Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Bronx Early College Academy for Teaching & Learning

Secondary School 09X324

250 East 164th St.
Bronx
NY 10456

Principal: Yvette Rivera

Dates of Review:
May 11, 2017 - May 12, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Buffie Whitfield
## The Quality Review Report

The Quality Review is a two-day school visit by an experienced educator. During the review, the reviewer visits classrooms, talks with parents, students, teachers, and school leaders and uses a rubric to evaluate how well the school is organized to support student achievement.

The Quality Review Report provides a rating for all ten indicators of the Quality Review Rubric in three categories: Instructional Core, School Culture, and Systems for Improvement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Celebration** to highlight an area in which the school does well to support student learning and achievement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Focus** to highlight an area the school should work on to support student learning and achievement. The remaining indicators are identified as **Additional Finding**. This report presents written findings, impact, and site-specific supporting evidence for six indicators.

## Information about the School


## School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<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 Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<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 Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<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 Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Evaluate the quality of school-level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator: 1.4 Positive Learning Environment  
Rating: Well Developed

Findings

The school maintains a culture informed by the 10 attributes of International Baccalaureate (IB) World Schools that exemplifies building of relationships, fosters mutual respect, and establishes a peaceful and productive learning environment that contributes to the academic and personal growth of students and staff.

Impact

The school meaningfully involves student voice in decision-making to initiate, guide, and lead school improvement efforts. Guidance supports impact students’ academic and personal behaviors.

Supporting Evidence

- The school’s theory of action embraces the IB learner profile as the vehicle to drive its fundamental belief that students must have social-emotional assistance in place to achieve high academic standards. All students are guided to live by the 10 attributes valued by IB World Schools that include being open-minded, caring, a risk taker, respectful, and reflective, to name a few. The school places great emphasis on respecting the individuality of and ensuring that every student has a meaningful relationship with at least one adult. To wit, several structures contribute to knowing students well and fostering such trusting relationships. Students, teachers, and parents, speak about the school's "friendly, safe, and joyful" environment. Students who have been in the school since the sixth grade and are currently in the high school as juniors and seniors say that teachers are very caring and really get to know them well, and teachers are supportive and expect students to reach academic goals.

- The small learning community provides a structure for teachers to share responsibility for the same students, and through frequent collegial collaborations a better understanding of their students and the ability to act in concert to address their particular learning needs. Teachers assume responsibility for monitoring and celebrating student behavior, outreaching to families on behalf of students in their designated classes, and working with grade-level teams comprised of a guidance counselor and a dean to provide coherent delivery of support. Proactive counselors, pupil personnel, and attendance teams communicate within weekly meetings tackling both individual student and school wide concerns. During the interview, students excitedly stated that Bronx Early College Academy (BECA) cares about us. One student stated, “They know about us more than we know about ourselves sometimes and always present to help us.”

- Classroom teachers implement a guided discipline system emphasizing student cooperation, self-management, responsible decision-making, and disciplined work habits. Student council representatives and on-going adult-student communication provide opportunities for students to express their thinking. Students and staff created the student council constitution and bylaws. Furthermore, as a result of students sharing their interests, teachers collaborated with students and created December Intensive courses that span eight days and include students from different grades. The courses include science, technology, business, travel, the arts, food and culture, wellness, and sports and fitness. Students reviewed and reflected on their work. Students use these reflections as a foundation for the script to present their published project to the school community. During the student meeting, students reported the impact on their willingness to participate in class, openness to communicate with peers and improvement in their classes. Students stated that they were able to try something they never tried before. Students raved during the interview, “The Intensive courses were amazing. I learned so much and it was fun.”
Findings
Teacher practice across classrooms reflects unity around school beliefs regarding how students learn best and that is informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching. In addition, the principal has developed structures to strengthen instructional practices by implementing scaffolds and the use of questioning techniques. However, the implementation of practices varies across the classrooms.

Impact
Although instructional practices reflect a common set of beliefs and teachers provide multiple supports to engage all learners, they are not always strategically planned. Thus, some students do not have the benefit of high quality supports and extensions so that they have access to challenging and rigorous tasks and are fully engaged.

Supporting Evidence
• Across a number of classrooms observed, lessons followed the workshop model, providing students with a structured Daily Routine for Unfolding Instruction (DRUI), a mini-lesson, and guided, independent, and/or group practice. Though lessons were aligned with the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts, instructional practices varied in classrooms visited. In a math class, students justified their reasoning to math problems. For example, the teacher posed to the class, “If you double the radius of a circle, what will happen to the circumference.” Students shared their opinions and used examples to justified their claims. However, in a geometry class, students divided segments in ratios. While students used Writing to Learn to explain how to convert ratios into fractions, some students were unable to thoroughly substantiate their answers.

• Across classrooms, teachers provided multiple entry points for all learners, including English Language Learners, (ELLs), and students with disabilities. For example in a science class, the teacher scaffolded questions to support student understanding and learning, including questions such as “What is an example of abiotic and biotic factors?”, and “Which factors are most important in an eco-system?” The teacher then provided the different groups with various species where students worked collectively on determining abiotic or biotic factors of the species. In a statistics class, the teacher attempted to unpack the lesson with a series of questions, but the students did not have a point of reference to make conclusions, only generalities. The teacher asked, “What has been happening in the news? What do you think was the cause? Can someone tell me who is in power at that time?” However, to extend thinking beyond tasks, students were not provided with additional extensions to support them in making deeper connections between the concepts and real world application.

• In the social studies classes observed, students employed critical thinking skills as a habit of mind considering different viewpoints using evidence from text and making connections. In the global history class observed, students read and annotated text to develop an argument for or against the Paris Climate Agreement. Students were given opportunities to demonstrate their thinking by deciding, “Do you agree with the current claim that you have been assigned? What more would need to know in order to support your claim?” However, there were missed opportunities for students to engage in deep discussions with peers. For example in a United States history class, students were engaged in a teacher-led discussion about Vietnam that reinforced skills taught in a mini-lesson, and prepared students for the Regents. As students shared out, they interpreted quotes from the text and offered their opinions. Students needed assistance inferring why some policies were not sustained.
Findings
Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics and common assessments to determine student progress and provide actionable feedback to students.

Impact
Teachers use assessment results and rubrics to adjust curricula, student groupings, and provide feedback so students know their next steps.

Supporting Evidence

- A schoolwide grading policy ensures common rubrics in writing for all subject areas. When questioned about the grading policy, students were able to articulate their use of rubrics and the difference between being a level one versus a level four performer. Furthermore, monitoring of student performance is consistent across the school as students receive progress reports that indicate their growth from assessment to assessment. During the interview, a student shared that the feedback given about his writing, projects, and classwork has helped him to improve. Another student spoke of a teacher who gave her feedback about the content of her writing. She shared that the feedback relating to grammar kept her motivated to write and she believes the feedback has helped her in all subjects. Student work across the school also reflects teachers’ written comments based on rubric elements.

- School leaders and staff use common assessments in ELA and math to determine student progress. Teachers across all grades administer pre- and post-writing performance tasks, unit tests, iReady assessments, periodic and benchmark assessments, quizzes, and Measure of Student Learning examinations. Middle school data in writing improved on the iReady assessment between the fall baseline and February mid-year assessment. Grade six had an 18 percent increase and grade seven had a 15 percent increase on the writing assessment. The analysis of this data is used to make instructional adjustments in teaching points at the classroom and grade levels as well as the purposeful grouping of students.

- Teachers support students in the classroom based on assessment results, and adjust curriculum and lesson plans. For example, an analysis of a writing assessment revealed that students were not showing progress in writing short responses. This data led to a focus on regrouping of tier one, two, and three students, to identify individuals in need of academic intervention services to help them master skills through small group teaching. Teachers who work with the small groups of students also meet with teacher teams from the various disciplines so that the members can adjust and revise their lessons and curriculum maps to meet all levels of student needs.
### Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well-Developed</th>
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**Findings**

The school leader communicates high expectations to the entire staff including teachers, students, and parents and she has created a culture of mutual accountability for meeting these expectations. There is an expectation of instruction and communication to parents to support their children's progress related to college and career.

**Impact**

The culture of collaboration among staff, students, and families fosters high expectations and supports an effective partnership for all with a clear path towards college and career readiness for all students.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School leaders communicate expectations for instruction through memoranda, newsletters, and professional development. A review of memorandum shows that instructional expectations include the use of high-order questions and developing engaging tasks that promote high levels of student participation and discussion. Support by administration to implement these expectations comes through a consistent cycle of observation and timely feedback. In addition, school leaders monitor teacher practices, assuming mutual accountability to support staff to meet pedagogical expectations by providing needed supports. During a meeting, teachers stated that while school leaders have always communicated high expectations through written and oral feedback, the most effective method of communication has been the inquiry team structure where a group of teachers are provided opportunities to track and support students as a team. Teachers stated that as a result of this structure, they feel more directly responsible to each other. This has resulted in a culture of mutual accountability where teachers have volunteered to model for each other and help each other plan activities to ensure student progress.

- Parents participate in home-school partnership activities such as family fitness and healthy habits events, as well as content specific workshops that offer resources and tips for helping their children. A math workshop informed families an online platform with resources linked to performance tasks. An English as a New Language (ENL) workshop offered an overview of resources and expectations for families of English Language Learners (ELLs), and a workshop for families of twelve-grade students supported families in completing their children's application to college. The school's numerous activities for parents keep stakeholders informed and support families in ensuring that their children have the appropriate tools to succeed in college and careers. The newsletters, family nights, scholarship, and financial aid workshops for parents, help parents help their children to prepare for the expectations of the world beyond graduation. As a result, parents and students have been exposed to a variety of colleges and post-graduation opportunities and internships and feel supported in making sound decisions.

- Some families serve as advocates for school services, in partnerships with staff, which resulted in parents and students attending workshops together. Parents stated that the school has done an excellent job of supporting those students transitioning into the country as a newly arriving student, but also in helping all students understand and access the supports that are available so they can own their education and succeed in college. Students spoke specifically of the mentoring as helping to support them towards graduating from high school and understanding what is expected of them in college. Specifically, on the 2015-2016 School Survey, 94 percent of parents stated that BECA helps keep their children on track for college, career, and success in life after high school and 92 percent of parents stated that BECA provides resources to them and their child to prepare their child for college, career, and success in life after high school.
Findings

The principal has established a distributive leadership structure that ensures the vast majority of staff engages in ongoing grade level and content area inquiry-based teacher professional collaborations.

Impact

The embedded collaborative structure empowers teachers, promotes schoolwide instructional coherence aligned with the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts, and supports students’ progress towards learning goals.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers meet regularly in grade and content specific teams and use collaboratively developed protocols to analyze curricula and student work, engage in shared reflection, and develop action plans to address the next steps. For example, during the observed teacher team meeting the facilitator distributed the agenda, explained the protocol, and asked colleagues if they needed clarification. Teachers discussed specific noticing about student work and supports for students. Teachers decided that more work was needed when writing counter claims. Each content specialist teacher shared how he or she would implement a strategy to support student understanding of counter claims.

- The principal firmly believes that teachers need to collaborate and therefore teachers’ schedules provide an opportunity for them to meet in grade teams and use the time to focus on the schoolwide goal of student engagement and improving achievement. Teachers, based on a combination of data, identify students who are pushables and slippables to provide them with targeted math instruction in key standards in small group settings. Subsequently, teachers of the small groups meet with the grade and discipline teams to inform them of the student’s needs and progress. A review of team minutes for English and math reflects meetings that focus on student-centered tasks. As a result of the focus on supporting targeted students, there has been an increase in their credit accumulation.

- A distributive leadership structure is embedded as part of the school culture and high expectations. BECA has five teacher leaders, two Peer Collaborative Teacher Leaders and three Model Teachers. These teachers serve as mentors, plan and lead professional development, lead grade and discipline teams, set up intervisitation schedules, host model lesson classrooms, and engage in a variety of other items as needed. Furthermore, teacher leaders assume a leadership role in supporting colleagues in instructional decisions that impact curriculum development. Teacher leaders meet with the principal during scheduled meetings to discuss instructional observations, suggest professional development and next steps for teachers. Teachers affirmed that they have a voice in instructional decisions and serve as facilitators during meetings to assist in the process of providing feedback to their colleagues around lesson planning.
Findings
School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, strategically integrate the instructional shifts, and emphasize rigorous habits in curricula and tasks in a coherent way across subjects.

Impact
All students, including English Language Learners (ELLs), students with disabilities, and higher achieving learners, are consistently exposed to higher level tasks across grades and content areas, and are required to demonstrate their thinking leading to college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- BECA is a member of the International Baccalaureate World School and utilizes curricula that comprises the Diploma Programme core and six subject groups. This includes studies in language and literature, language acquisition, individuals and societies, sciences, math and the arts. All departments have clearly defined criteria for what students need to know and identify, and they imbed specific college and career readiness skills connected to reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language, as well as connections to real world applications coherently across all content areas and grade curricula documents. Teachers are using Writing to Learn as their chosen instructional shift this year, designed to strengthen student writing ability and stamina. Upon review common Writing to Learn strategies are visible across all curricula documents and teachers have embedded stop and jots, free writes, and formal reflections.

- The school’s curricula include higher order thinking skills and instructional shifts across grades and subjects. All students complete research papers in all classes. For example, a task assigned in an English class required students to submit a research paper using a minimum of six sources. Students were to defend a position and formulate an argument drawing upon the arguments of the authors and support their own point of view. English unit plans include close reading, text-based writing, questioning, and discussion. The module also includes performance-based and summative assessments, a culminating performance-based assessment, a student checklist, as well as scaffolds, adjustments, extensions, and resources for vocabulary, text-dependent questions, and literature circles.

- The school has also created a lesson plan template, used by the vast majority of teachers that asks them to identify targeted Common Core Learning Standards, content and language objectives, key vocabulary, and connections to real world applications. Lesson plans across all content areas revealed that in-class tasks consistently emphasize higher order thinking skills such as developing claims and citing evidence, developing logical arguments, analyzing information from multiple sources, and applying concepts in real world situations. For example, in a geometry lesson plan, students were required to develop logical arguments and prove relationships between angles and arcs. In an ecology and biome unit plan, students were required to use evidence from various sources to develop their claim, and determine if climate change is reversible. These higher order skills have resulted in students’ academic skills being strengthened as students entering BECA with ELA and math scores below or approaching standards have exhibited growth from grade six to grade twelve. Specifically, data from the school’s Quality Guide revealed that the four-year graduation rate, four-year College Readiness index, and the six-year College Readiness Index with persistence have all surpassed the city for the last four years.