Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The Belmont School
Elementary School X032
690 East 183rd Street
Bronx
New York 10458
Principal: Adalia Rosamilia

Date of review: December 12, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Marjory Matthieu-Kodjovi
The Belmont School is an elementary school with 836 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 24% Black, 72% Hispanic, 2% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 16% English language learners and 18% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 92.0%.

School Quality Criteria

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<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.1</strong> 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</td>
<td>Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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<td><strong>1.2</strong> Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products</td>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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<td><strong>2.2</strong> 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</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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<th>School Culture</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<tbody>
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<td><strong>3.4</strong> Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Systems for Improvement</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td><strong>4.2</strong> Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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Area of Celebration

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings
Across the majority of the classrooms rigorous habits and higher-order skills are emphasized in curricula and academic tasks and are embedded in a coherent way across grades and subjects. The school continuously refines curricula and academic tasks using student work and data.

Impact
Individual students and groups of students, including the lowest- and highest-achieving students, English language learners (ELLs), and students with disabilities, are engaged cognitively and all learners demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence
- In teacher team meetings, teachers spoke to the curriculum and academic tasks with a focus on elaboration and interpretation of textual evidence to support writing. During the grade 5 meeting, teachers made revision to their media unit based on students’ writing samples that showed how students elaborate from textual evidence by providing their interpretation of the evidence. Teachers used guiding questions such as “How can we have students interpreting and citing text with higher complexity? What skills are required to meet our students’ needs? In what setting would these strategies work most effectively?” Teachers spoke to differentiation opportunities in content, process and product. Teacher teams meet weekly to review student work using predetermined criteria and norming protocols, discuss class strengths and next steps including teaching strategies that were successful or not successful, and then revise the curriculum.

- Teachers, coaches, assistant principals and the principal spoke of whole-school unified structures around essential questions, Benchmark Assessment Tasks (BATs) and Cumulative Assessment Tasks (CATs) and how they made adjustments and revised the curriculum with mini-units based on last year’s results. Teachers and administration spoke to how integrating the Common Core has allowed them to be more reflective and how it has caused them to have deeper thoughts around how unit lessons and skills build upon one another to create more rigorous tasks. For example, the grade 3 team made revisions to their Peter Pan unit because, “The essential question did not lead to deep, higher-order discussion.” Changes were also made in benchmark assessments. In the culminating assessment task, two BATs were added in opinion writing about a character and their actions as a result of the more rigorous unit tasks. In another classroom visit, students used differentiated texts to share their ideas, reflections, and writing to support their opinions on modern video game covers.

- In one class, several groups of students were using visuals-group charts and individual graphic organizers to answer questions around the word “perseverance”. Students were required to engage in discussions, ask questions, build on each other’s comments, explain how the picture represented the word “perseverance” and, with their groups or partners, students had to defend their responses and provide evidence to support their comments.
Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 1.2 Pedagogy | Rating: | Well Developed |

Findings
Across the vast majority of classrooms, student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking, participation, and ownership and it was evident that teachers strategically provide multiple entry points, high-quality supports and extensions into the curricula. However, the school-wide goal is to have evidence of this same work across every single classroom.

Impact
All learners, including ELLs, bilingual students and students with disabilities, are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in student work products, but not every single classroom exhibits this, leading to some missed opportunities for students being pushed to their highest potential.

Supporting Evidence
- In a kindergarten classroom, students were engaged in a writing activity using a combination of drawing and dictating to compose a text in which they named the features of their faces. In small groups, students talked about what they look like and how they can use color words to supply details about what they look like. Two students explained how they were using a list and adding details to their writing to teach themselves and others about what details they can add to describe what they look like. In the whole group discussion, another student discussed what she learned about her partner and wondered if what she looked like really matters.

- In a 1st grade, self-contained math class, students worked in small groups based on strengths, next steps, learning styles and interests, as evidenced in the teacher’s conference folder. Teachers used scaffolds where appropriate and consistently provided multiple entry points so that students were engaged and appropriately challenged as they used their previous knowledge about the relationship between addition and subtraction to create equivalent known sums.

- In another math class, students worked collaboratively in small groups to plan their lunch using different menus based on each group’s strengths and needs. In one group a student explained his menu pick with his partner, put their orders together and figured out the total. In another group students were figuring out how to split the bill and were using colored markers to show individual students’ contributions to solving the problem. In different groups, students applied their knowledge of adding, multiplying, subtracting and dividing decimals to real scenarios. Student discussions reflected high level of student participation and thinking as students described the processes they took to solve the problems using key words associated with each operation.

- Across all classrooms, students were able to speak to discussion tools they were using and how they applied to their thinking and learning. In one class, a student explained the “How Am I Doing?” chart by explaining, “green means they understand, orange means they kind of get it and blue means they need help.” The student also explained that once students identify where they fall they must write an explanation detailing the steps they took to solve the problem and why they chose those steps. While there was evidence of students and teachers engaging in high order questioning and discussions, in some classes teachers were still developing their skills to elicit this thinking from all students.
**Additional Findings**

**Quality Indicator:** 2.2 Assessment  
**Rating:** Well Developed

**Findings**
Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use and create assessments, students participate in creating rubrics, and teachers use grading policies that are aligned with the school’s curricula and offer a clear portrait of student mastery. Teachers’ assessment practices consistently reflect the varied use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

**Impact**
Actionable and meaningful feedback are provided to students and teachers regarding student achievement so that teachers make effective adjustments to meet all students’ learning needs and students are aware of their next learning steps.

**Supporting Evidence**
- Teachers maintain assessment binders which track baseline, midline, and end line data across content areas. Teachers use data to inform instruction and adjust curricular plans and make instructional decisions. For example, teachers used data from a culminating assessment task in the life lesson unit and as their next step developed students’ ability to elaborate in their use of textual evidence by providing other students’ interpretation of the evidence as models.

- Teachers use teacher-created assessments and rubrics including “How Am I Doing?” charts, self-reflections, student conferencing, and grading policies to provide students with a clear portrait of their mastery and next steps. For example, during a writing conferencing session, the teacher grouped students based on strength and next steps. The teacher added skills to individual feedback sheets based on student needs, and students were asked to use the tools and resources provided based on interests and needs.

- Actionable and meaningful feedback using various tools was evident in all classrooms. During the student meeting, students were able to speak to feedback regarding their achievement. Several students explained that teachers used various methods for recording conference notes including clipboards, binders, computers, etc. They further explained that at the end of each conference, each student is left with a list of skills or strategies to focus on. Two other students explained that feedback is given through checklists, rubrics, post-its and reflections, and that most of the time feedback becomes their short-term goal or learning target.

- In all meetings, teachers, students, assistant principals and the principal concur that feedback is given via teacher-to-student, student-to-student, self-reflection and self-assessment and this was evident in all classrooms.
Findings
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations and provide training around professionalism and instruction in alignment with the Danielson Framework to the entire staff and parents. School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations for all students related to college and career readiness in partnerships with families.

Impact
The clear communication around the school’s high expectations results in a culture of mutual accountability for those expectations, ensuring that students, including high-need subgroups, own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence
- School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to teachers regarding teaching and learning through professional learning plans, demonstration lessons, teacher-initiated inter-visitations, modeling and by providing one-on-one support to new teachers. Teacher leaders facilitate and rotate the process and hold each other accountable for their growth by, for example, deepening the work of the response to intervention team by creating shared team goals, objectives, policies, procedures to support their practice and student progress, as was evident during teacher team meetings and in conversations with the staff.

- During the parent meeting, parents shared how teachers and the principal provided guidance regarding their children’s academic, social and emotional progress while communicating, celebrating and providing opportunities for parents and students to learn. For example, a parent of a student with autism shared how the school as a whole provided support, communicated a set of high expectations that did not differ from those communicated to the rest of the students. They explained how they as parents were involved in their child’s academic life and how they were invited to be thought of as partners in understanding and providing support and strategies so that their student could progress both emotionally and academically.

- Parents and teachers explained that each grade level team uses a number of outreach and communication forums including providing parents with a bi-monthly parent newsletter that is completed by classroom teachers. This newsletter provides supports for parents and highlights class and grade events and celebrations. Families also spoke to how the school provides workshops to help them familiarize themselves with the structure and content of GO Math!, reading strategies and supports, assessments and goal setting.
Findings
The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations. Teacher teams systematically analyze key elements of teacher work including classroom practice assessment data and student work.

Impact
Inquiry work has led to increased student achievement for all learners, effective teacher leadership, shared improvements in teacher practice and mastery of goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence
- School-wide instructional coherence and increased student achievement for all learners were evident in teachers who share that they engage in self-initiated as well as leadership-recommended professional learning. For example, all teachers are focusing on looking at student work (LASW), baseline data analysis, planning for instructions, unit and lesson plan revisions, development of grade-level teacher and student goals, unit process and product, “norming” LASW protocols by using rubrics and exemplars, highlighting strengths and next steps, revising current and future units of study and supporting each other through the process.

- Coaches support the work of the grade, teacher teams support their members, and teacher mentors support one another as evident in the classrooms as well as in meetings. Instructionally, coaches and teachers look at what tasks and activities look and sound like in the classroom in order to identify depth and rigor in the execution of lessons and tasks they are engaging students in.

- Teachers and the administration are systematically involved in conversations around teaching and learning, looking at student work, developing an understanding of quality instruction and the use of research-based practices. One such conversation has led the school to focus on units of study, specifically ELA units, guided reading and strategy groups, and daily monitoring of student understanding through ongoing checking for understanding.

- Professional learning communities, common planning, calendar days, learning walks, lab-sites, inter-visitations, professional learning Mondays and Tuesdays, study groups, new teacher meetings, enhancement teacher meetings and differentiated professional learning are all in place to analyze key elements of teacher work including classroom practice and student work for students they share or are focused on.