Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Bronx Leadership Academy High School

High school 09X525

1710 Webster Ave.
Bronx
NY 10457

Principal: Ivan Yip

Dates of Review:
April 24, 2017 - April 25, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Edward Hazen
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

Bronx Leadership Academy High School serves students in grade 9 through grade 12. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm.

School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</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>Area of Celebration</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>Developing</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

**To what extent does the school...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<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>Additional Finding</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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Systems for Improvement

**To what extent does the school...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<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>
</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>
</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>
</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>
</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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Findings

Curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and content standards strategically integrating the instructional shifts. Rigorous habits and skills are emphasized in curricula and academic tasks.

### Impact

There is curricular coherence across grades and subject areas that promotes college readiness. Students must demonstrate rigorous habits and thinking in academic tasks.

### Supporting Evidence

- In-depth thinking and rigorous habits are promoted across grade levels and disciplines for all students through the implementation of schoolwide practices that are embedded into the curricula and meet the rigors of the Common Core Learning Standards such as using a writing strategy that requires students to identify the main idea of a text, collect sufficient textual evidence to support their claim, assess the level of analysis they have done on their supporting evidence, and identify the link they can make to something else such as another text or concept (MEAL). Furthermore, to build coherence across grade levels and departments, teachers have identified common strategies and protocols in their curriculum maps and lesson plans such as the They Say-I Say and vocabulary, idea, and purpose (VIP) annotation methodologies and accountable talk stems to promote high levels of student discourse and build coherence across content areas.

- School leaders have strategically added high interest electives into the curricula such as a dance course, computer literacy, and a public speaking course that emphasizes both key Common Core literacy standards as well as key discussion, debate, and presentation skills that are high leverage skills students need to acquire to become college and career ready. Similarly, school leaders have added additional Advance Placement courses and partnered with higher education institutions to provide senior level students access to college credit bearing courses from Monroe College and Berkeley College.

- To ensure that students acquire the key skills embedded in the instructional shifts of the Common Core that are needed to be adequately prepared for college and career, the school has partnered with Skidmore College, Syracuse University, New York University (NYU), and Yale University to provide summer pre-college institutes. School leaders are targeting a program that will emphasize skills such as close reading of texts and concise annotation for juniors. Similarly, school leader have added a Summer Bridge program for incoming ninth graders to assist students with their transition to the high school. The algebra course was revised to become a two-year course of study to provide incoming students with additional academic support so they can meet the demands of the Common Core math standards. Additionally, the science curriculum was revised to provide anatomy and physiology courses for all ninth graders as a prerequisite for the living environment in the tenth grade to adequately prepare students for the Regents exam.
Findings

Teaching strategies, including scaffolds such as graphic organizers and manipulatives, inconsistently serve as entry points for all learners to engage in performance tasks. The level of student participation and thinking is uneven across classrooms.

Impact

Teaching practices lead to missed opportunities for all students to fully engage in high levels of thinking and discussion as they develop work products across all disciplines.

Supporting Evidence

- Across departments and grade levels, teachers inconsistently provided multiple entry points into the lesson or differentiated the materials or task so that all students were engaged in the lesson at a high level. In an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) geometry class, students were required to work collaboratively to determine the measure of interior angles and identify any patterns they may notice. English Language Learners (ELLs) were provided with the option of using worksheets that were translated to Spanish; however, all other students received the same materials and no other scaffolds or manipulatives were provided. Many students were confused with the activity and struggled to determine the angle of the objects without the use of a protractor. Since there were no guidelines or explicit expectations for the group work, several students did not interact with each other. Other students finished early and began talking with one another because they were not assigned an extension activity.

- In some classrooms, teachers provided students opportunities to engage in high levels of discussion, requiring strategic thinking and reasoning. In a tenth grade English Language Arts (ELA) class, students had to cite textual evidence to analyze literary devices within a text and make a connection to their own life. The teacher modeled how to perform the task by using a think aloud strategy and reflecting on how her life story was similar to the character in the book because of her decision to become a teacher. After working in groups to annotate literary devices, each student shared one literary element from the text to which they could make a personal connection. However, this level of engagement and understanding was not prevalent across other classrooms. In an economics class, students were required to work with a peer to provide feedback on an essay they had written. Some of the pairs did not have a rubric to which to align their feedback and wrote statements such as, “more evidence.” Some pairs were observed discussing topics unrelated to the task.

- In a co-taught Global Studies class, students were required to discuss the impact the Treaty of Versailles had on Europe. Students were directed to collaborate with their group to review the text and map to create a list of impact statements and prepare to share their findings with the class. Several students did not write anything and some students did not interact with their peers, as directed. One student that was provided a phone for translation was observed looking at web sites unrelated to the task. Other students were observed doodling or coloring on their papers. During the share out activity, the teachers called on students to share their answers and listed the names of students who shared on the board in an effort to motivate more students to participate. One student that had not written anything was called on and refused to provide an answer. When he was told he could earn participation points he became frustrated and began muttering comments under his breathe.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use checks for understanding and make instructional adjustments. Rubrics are used to provide feedback to students on their writing in most classes.

Impact

In most classes, feedback is provided that has actionable next steps, leading to some students taking ownership of the quality of their writing. Checks for understanding are used to assess students’ progress toward meeting the learning objective of a lesson or unit of study and teachers make adjustments to instruction; however, this is not consistent across all disciplines.

Supporting Evidence

- Across disciplines and grade levels, teachers use common assessments and rubrics that are aligned to the curricula or the Regents assessments in Regents bearing classes. For example, the social studies department uses rubrics that are aligned to the tenth grade global history and eleventh grade United States History Regents exams. The English Language Arts (ELA) department uses a common Regents-aligned rubric in grades nine through twelve. Students reported that rubrics and anchor papers as well as exemplar essays are reviewed with them so that they know what the benchmark is for writing a quality essay. Students stated that teachers’ feedback with the next steps for improvement has a positive impact on their ability to write an essay that would score at mastery level on the Regents exam.

- Across grades and departments, teachers use checks for understanding to make adjustments to instruction. In a trigonometry class students were required to use the elimination method to solve a linear equation. The teacher called on students to walk her through the method while she transcribed the steps on the whiteboard. Most of the students could not articulate the steps required to solve the equation using the methodology, so the teacher asked the class to give a thumbs up or down anyone could remember how to solve an equation using the elimination method. Since the overwhelming majority of students indicated no, the teacher retaught the class how to use the methodology by modeling the steps for them using a think-aloud strategy.

- A review of lesson plans indicate that most teachers use exit tickets as a means of checking to see if students met the learning objective of the lesson. In an eleventh grade ELA class in which students were required to analyze an author’s use of characterization and storyline development in a book they were reading, students were given exit slips at the end of the lesson on which they had to answer the question, “How does money show up as a recurring theme throughout chapter four?” Students reported that they receive exit tickets in most of their classes and stated that, “If the teacher notices that the majority of the class didn’t understand what they taught, then the teacher will go over it again with us the next day.”
**Findings**

The school leaders consistently communicate high expectations to staff, and staff provides feedback to parents on their children’s academic progress.

**Impact**

Systems of accountability for staff and partnerships with families ensure that the students and their families are aware of the progress toward graduation and college and career readiness.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The school’s leadership team is committed to not only communicating high expectations to the faculty and holding them accountable, but also to providing the ongoing support that is required to meet those expectations and improve their professional practice. Instructional expectations have been clearly articulated to teachers via the School Comprehensive Education Plan (SCEP), professional learning sessions, teacher team meetings, and regular emails from school leaders. Members from the School Leadership Team provide teachers with support in advancing their professional growth and aligning their instructional strategies and curricula to the articulated schoolwide goals and the Common Core through a series of professional learning sessions that occur a minimum of once per week. The school has an initiative in place, which requires the implementation of rigorous curriculum, instruction and academic tasks, and ongoing student assessment. Teachers reported that the focus of most of the professional learning sessions was professional development that will support teachers in implementing practices that will help students meet the demands of the Common Core.

- Teachers hold each other mutually accountable to the schoolwide expectations by participating in informal learning walks. This practice allows faculty to assess the level at which the school’s prioritized initiatives are being implemented in their practice, across departments and disciplines, and schoolwide. As part of the school’s participation in the Learning Partners Plus (LPP) program, teachers observe each other and provide actionable feedback to further their professional practice. Teachers reported that they have had several opportunities to participate in inter-visitations during which they observe a colleague using a specific instructional strategy that they can use in their own classroom. Teachers stated that is has been effective in improving their pedagogy. Advance teacher evaluation ratings revealed that seventy-six percent of teachers were rated effective with no teachers at the school rated ineffective.

- The school leader restructured the guidance department so that there is a counselor dedicated full time to coordinating efforts to meet the schoolwide expectation that all students will graduate from high school on time and be prepared for college and career. The counselor provides advisement and support to students to ensure that they are on track to graduate and meets regularly with seniors and their families to ensure requirements and deadlines for college applications are being met. Assistance with completing college scholarship applications and financial aid forms is provided to students and their families. Another counselor has been assigned to support the social and emotional preparedness of students including teaching effective personal habits that lead to students taking ownership of their college and career pathway. A senior stated that she got accepted into the college of her choice and was overwhelmingly grateful for the support she and her parents received from the guidance department. She stated that the counselors made sure she was preparing herself adequately and taking ownership of what she had to do to be prepared, and stated that she is confident that she is prepared for college.
Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: | 4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings

School leaders support the professional growth of teachers using a cycle of observation that informs professional development and provides actionable feedback to teachers, including next steps for improvement.

Impact

School leaders have an effective system that uses the Danielson Framework for Teaching to observe teachers and support their practice through follow up professional learning opportunities, resulting in the adoption of common instructional practices that is leading to improved teacher practice.

Supporting Evidence

- Formal and informal observations by school leaders serve as regular reminders to faculty of the articulated schoolwide expectations related to the professional practice and their growth as educators. The school leaders have set a benchmark of having a minimum of ten teachers that scored developing in the 2015-2016 school year to move to effective by June 2017. Teachers reported that feedback from formal observations and informal learning walks has been actionable and include next steps for improvement. Teachers also stated that school leaders have identified teachers that are strong in areas of specific instructional practice such as using Webb’s Depth of Knowledge (DOK) to formulate higher-order thinking questions, and encourage staff to observe their class if they scored low in that area. All teachers agreed that the formal observation cycle and inter-visitations are leading to improved teacher practice as indicated by the school’s Advance data.

- Teacher teams meet weekly in collaborative groups by department to support each other with developing their pedagogy and developing curricula with a focus on alignment to the schoolwide initiatives and the Common Core. Planning of the sessions is informed by informal observation feedback gathered by school leaders and teachers and the analysis of student work samples and assessments. Teachers reported that during the professional development meetings, they typically share information on instructional strategies, ideas, and resources to help make their lessons more engaging, or they collaborate on designing socially and culturally relevant lessons plans. Teachers stated that the weekly professional collaboration and learning sessions have been effective in improving their skillset.

- School leaders have established a teacher team structure wherein a teacher-led department session and/or grade level facilitators and their grade teachers meet to share trends and patterns in pedagogical practice and students’ academic progress. The school has set a goal of having 12 of its 40 teachers facilitate a minimum of one professional learning session by June 2017. A review of agendas and meeting minutes indicate that meeting topics are aligned to the schoolwide goals and are dependent upon teacher needs, which are identified by using formal and informal observation data. Areas of instructional practice in which teachers scored low in using the Danielson Framework for Teaching rubric, along with the information from the analysis of student data and work products, are given top priority when planning meetings and professional learning sessions by the school's Learning Partners Plus (LPP) team.
Findings
The majority of teachers are engaged in structured inquiry-based collaborations that align to the school’s goals.

Impact
Increased instructional planning and collaboration have strengthened and improved teacher practices, which affects student learning across grade levels.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers have strengthened their instructional capacity through teacher team collaborations and inquiry-based learning with their colleagues. The LPP teacher team was observed analyzing data collected from informal observations of their peers, or learning walks, to determine the next steps for the remainder of the school year and for planning the next phase of walks for the 2017-2018 school year. The team discussed issues related to the school schedule that is impeding the progress of the learning walks and how they can better plan so that it fits with the change in the schedule for the last round of informal observation in May and for the following school year. The team stated that the data from the learning walks indicate that this protocol is building instructional cohesiveness across grades and content areas as teachers are able to emulate an effective practice they observed a colleague use in his/her own classrooms.

- School leaders and teachers state that the decision was made to implement the MEAL and They Say-I Say strategies across disciplines to increase the quality of student writing after. This came about after analyzing students’ constructed responses on the Common Core English Language Arts (ELA) and social studies Regents assessments. The analysis of the student writing samples from the assessments revealed that students struggled to cite evidence for the Document Based Question (DBQ) essays on the social studies exam and that they did not make effective counterclaims for argumentative essay writing on the Common Core exam. Teacher teams identified MEAL as an effective strategy to teach students how to improve their essay writing across the curriculum and They Say-I Say as a best practice in helping students become proficient at annotating text.

- A review of team meeting agendas and minutes, along with documented findings and next steps, indicate that the majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based analysis of common assessment data. Using the Atlas Protocol, teams look at data from Regents exams, mock Regents tests, and uniform assessments to determine trends and patterns in student achievement and determine instructional strategies to address the gaps. Teacher teams identify and implement an intervention strategy that can be used to address the achievement gap and then administer a follow-up assessment to determine the impact on students’ learning. Teams repeat the cycle until students respond to the intervention by improving their skillset.