Quality Review Report

2017-2018

Bushwick Community High School

High school 32K564

231 Palmetto Street
Brooklyn
NY 11221

Principal: Llermi Gonzalez

Dates of Review:
November 15, 2017 - November 16, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Rod Bowen
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

Bushwick Community High School serves students in grade 9 through grade 11. 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>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>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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</td>
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### School Culture

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
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### Systems for Improvement

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>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>
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<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>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>
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<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>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>
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Area of Celebration

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

Findings

The use of space, partnerships, staff time, and other organizational decisions are aligned to support the school's instructional goals.

Impact

The utilization of resources that are aligned to the school's instructional goals contribute toward students' increasing credit accumulation and college readiness, as well as teachers' ability to engage students in challenging tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- In order to increase students’ college readiness, the school community established a partnership with an organization that provides services specifically geared toward helping students identify the best colleges suited to their interests and needs, as well as with completing the college application process. The number of students who have registered for the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), as well as those applying to the City University of New York (CUNY), continue to increase compared to previous years.

- In response to feedback from students who had difficulty accessing college counselors when their schedules permitted, the school merged the offices of the full-time college advisor with that of the part-time staff person provided by a partner organization and created a dedicated space for college resources and counseling.

- School leadership’s investment in the restorative circles that occur during mentoring classes is reflected in the partnership that the school has with an organization that provides ongoing teacher training and support for restorative education practices.

- Financial, space, and human resources are dedicated to the yearly implementation of a summer bridge program for students matriculating into Bushwick Community High School. This program provides opportunities for students to acclimate to the school’s culture while earning course credit in math and science. This past summer, 16 out of the 50 students who participated earned two credits before the official start of the school year. Most of the others earned one credit.

- Teacher schedules are programmed to accommodate daily opportunities for teacher teams to meet and invest in each other’s professional growth. The instructional day was moved a period later, compared to last year, to enable more students to get to school on time, and to create a first period dedicated to teacher support and collaboration. One teacher described that given his schedule, Mondays and Wednesdays are focused on looking at lesson plans and providing collegial feedback. Tuesdays are used for group professional development on schoolwide expectations such as effectively designing learning objectives and the use of Bloom’s Taxonomy in curricular design. The other days are used for teachers to share problems of practice.
## Area of Focus

<table>
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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

Although assessments and rubrics are aligned to the school’s curricula, feedback to students does not consistently yield information that can be used to inform next steps toward improvement. Teachers’ assessment practices during instruction reflect an inconsistent use of checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

### Impact

Students receive limited feedback that is not always actionable regarding their achievement. Across classrooms, teachers do not regularly make effective adjustments to meet all students’ learning needs.

### Supporting Evidence

- Students shared samples of their work and offered a number of examples across content areas where they were provided with checks and check pluses. All understood that check pluses meant that they had done the task well, but none were able to state what exactly they did well and what they might do differently to engage the tasks at higher levels.

- Both students and staff noted that the Common Core Learning Standard English Language Arts (ELA) writing rubric is used to communicate expectations related to various writing assignments. Although students verbalized familiarity with the criteria found within the lower ratings, they were not able to exhibit an understanding of expectations found within the higher level criteria. For example, no one could successfully make meaning of, “demonstrate in-depth and insightful analysis of the texts, as necessary, to support the claim and distinguish the claim from alternate or opposing claims.” Such a lack of understanding does not enable students to gauge their effort toward attaining higher levels of performance.

- During an ELA class, the teacher consistently checked for understanding by asking questions such as, “What type of argument are they making?” and “Which one deals with emotions?” In response, students were able to support their answers with their rationale for selecting *pathos, ethos,* or *logos.* However, in a science class, the teacher quickly progressed through the mini lesson and asked a few closed ended questions to the class. For example, while pointing to a slide that showed two DNA samples with different end proteins, he asked, “Which one of these is wrong?” A student gave a one-word response, but was not asked to explain her thinking.

- In a social studies class, students grappled with vocabulary from a primary source document. There was no structure in place for the teacher to assess or for students to self-assess their understanding of words and terms such as *transgression,* *salutary penance,* *enjoin,* and *diurnal.* The lack of clarifying discussion hindered the students’ ability to develop their written responses.
Additional Finding

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings
Curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, integrate writing from sources, and utilize close reading strategies. They consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher order skills across grades and subject for all students including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

Impact
The purposeful decisions that inform the development of curricula build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Across lesson plans, there is an emphasis on students’ ability to establish claims that could be supported by evidence. In one ELA plan, *claim* is one of the vocabulary words, and the guidance for a turn and talk activity focuses on assessing the quality of student work, including the questions, “What is their claim?” and “How do they support their claim with analysis?” The lesson for an ELA Regents preparation course is designed to prepare students to compose the introductory paragraph of the unit assessment argumentative essay based on genetic engineering. Higher-order questions such as, “How can we ensure genetic technologies don’t create further social inequality?” are listed to compel students to formulate opinions that could be substantiated in their writing. Such task design builds coherence within a content area.

- The use of the close reading strategy referred to as CUBANS, which guides students to circle unfamiliar words, underline important details, draw a box around the main idea, use arrows to connect main ideas, write notes in the margins, and summarize the biggest idea was evident in some lesson plans to support argumentative writing. A science lesson plan showed that students would use aspects of this strategy to annotate an article and then establish and write about their opinion on the pros and cons of there being a nuclear power plant at Indian Point, given its proximity to New York City. Similarly, in a social studies plan, students would do a close reading of primary source indictment statements from the trial of Galileo and form an opinion about whether or not he should renounce his beliefs regarding the heliocentric model. Such tasks reflect a consistency in the use of a specific close reading strategy as well as an emphasis on higher-order thinking.

- A math lesson plan shows a version of the CUBANS is to be used to engage students with a math problem. However, unlike in other subjects, students are not expected to develop an opinion and support it with evidence. The task is still rigorous as it requires students to analyze information and create their own word problems.
Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the learning activities to enable students to produce meaningful work products.

Impact

There is uneven student engagement in appropriately challenging tasks, as well as uneven student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- In a number of classes, expectations and routines that would result in students engaging in planned discussion were not met or utilized. In an ELA class, the teacher circulated around the room and prompted discussion between himself and students, whereas the lesson’s design was for students to talk to each other. Similarly, in an art class, the teacher modeled how he expected students to partner in the discussion of artwork, but only three students chose to work together in a group and five other students worked individually.

- Although the activity in a math class consisted of steps that were clearly sequenced, sufficient supports were not in place for students to successfully engage in the whole task. As a result, a number of collaborative student pairs were not able to do all of the steps, especially the most rigorous section, which was to create their own word problem using the scenario and information that were provided.

- The task in a science class was for students to work in groups to simulate the process of protein synthesis. However, when asked, students in this class were not able to articulate how the activity of building a sentence based on DNA clues would deepen their science knowledge. When asked why they were doing the task, a student responded that it would help them on the Regents exam. Yet, no one at the table understood how or in what way the task would support them on the State test.

- During a team taught social studies class, one teacher worked with the majority of the class while the other conducted a small group instruction session with four students at a table. The teacher with the small group read aloud, modeled the annotation strategy, and asked students questions based on the text. Students were observed copying what she had underlined, writing what she told them to on their worksheets, and answering few of her questions as only one of the students was fully engaged, following along and responding to the teacher’s questions. This small student group exhibited low levels of thinking and participation.

- Although students participating in a science lesson annotated text, few followed the prescribed close reading strategy with fidelity, as most only underlined text they deemed relevant without circling unfamiliar words or drawing a box around the main idea. In one group, two students copied the annotation from a table mate. In addition, at times, the teacher read text to the students when the activity was designed for them to read independently. Lastly, although a student had read and annotated the text, she was not able to articulate why she was taking the stance she had selected. This lesson lacked scaffolds and strategies that would engage all students in this challenging task.
Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations aligned to the instructional focus. Staff consistently communicates high expectations to all students.

Impact
There are structures for training and accountability that support staff’s ability to meet the expectations put forth by leadership. Students receive detailed feedback and guidance that support their preparation for life after graduation.

Supporting Evidence

- The school’s instructional focus is “to increase critical thinking through rigorous assessments, with a focus on writing.” Materials from a whole staff professional development session indicated that fewer than half of their graduates are college and career ready. This rationale informed the specific focus on argumentative writing as an end of unit assessment across all subjects. Curricular documents included essential questions for units of study that students would answer in writing. Examples include, “Does challenging authority change the status quo?” and “Should the United States prevent businesses from growing too powerful?”

- Support structures are in place to ensure that new teachers engage in professional learning in adopting strategies aligned with the instructional focus. In addition to argumentative writing, staff is trained to utilize CUBANS, discussion strategies, and an approach to the creation of learning objectives that leverage Bloom’s Taxonomy.

- Observation feedback provided to teachers serves as a purposeful means to communicate these high expectations. One report noted how a teacher’s inability to effectively use an article to answer the essential question led students to not select the article, resulting in an imbalance in article selection during the lesson. Another evaluation suggested that the teacher provide more time for students to process their thoughts as they analyze evidence they collected to support their claim.

- Students stated that they are all able to stay abreast of their progress toward promotion and graduation by checking an online information sharing website. They agreed that they check their grades every marking period, and look at their credit accumulation at the end of each term.

- Opportunities such as the Learning to Work program and college initiatives also provide guidance that can inform readiness and future decision making. Students spoke of the importance of achieving high SAT scores, earning the best grade point average (GPA) possible, and writing college essays. One noted that he learned of the importance of how you present yourself at an interview and that he plans to be thoughtful about what he wears, his posture, and how he speaks. Such awareness gained from lessons, feedback and guidance prepares students for the next level.
Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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Findings

The majority of teachers are developing their inquiry-based professional collaborations. Teams of teachers inconsistently analyze assessment data and student work products.

Impact

Inquiry-based teacher teamwork does not yet improve the practice of participating teachers, and does not lead to progress toward goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- The observed inquiry meeting was one of the first of the year. This developing practice included a protocol that did not fully support an effective process for looking at student work. The fourth step was to fill out an observation summary that asked, “What can the student do?”, “What does the student need support in?”, and “What are the students next steps?” Yet, there was no subsequent step to share what was recorded, limiting the potential for effective feedback. Also, the second step of the protocol, which was for the group to discuss what the work would look like if the students had met the expectations set forth in the mini-lesson, never took place, so there was no shared lens to inform the assessment of the work. The questions, “How does the lesson promote critical thinking?” and “How can the teacher increase the level of critical thinking?” appeared below the protocol, but those questions detracted from the focus on student work and instead led to an inquiry process focused on lesson planning.

- There has been schoolwide inquiry work on student writing as well as the implementation of the CUBAN close reading strategies. However, such ongoing inquiry is not consistent.

- Staff acknowledged that they are just beginning to purposefully look at student work as the focus has been supporting new staff in the writing of rigorous objectives and the implementation of CUBANS.