Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Bronx Compass High School
High school 08X561
1980 Lafayette Ave.
Bronx
NY 10473

Principal: Brett Roer

Dates of Review:
April 3, 2017 - April 4, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Jorge Estrella
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 Compass 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>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school…</td>
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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 Finding</td>
<td>Developing</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>Additional Finding</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>Developing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### School Quality Ratings continued

#### 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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Developing</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>Developing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Systems for Improvement

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.3 Leveraging Resources</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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</table>

Findings

The school leader is in the process of aligning resources to support the school in meeting their instructional goal by reprogramming the school to ensure that they will be able to offer courses necessary to have all students on-track for graduation and are beginning to develop groupings and interventions for English Language Learners and students with disabilities.

Impact

The new principal is in the process of aligning resources to the instructional goals and developing the necessary supports to ensure students have access to meaningful learning opportunities that lead to college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- To address the urgent need to have students on track for graduation, the new principal, with the guidance and support of the superintendent’s office and the borough field support center, engaged in reprogramming the school to ensure students have access to the necessary courses so that students are on track for graduation. As a result, the new school program is beginning to provide students with the necessary courses leading to college and career readiness.

- In addition, the new principal partnered with a curriculum consultant to support curriculum alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards. The school also purchased an online platform system to enhance communication with students and families, purchased additional interactive whiteboards and furniture, created a part-time Restorative Justice Dean position, and allocated funds to secure college trips for students in grades nine through twelve. Furthermore, the principal allocated funds for teachers’ per-session hours when they work during Evening and Saturday Academies.

- Another element that the new principal uncovered was that there were disparities in teachers’ licenses and courses that needed to be offered to students, as well as deficits in meeting the necessary scheduling requirements for English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities. To address this need, nine teachers volunteer to teach six periods a day. In the meeting with teachers, they mentioned that this transition was challenging because of the sudden new schedules and new teachers. However, they understood the reasoning behind the changes and got onboard to support the new principal’s approach to ensure all students are on-track for graduation. Similarly, students reported that they were initially upset by these changes, but after their meeting with the school leaders, guidance team, teachers, and parents to review their transcripts, they had a better understanding behind the rationale for the changes and agreed to take advantage of this opportunity. Moreover, parents reported that they were grateful that the new principal made tough decisions and told the truth to parents and students about their current students’ status to meet graduation requirements.

- To further support students in meeting their academic needs and progress to be on-track for graduation, the school is offering an Evening Academy on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday from 3:00 pm to 6:45 pm, as well as Saturday Academy from 8:30 am to 12:15 pm to allow students additional opportunities to earn credits required for graduation. Students and parents reported that these additional after school opportunities have been critical for students in helping them to complete the schoolwork needed to obtain the necessary requirements to be on-track for graduation. Students also mentioned that the small group instruction provided allowed them to focus better on the content while having more opportunities to have one-on-one contact with teachers.
Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development | Rating: | Underdeveloped |

Findings

All teachers are engaged in teams that do not use an inquiry approach, focusing on problem solving for individual students or non-instructional supports. Student work and data analysis within teams is not typically used to improve teaching and learning.

Impact

Teacher teams have not engaged in collaborations that result in increased student achievement. Teacher team meetings have yet to promote shared improvements in teacher practice or increased student achievement for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- During the meeting with the new principal, he shared that due to the urgency around reprogramming the school to offer the necessary credits to students so that they can be on track to graduate, the new master program did not allow enough available teaching time to build into teachers schedule, nor a structured common planning time for them to engage in professional collaborations. On Mondays, teachers are scheduled for professional development where they are engaged in restorative justice sessions facilitated by school leaders and members of the faculty who have already received the training. Specialists from the Borough Field Support Center also offered professional development sessions on the curricula that are newly aligned to the Common Core.

- During the observed School Implementation Team/Child Study Team, teachers discussed a student who was referred to the team by his English teacher because the student had challenges in completing his assignments due to difficulties following directions. Teachers discussed the student’s academic strengths and areas of growth as well as attendance and social-emotional concerns. Teachers looked at his work and then discussed instructional strategies such as modeling, reading directions aloud, visual prompts, highlighting or changing format for directions, adding an extension of previous day’s work and emphasizing student cues, like facial expression. Teachers shared that they meet twice a month to discuss referred students and agendas, notes from these meetings are emailed to teachers and school leaders. However, the review of previous agendas and minutes indicated that there is no clear process that follows up on the outcomes of the interventions recommended to referred students.

- A review of agendas and minutes indicates a lack of protocols and strategies to approach the work of analyzing data in a streamlined and focused manner to heighten the impact of teamwork on student and teacher progress. For example, an agenda and artifacts of teacher team meetings facilitated by the assistant principal indicated that teachers had a session to discuss “What is Rigor?” Teachers used indicators 1.1, 1.2 and 2.2 of the Quality Review rubric as well as additional resources to guide the conversation. Teachers were assigned to complete a form where they have to define “The What – Rigor is”, “The How - In my classroom, you will see rigor through”, “The Supports – In order to provide rigorous instruction and environment, I need,” and “The Goal – During semester one, a goal I would like to reach in my practice involving rigor is.” The review of teachers’ responses indicated that during this session teachers did not arrive at a consensus about what is rigor and how it going to help them improve their practice.

- During the meeting with school leaders and teachers, it was evident that teacher teams are not engaged in inquiry team work with identified groups of students and that they do not have structures and protocols for looking at student work. As a result, the lack of meaningful collaborations hinders teams’ potential to clearly identify the success of groups of learners as well as improving teaching practice.
Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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Findings

The school is in the process of developing coherent curricula and tasks aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. The school inconsistently emphasizes higher order thinking skills across grades and subjects.

Impact

Limited access to curricula and rigorous academic tasks in all subject areas across grades and classrooms hampers college and career readiness opportunities for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- The new principal reported that upon his appointment to school, he learned that there was not coherence in the curricula. For example, teachers within the same subject area and same grade used different curricula and pacing calendars. He also shared that daily lesson plans were uncommon practice in the school. Because of these findings, a few weeks after his appointment, the principal and his instructional team decided to adopt curricula aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. The faculty also agreed to plan daily lessons and use common lesson plan templates. However, there are inconsistencies in key elements when planning instruction. For example, there are attempts in few lessons to include differentiated instructional activities, indicate targeted student groupings or incorporate formative assessments. However, other lesson plans, including some for Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classes, are missing those components and show no evidence of a structured plan to provide access to the curricula for all students.

- The instructional team is in the process of engaging in activities that will adjust curricula to incorporate the instructional shifts in all core subjects. For example, the principal hired a consultant to design units of study across grades and content areas. In addition, the Borough Field Support Center is assisting the high school instructional team with school visits to assist teachers and administrators with planning and teaching strategies to implement the newly adopted curricula.

- While some lessons promote student thinking and provide rigorous tasks, others inconsistently emphasize rigorous tasks and higher-order thinking skills. For example, an ELA class challenges students to determine character traits where they have to formulate a final opinion using graphic organizers and argue the opinions of their group members. However, in a global history ICT lesson plan, the task was for students to go online to find definitions and write them in a graphic organizer. During the student interview, some students did not have the proper artifacts to demonstrate their work, and some students stated that at times their work is not challenging enough.

- A review of curriculum planning documents reveals inconsistencies in the development of lessons designed to meet the needs of the school’s diverse population. Some lesson planning documents include intentional grouping of students. However, specific learning scaffolds or extensions for the groups were not in evidence in the plans. For example, in a global history class the lesson plan includes translations in students’ native language so they can have access to the content the group is learning. However, in an ICT class lesson plan all students were to read from the same text without considerations of their reading level.
Findings

Across classrooms, pedagogical practices are becoming aligned to the curricula and are starting to reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best. Certain teaching strategies, however, do not always lead to a demonstration of student thinking and participation.

Impact

The use of the do now across classrooms is beginning to bring coherence to the curricula. However, its implementation has yet to ensure that all students produce meaningful work products and promote higher levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- Classroom visits revealed that across classrooms, teachers are making attempts to implement a common set of beliefs regarding how students learn best by using the do now as a starting point to the lesson. However, out of the five classes observed at the beginning of the lesson, strategies used to implement the do now varied across classrooms. In most cases, it is unclear of how this time is being used to promote higher engagements, involving students in meaningful conversations, or how teachers use the information from the do now to adjust instruction. For example, in one ELA class the teacher ensured that students engage in the do now by circulating about the room and providing them guidance to accomplish the task. Then, after five minutes, the teacher had a student monitor collect the do now documents. The teacher posed a question regarding the do now, two students responded to the teacher while the rest of the class was not actively listening to the responses, and then the teacher moved on with the lesson. In other classes, the do now took longer than five minutes and the teacher did not collect students' responses before continuing with the lesson.

- In the meeting with students, they shared that the do now activity is the activity they engage in upon entering their classes. However, some students were not able to elaborate on the do now purpose. Some said that “we just have to do it” or “it is part of the lesson.” Thus, it is unclear to students how and why this activity is built into the lesson and students and teachers both do not seem to understand its potential impact on teaching and learning.

- Discussions were observed only in some classrooms. For example, in an ELA class, students were discussing characters and making inferences and predictions of character traits found in the plot. The teacher facilitated these discussions with students by asking provoking questions such as, “How does the audience perceive this character?” This prompted students to take ownership of their discussion, where they justified their statement with textual evidence. In another lesson, four students dominated most of the conversation, while most of the remaining students were silent. At some point, the teacher attempted to engage one of the quiet students but when trying to answer the question, another student interjected and the teacher moved his attention back to the dominating group, leaving the other student without an opportunity to make his thinking known.

- In a United States history class, the teacher asked students to read a newspaper article, text book, and other primary sources, then explicitly told the students to turn and discuss the why the United States entered World War I. Most students did turn and talk or use accountable talk prompts and remained on topic. There was a high level of participation for all students. However, this level of discussions that promotes thinking and participation is yet to be implemented in other classrooms. Instead, some lessons are teacher led, such as in an algebra class where the teacher spent most of the time solving equations on the board without students' participation. In a living environment class, some students were sitting in groups and others were working individually, some of the students in groups were not having a conversation on their task but were socializing instead, and the teacher did not address those students.
Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: | Developing |

Findings
School leaders communicate urgency to teachers, students and parents to ensure all students are on track for graduation. School leaders and staff are starting to develop expectations that are connected to a path of college and career readiness.

Impact
Leadership transitions created limited opportunities to ensure implementation of classroom expectations and communication of progress to students and families, which introduces opportunities for students’ continued growth and for families to support their children towards a clear path to college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- Upon his appointment in January 2017, the new principal met with his faculty and communicated his vision to redirect efforts to ensure all students are meeting the necessary requirements for graduation. High expectations are reiterated in weekly professional development sessions, weekly newsletters, one-on-one meetings as well as written documents indicating instructional expectations. To have a pulse check of the status of teaching and learning in the school, the principal engaged in walkthroughs with the instructional team using a checklist aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. As a result, school leaders strategized their cycles of observations so they can provide actionable feedback to teachers, which had previously been delayed due to multiple leadership transitions during the school year.

- Although at the beginning of the school year teachers received initial professional development around components of the Danielson Framework for Teaching, there was inconsistent professional development opportunities for faculty members. As a result, the new principal is in the process of redesigning the school's professional development plan to ensure teachers have opportunities to deepen their understanding of the instructional expectations and effective teaching practices around the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

- Another initial step taken by the new principal was to communicate with parents regarding their children’s path to college and career readiness. There were two punctual elements that informed parents. The first one was to inform them that a considerable number of students were off-track for graduation, and the second was that the school will be reprogrammed for the second semester of the school year and students will need to attend to evening academy and/or Saturday academy in order to get back on track for graduation. In addition to this initial communication, teachers with the guidance team set-up one-on-one meetings with families to ensure that they had a clear understanding of their progress to meet high school graduation requirements.

- To promote ongoing parent-teacher-student communication about student progress, the school started to use an online platform that allows parents and students to track students’ grades, attendance, celebrations, and any other information about the social-emotional needs of students. Parents shared that access to the online platform promotes informed conversations with teachers and allows early detection of struggling students, leading to the development of collaborative plans to help those student at school and at home. Students said, “I can see how my grades changed every day based on my classwork and behavior.” In a short time after its implementation, this communication tool is beginning to offer on-going feedback to students and family about students’ progress.
Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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Findings

Teachers use and create rubrics, but assessments are not used consistently and teachers do not provide actionable feedback to students. Across classrooms, teachers’ assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessments.

Impact

Teachers’ feedback does not yet consistently empower all students in being aware of their next learning steps for each subject, thus limiting opportunities to accelerate students’ academic achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers are beginning to use ongoing checks for understanding as part of the school’s foci and the do now is beginning to be used as a type of formative assessment. During classroom visits, some teachers during the do now activity recorded students’ responses. However, no actions were taken to make on the spot adjustments to the lesson. Teachers simply moved on with the lesson, and in some classes it was unclear when the do now ended and when the actual lesson started, or how the information gathered will be used during the lesson. Minimal student-to-student or teacher-to-student interactions were observed after completion of the do now. In most classes, it remained uncertain how the do now was used as a formative assessment.

- The review of student work products reveals that offering actionable feedback with next steps to students varies across the school. There was some feedback in student work presented and in hallways bulletin boards such as “Great job remembering which plus and minuses signs to use. Be careful with using precise and accurate vocabulary.” However, most classrooms do not have student work on display and student work in portfolios was difficult to find. Some of the feedback offered to students was just grades, highlighted rubrics, stamped “great job,” marked with checks, or included no teacher comments at all.

- Students reported that rubrics are not always used across subjects. One student said, “For English Language Arts (ELA), we use rubrics for our essays”, and another student said, “We use rubrics most of the time in ELA and math, but only sometimes in other subjects.” Some students explained why they were using rubrics, while others had difficulty articulating the purpose of using rubrics.

- Classroom visits revealed inconsistent implementation of the use of checks for understanding. For example, in an ELA class while students were working independently, the teacher circulated about the room checking if students understood the tasks. Then, based on their responses, the teacher used different approaches to ensure the students understood their concepts. However, in other classes, teachers circulated without a clear purpose, some just checking for procedures but not interacting to check if students were grasping the concepts or having misconceptions. Only in two out of nine classrooms visited were teachers gathering data from students’ responses at the beginning of the lesson. These inconsistent checks for understanding do not allow for sufficient on the spot adjustments to lessons, resulting in missed opportunities to meet all students’ diverse learning needs.

- Students mostly rely on report cards, progress reports, and grades posted on the online platform to determine how they are doing in class and there is little evidence of established routines for students to use rubrics to assess their own work. There are no schoolwide systems for students to assess their progress towards learning goals, thus lessening opportunities for students to have a clear and detailed understanding for their own areas for growth.