Quality Review Report

2015-2016

Bushwick Community High School
High School 32K564
231 Palmetto Street
Brooklyn
NY 11221

Principal: Llermi Gonzalez
Date of review: March 18, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Gary Knight
The School Context

Bushwick Community is a high school with 253 students from grade 10 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 0% Asian, 32% Black, 65% Hispanic, and 2% White students. The student body includes 2% English Language Learners and 18% students with disabilities. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 65.7%.

School Quality Criteria

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<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<td>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 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>Proficient</td>
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<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<th>School Culture</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Celebration</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<th>Systems for Improvement</th>
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<td>4.2 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>Proficient</td>
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Area of Celebration

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings
The school leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff. School leaders and staff establish a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations for all students.

Impact
The leaders provide training and have a system of accountability for those expectations. School leaders and staff offer ongoing and detailed feedback and guidance supports that prepare students for the next level.

Supporting Evidence
- The principal expects that all teachers be present and prepared with well-planned lessons that engage students in appropriately challenging tasks and activities. These expectations are communicated in a myriad of ways. For example, all staff members received a memo titled 2015-2016 Instructional Expectations which addresses student engagement, rigorous instruction and lesson planning that is aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. A staff handbook is also used as a means of reinforcing the message as it relates to student engagement and staff responsibilities, specifically highlighting the effective use of teaching planning time and the infusion of Bloom’s Taxonomy in the planning process.

- Professional development workshops are conducted to support the implementation of the expectations set by the principal. Based on professional development topics, the principal follows up with classroom visitations to ensure implementation of desired practice. Teachers receive two cycles of non-evaluative observations and feedback in addition to formal observations.

- The school leaders and staff set the tone with students regarding expectations at the onset. A new student orientation is conducted providing an introduction to the school and allowing students to begin setting goals for themselves with a culminating homework assignment that requires them to answer questions about their short and long term goals. All students are provided a student handbook that details the school’s mission and vision along with an academic overview, graduation checklist, and a student compact that they are expected to sign.

- The school offers a course titled, “Future Focus,” which provides an in-depth study of techniques used in career planning process, including conducting research, delivering presentations, networking and conducting interviews. In addition the school offers SAT preparation courses and exposes students to the college matriculation process through the College Confident Program in conjunction with the school’s guidance department, which also conducts college preparation meetings and workshops. The meetings address college preparation expectations, SAT preparation and bi-weekly check-ins. The guidance team tracks students’ progress towards graduation and steps taken in the college application process.
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. Across classrooms, teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact
Teaching practices are informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts. All students are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher order thinking skills in student work products.

Supporting Evidence
- Teachers' lessons reflect the belief that students learn best through engagement and incorporate various student tasks such as citing specific textual evidence, analyzing primary and secondary sources, integrating information from diverse sources into a coherent understanding of an idea, and annotating a poem for the use of literal, figurative, and thematic devices. For example, in a social studies lesson observed, students were debating whether Reconstruction was a success or failure based on the text, were having to support their claim with evidence. One student stated it was a success because during that time period, former slaves were allowed to go to school. Another student commented that progress was made, but it was not to be considered successful because blacks were still being treated unfairly.

- Teaching practices included but were not limited to, the use of grouping by ability, graphic organizers, infusion of technology, differentiated text, think pair and share, and manipulatives. In a global studies class, students were learning about the Magna Carta and/or the Bill of Rights. There were multiple versions of each document to reflect the varying learning styles and abilities. For example, there were three different Bill of Rights documents that varied in length and level of difficulty. Similarly, four versions of the Magna Carta documents varied in structure and level of difficulty.

- Lessons incorporated some higher order thinking tasks and questions such as that evidenced in global studies where students were asked to respond with evidence as to whether or not the creation of the Bill of Rights and the English Magna Carta limited the power of absolute rulers. In an Advanced Placement literature class, students were asked to determine, through text and images, how authors want to affect the reader with their work. Although there was evidence of higher order questioning, there were missed opportunities for students to apply critical thinking through questioning practices. In a literacy class, a student was asked to make connections to three books read. A student responded, “They were all going through struggles.” No additional follow up questions were presented to delve into a deeper response. In a math lesson, most questions observed reflected low level thinking, basically asking students to recall information. For example, “In rounding, what digit do I have to look at?” And, “If the digit after decimal point is more than 5 what happens to the place?” The teacher then gave the answer regarding what happens if the digit is 4 or less.
Findings
School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher order skills.

Impact
The school’s curricula promote college and career readiness and higher order skills for all students.

Supporting Evidence
- The principal and staff created curricula to reflect the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. The school partnered with Teaching Matters, Inc. to support the development of curricula refinement with staff. Professional development sessions were conducted with both the English and math departments. Literacy curricula documents examined included drawing evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research and integrating multiple sources of information presented in diverse media formats.

- The school has developed two school wide curricula templates that focus on higher order thinking while also supporting the planning for students with disabilities, by creating an IEP summary sheet, and English Language Learners by intentionally including modifications and methods of differentiating instruction. For example, an English curriculum document on Thoreau and technology focuses on Domain 3b of the Danielson Framework for Teaching with an emphasis on analysis and evaluation such as, “What do you think about the author's ideas about TV and video games? Do you agree?” and “What is he saying about Twitter and Google?” Modifications noted for diverse learners included strategies such as grouping by ability, use of graphic organizers, the infusion of technology, differentiated texts and extended time.

- The review of curricula documents on flash debates addressed the alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards and the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Examples of skills required include finding evidence from multiple sources, using evidence to support text, logical reasoning and argumentation, and using discourse to rehearse writing.

- Curricula maps include the integration of essential questioning in all subject and grades. In a math document, essential questions include “How can formulas learned during this unit be used to construct a city?” and “How do we use linear equations to model real-life situations?” And curricula plans for history include questions such as, “How can a policy intended to have a positive outcome turn out negative?” In Living Environment, a question in one plan asked “Where do you stand on the human population growth issue?”
**Quality Indicator:** 2.2 Assessment  
**Rating:** Proficient

**Findings**
Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school’s curricula. The school uses common assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subjects.

**Impact**
Teachers provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. The results from common assessments are used to adjust curricula and instruction.

**Supporting Evidence**
- Teachers use curricula-aligned baseline assessments in English and math for incoming students. The results of the baselines are used to inform students’ placement into the appropriate class based on their level. Baseline assessments are also used in science and social studies. The school also administers mock Regents, end-of-unit and writing assessments.

- Rubrics are used school wide in all classes and subjects. Examples provided included a science writing rubric and a scoring rubric for essay writing which assesses skills in the following areas: theme statement, argument and organization, knowledge of text, literary elements, author’s purpose, text comparison, and use of evidence, use of quotes and drafting and proofing. During a meeting with students, all students were able to articulate their familiarity with the rubric and indicated that they receive feedback regarding what can be done to improve their work. An example of feedback provided on student work stated, “Great start to your writing, but you must discuss a lot more details from the reading. We will work on summarizing and paraphrasing.”

- An analysis of an English baseline assessment revealed only 5 out of 24 multiple-choice questions were answered correctly by more than 50% of students and that questions students missed most often required them to determine figurative or thematic significance of a particular quote. Teachers also identified that several questions required students to explain what a particular literary device contributed to the text on a structural level. As a result, teachers determined next instructional moves would include having students annotate portions of the text referred to specifically in multiple-choice questions in order to focus attention on essential passages. Students will be asked to underline passages that contribute essentially to the writing piece and self-check after answering multiple-choice questions by underlining a specific phrase from the text that justifies their response. Students were also grouped based on areas of struggle based on data such as introducing counter-arguments and justifying relationships between their claims, supporting arguments and, using textual evidence.
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. Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students they share or on whom they are focused.

Impact
Professional collaborations strengthen the instructional capacity of teachers, typically resulting in improved teacher practice and progress toward goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence
- The school has various team structures including a professional development team, which conducts sessions on topics such as rigor and critical thinking, common planning, cultural, writing committee, math and English. All teams are tied to the school’s mission and vision of providing a rigorous academic program.

- The teachers from the English department were observed engaged in a structured, inquiry-based collaboration as they reviewed an argumentative writing piece. The topic was selected based on the fact that writing is a major area of focus and a skill in need of improvement. Teachers focused on three students, an above average performer, an English Language Learner, and a student performing below average. The teachers shared what they identified as strengths in students’ work such as presenting a clear claim, explanation of topic and an introduction of the author. Areas of growth included: word choice, paraphrasing and presenting evidence from only two texts and not the three required by the task. Some next steps decided upon included summarizing in their own words and having students rewrite sentences using a sentence isolation strategy. Teachers will then have students focus on individual sentences.

- Teachers shared that the teacher team structures have allowed for best practices and strategies to be shared. They value each other’s input and are able to constructively critique and give feedback. The process has allowed them to improve as teachers by being better informed of their students’ performance and being able to effectively intervene, based on strategies shared during meetings. As a result, student writing has improved. Students who were struggling to form a cohesive paragraph are now able to do so. Teachers articulated that the information that derives from their meetings is shared with other departments resulting in the infusion of strategies discussed to be applied school wide.