Quality Review Report

2017-2018

Bushwick Leaders High School For Academic Excellence

High school 32K556
797 Bushwick Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11221

Principal: Catherine Reilly

Dates of Review: February 8, 2018 - February 9, 2018

Lead Reviewer: AJ Hepworth
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

Bushwick Leaders High School For Academic Excellence 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><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</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>Proficient</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>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>Area of Focus</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>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>Proficient</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>Well Developed</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>Proficient</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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.4 Positive Learning Environment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings

Daily advisory classes and other college preparation experiences are in place to coordinate social emotional learning and youth development. Additionally professional development, family outreach, and student learning experiences align to support student learning.

Impact

Each student receives guidance and advisement that align with individualized learning needs, while teacher professional development, college visits, and family workshops support the promotion of effective academic and personal behaviors for students.

Supporting Evidence

- Vertical alignment of advisory courses includes curriculum that ensures personal guidance and supports students’ career and college readiness. Within each grade, students meet daily with an advisor and a small group of the same gender students where they discuss their academic progress and social emotional mindset. One student shared that the advisor “helps me in a good way [to] calm us down.” Thus the small group meetings allow students to develop a long-term connection with a teacher with whom they develop a bond, allowing them to address academic and personal behaviors in an intimate learning environment. Additionally, advisors ensure students are made aware of their academic progress and attendance.

- Life skills are a primary component of the advisory curriculum intended to support students’ ability to coordinate social-emotional learning. A grade nine advisory class worked collaboratively to engage in an activity designed to learn and experience how to best regulate their emotions. A demographically diverse group of ninth grade boys discussed strategies with a peer about what they would use for regulating emotions and deescalating a situation in the face of a conflict that might arise in school. Students were then tasked to role play a similar conflict based on school work that they could experience at home with a guardian. Students self-reflected in their journal how they would have calmed themselves down by taking a deep breath and use listening skills rather than being argumentative.

- Staff receives professional development on designing coherent instruction and the use of assessment. Weekly after school meetings, off-site trainings, and feedback from informal observations, align to support students’ development of effective academic and personal behaviors. From these professional learning experiences, students and their families receive a consistent message of organization and perseverance towards a college and career pathway. The students immensely value the support and learning staff provides them to achieve that goal. Family programs include English acquisition, financial advisement, and articulation presentations. Additionally, all students take trips to colleges where they establish a Growth Mindset and are motivated to engage in behaviors that will result in going on to a post-secondary education.
### Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 2.2 Assessment | Rating: Developing |

**Findings**

Rubrics and checklists are commonly utilized as assessment tools to model feedback for students and teachers; however, they are loosely aligned with curricula across classes. Additionally, teachers' assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of effective ongoing checks for understanding during instruction.

**Impact**

The inconsistent use of assessments by teachers and the lack of actionable feedback to students results in a limited understanding of student achievement and instructional adjustments made by teachers.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teachers have developed rubrics and checklists to provide students with feedback regarding their learning. However, the ability of students to apply the feedback to better themselves is inconsistent. For example, an Advanced Placement (AP) history Data-Based Question (DBQ) rubric has four reporting categories and seven scoring criteria to determine a student’s score. However, review of several completed written assignments returned to students included feedback for only partial criteria, thus not clearly informing the student of their grade or areas of strength and weakness. Similarly, on several other written assignments, students are provided additional comments; however, they do not fully align with the rubric criteria. For example, a students’ written conclusion for an assignment was rated four out of five points; however the feedback was only connected to conventions of grammar. The lack of meaningful feedback between the graded work limits students’ ability to act on it or articulate the area in which there is a gap in their achievement. This was confirmed by several students who when asked about their grades on submitted assignments, were unable to specify what they would strategically do to improve their work moving forward.

- Students expressed that rubrics are tools to inform them of what is necessary to complete a task. However, students also expressed to get a perfect score on an assignment, they need to “exceed expectations” and “put in more work.” They further shared although they often get the rubric or guidance criteria prior to the assignment, they do not get it after it is complete. This perception by students limits their understanding of clear feedback leading to actionable next steps and revised work. Teachers do provide students with rubrics and checklists with a majority of assignments; however, students inconsistently understand how the respective assessment tool serves as a guidance document.

- During an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, several teachers and paraprofessionals were present in the room; however only one teacher asked clarifying questions regarding the do now and much of the following group work. Additionally, during the group challenge the teachers did not make use of effective adjustments to correct any student misconceptions.

- In several classes in which Socratics seminar protocols were used for instruction there was an inconsistent use of checking for understanding and assessment protocols. Teachers periodically interjected during student discussion yet they did not effectively redirect misconceptions of content or protocol, limiting all students to be engaged in the discussion. Similarly, the learning objective suggested students were to cite their evidence, although they infrequently did.
Findings
School leaders and staff ensure lesson plans and student tasks are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, integrate the instructional shifts, emphasize rigorous habits, higher-order thinking skills, and include writing strategies across grades and content areas.

Impact
Coherence and promotion of rigorous college and career readiness skills are embedded throughout instructional planning documents so all students have to read, write, or draw, and provide explanations of their work.

Supporting Evidence

- Lesson plans are developed using a schoolwide adopted template design with content and language objectives to build coherence and promote college and career readiness between content areas and grades. The content objective for a social studies lesson plan states students will analyze actions taken by Mohandas Gandhi to address systemic injustice in India by reading a letter written by him asking for an end to imperialism. The language objective within the same lesson states students will collaborate on a group project and participate in a small group discussion regarding historical quotes and their relevance. Additionally, an English lesson plan content objective states students will analyze Hamlet’s characterization in the play, while the language objective states students will re-read their original soliloquies and write feedback and a reflection.

- Curricular planning documents focus on fostering student engagement by developing lessons that hold students accountable through rigorous instruction. Most lessons incorporate structures that require students to challenge their thinking, reason logically, and collaborate. For example, the design of an earth science lesson requires students to discuss with group members evidence using facts and observations regarding internal properties of the earth. Students will complete a series of tasks at stations and norm their findings with their partners using provided directions. Directions are provided in Spanish to help English Language Learners (ELLs). Additionally, flexible groups are planned to cognitively engage students with hands-on learning activities.

- ELL students comprise nearly one third of all students enrolled in the school. As such, teachers plan their lessons specifically to include scaffolds and structures that meet their needs, in addition to the general education students. Provision of interpretive and performance text versions of Hamlet are planned to support reading, visual, and auditory learners. Throughout curricular planning documents, teachers consistently use sentence stems and graphic organizers to support engaging students in tasks that push their thinking when writing. Similarly, in math lessons, teachers plan for students to make models and recognize patterns using large visual supports, such as chart paper or dry erase boards.
Findings
Teaching practices are aligned with the belief of engaging students with text, conversation, and discussion so they learn best.

Impact
Students produce meaningful work products and demonstrate high levels of thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- In all classes, students had some opportunity to record their findings and thinking on an anchor chart, journal, or graphic organizer. During a global 10 class, students completed the do now activity and then engaged in the main activity of finding evidence from primary and secondary sources to support discussions. Students collected their evidence to then record their summary on a graphic organizer. Details included their interpretation and significance of the evidence. One student shared “when you take over a country, you give them no equal rights.” Another student disagreed citing an example from his or her text. Similarly, in a college readiness class, students engaged in a Socratic seminar focusing on questions to spur critical thinking and explore new perspectives for dealing with problems to combat stereotypes. Students referred to a question-planning template to guide their thinking and preparation. Students discussed how stereotypes lead to discrimination and violence. These opportunities to engage in the lessons align with the instructional focus that students learn best through document supports, engaging curriculum, and opportunities for discussion.

- In a grade nine U.S. history class Socratic seminar students evaluated the extent to which African Americans were truly free during and after the Reconstruction. The inner circle of students expressed their thoughts by referring to text they read, prior knowledge, and homework video. One students expressed, “African Americans are literally free, but facing tough decisions and dealing with discrimination [like we saw] in the doll experiment.” Another student added, "we are partially free and have the same rights as the average American citizen, but even with laws written, there are ‘black codes’.

- Partnered students provided one another guidance and feedback to strengthen their argument regarding the role historical figures played in the annexation of the Philippines. During an AP U.S. history class students provided evidence they collected from their research from the lens of their respective historical figure. For example, students who portrayed Josiah Strong conveyed they wanted the people of the Philippines to learn to govern themselves and adopt Christianity, while the students who had the role of Emilio Aguinaldo argued the role guns played in this annexation was unfair. Throughout most classes, students had similar opportunities to demonstrate their thinking and participate in partnered, group, or whole class discussions.
Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff and provide professional learning sessions to meet those expectations. Additionally, a culture of high expectations is communicated to students through an advisory course.

Impact

Staff is aware of establishing expectations connected to college and career readiness, the need for students to successfully meet them, and being accountable for their own professional growth.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal provides all staff with a handbook at the beginning of the year and conducts regular staff meetings regarding instructional and professional expectations. In addition, at the beginning of the year, teachers set both professional and personal goals. Most teacher-generated goals focus on using assessments in instruction. School leadership, by conducting six-week cycles of observations, evaluate how teacher goals are carried out and then use them to inform teacher professional development and support moving forward. Additionally, collaborative staff conversations have led to the establishment of schoolwide curricular planning expectations. Week at a Glance (WAGs) documents identify instruction each day and help support teachers’ ability to develop lessons specifically for the week to meet the needs of students. The lesson plan template includes components that support alignment and vertical coherence so teachers can meet curricular expectations. Additionally, an open door policy from the principal provides opportunities for staff to consistently communicate any professional, instructional, or other concerns they have about meeting schoolwide expectations.

- Teacher professional development connects to staffs’ building a coherent social emotional learning environment and furthers their clear understanding of content, pedagogy, planning, culture, and assessment expectations to support student achievement. For example, professional development conducted on Mondays for the vertical teams focuses specifically on the instructional core, especially designing coherent instruction.

- Guidance and advisement is provided to students in their daily advisory class. Students are made aware of their progress towards graduation and credit accumulation. Students state they are prepared for college and career readiness through advisory, field trips, and discussions about developing a Growth Mindset. Additionally, students individually develop academic and personal goals to meet those expectations which are posted in classes. The advisory class also teaches students effective study habits and how to handle difficult situations so they are further prepared for meeting personal and academic expectations.

- College experiences are provided to all students so they can be prepared upon graduation to meet the identified expectations. For example, AP courses are offered to all students so they can experience rigorous curriculum and instruction similar to college. Additionally, students in all grades visit colleges during each of their four years in high school, including an overnight to several schools in upstate New York.
**Additional Finding**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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</table>

**Findings**

Grade level inquiry teams consistently analyze student work products from diverse learners. Additionally, teachers contribute to school-based decisions to improve student learning opportunities.

**Impact**

Structured professional collaborations result in improved instructional approaches and contribute to progress towards goals for groups of students. Additionally, teachers offer insightful suggestions to improve experiences for all school community members.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teams of teachers analyze student work samples and identify areas, based on levels of proficiency, so that they can further improve their instruction for groups of students. Inquiry work identified that the lowest third of grade nine students were struggling to annotate their work effectively, thus limiting their understanding of the task or assigned problem. As such, uniform annotation expectations were developed and used throughout classes by those students. Although some teachers were skeptical at first to embrace a uniform annotation process, teachers have noted progress by their students with reading and writing of quality work products. Teachers acknowledge improved annotation has led to higher-order thinking by targeted students and allowed for deeper conversations amongst peers. Similar inquiry work is achieved for other subgroups of students.

- During a humanities inquiry team meeting, teachers reviewed what makes a good thesis statement. The AP rubric was reviewed to determine what criteria students need to do well in order to get full credit. Teachers then identified the criteria and practiced developing a thesis by responding to a prompt. Groups of teachers established criteria to determine what it would look like vertically across grades at various times of the year. Then they identified what adjustments they will make in their instruction based on their work from the meeting. Suggestions of newly generated graphic organizers or templates were provided. Scaffolds to offer choice were developed to support certain subgroups of students. The teachers established they will revisit the effectiveness of these strategies at the next meeting by having students write culturally relevant thesis.

- Teachers support student learning by attending off-site professional learning by sources they have researched and chosen. It is understood by teachers that they will share their new learning with their colleagues after the training. Teachers are provided the opportunity to turnkey their professional training experience during or after school. For example, one teacher who brought an entrepreneurial curriculum to the school used it to provide a structure for focusing on solving problems in the school. Another teacher attended a blended learning professional development which led to the inspiration of a blended learning model approach in several classes. Additionally, teacher-led intervisitations have led to shared best practices and improved student learning experiences.