough use of the mathematical concepts. Your goal is to practice writing a clearer and concise written response." However, the goal does not support the student with actionable steps to meet it. Similarly, some feedback states what is wrong but does not provide a next step or explain with clarity. The feedback to students is uneven and often unclear, thus limiting them from accelerating their performance.
- In an Algebra class, students were given a mock Regents exam. Students used a reflection form to reflect upon their scores and determine what they needed to do to pass the Regents exam in June. However, a follow-up assessment was not provided to see if they showed growth or to monitor what they still did not understand. Similarly, a few social studies teachers created a student progress portfolio chart to provide students their marking period grades and to determine students' goals and steps to improvement. Although some teachers provide students with reflection opportunities, the data is not demonstrating an increase in student achievement.

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 staff and administration communicate expectations to students and families and keep 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

- Parents stated that they are very pleased with the level of communication from the teachers and administration. In addition to weekly parent engagement contact via phone, email, or in-person meetings in both Spanish and English, staff also communicate with the home through an online grade book called *PupilPath*, a parent and student portal. Students stated that they check *PupilPath* once or twice a week “or when I’m not doing well or missing assignments.” Students feel they can always ask their teacher if they can redo assignments, especially in math. Parents and students shared that they often go online together and view *PupilPath*, thus allowing parents to further understand their children’s progress toward their goals.
- Parents and students shared the support they receive with the college selection process. Workshops, college fairs and tours, and the completion of the financial aid and school applications with the support of the guidance counselor and parent coordinator are the many supports that are provided the students. College preparedness is embedded in assignments such as writing college essays, giving class presentations, and studying economics and banking. Guidance counselors hold grade level town hall meetings to discuss being on track for graduation and focusing on Regents credits, college applications, and financial aid. Students noted college trips they attended in both New York and out of state. Parents spoke positively about the support they receive, especially the transition fair for students with special needs. Five more students applied to four-year colleges in 2015-2016 than last year, although fewer students applied overall. There were 78 students who applied to both 4- and 2-year colleges in 2014-2015, as compared to 55 students who applied to both 4- and 2-year colleges in 2015-2016. Four more students completed concurrent college classes and four more students enrolled in advanced placement classes this year as compared to 2014-2015.
- During the principal’s first staff meeting, she set the tone and expectations for the year. The delineation of school goals, current performance data, proposed action plans, and next steps were outlined for all staff. The principal sends weekly emails informing all staff as to the progress being made toward benchmarks, upcoming events, and highlights those members of the faculty for participation and collegial support. Post-observation conferences provide specific and actionable feedback to further focus on the implementation of the school-wide initiatives. Teachers create and present professional development to their peers, conduct intervisitations, and share best practices. A follow-up system includes frequent observations with actionable feedback and coaching from outside consultants to support staff working toward the school’s achievement goals.

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

Most staff are members of teacher teams and engage in structured professional collaborations during which they analyze assessment data and student work for students they share or on whom they are focused.

Impact

The use of an inquiry approach is developing across the teams. The outcome of the work at present has not typically resulted in improved teacher practice or progress toward goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- The majority of teachers meet in teams. Department meetings occur weekly and teachers analyze student work. In February, teachers and staff also selected a tenet working group to address the action plans from the New York State school review. The ninth and tenth grade teams meet for Writing is Thinking with Strategic Inquiry (WITsi) at least twice weekly and are currently implementing the third WITsi cycle. However, there is little evidence of inquiry being conducted in grades 11 and 12. The evidence that was provided for grades 11 and 12 indicated a focus on grade 11 for the mid-year English Language Arts Common Core Regents exam. However, there is no additional evidence provided to show that the agreed upon plan to reteach has improved student achievement after the first round of looking at student work.
- Teachers used the mock Regents data to determine a two-month scope and sequence for instruction. However, this scope and sequence varied in depth of planning. One included the reflections for students to annotate a problem, understand how to solve, and then plan to solve it. The ELA department’s plan included more detailed scope and sequence and lesson plans with graphic organizers, while others are less detailed and include an outline but no lessons. Further, there is no indication as to what has been taught or whether the inquiry team has determined if any increase in student achievement or progress toward goals has occurred.
- Teachers stated that the function of the WITsi team is to improve student writing across grades and classes. A WITsi teacher team realized that students were having a problem with capitalization. Teachers then created a mini-lesson and an anchor chart to reteach the grammar rules. However, staff did not demonstrate how re-teaching improved student achievement across the subjects on that grade. The data and anecdotal evidence provided does not demonstrate the intended positive impact across grades and classes.
- Some teachers spoke about how working in teacher teams has improved their instructional practice. Teachers share best practices and planning. One teacher explained, “I am new to the Department of Education and to high school, so getting feedback from the team has helped me to take the *EngageNY* lesson plans and adjust it to meet the needs of my students.”