Quality Review Report

2017-2018

Bronx Community High School
High school 08X377
1980 Lafayette Avenue
Bronx
NY 10473

Principal: Flora Greenaway

Dates of Review:
October 18, 2017 - October 19, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Adam Breier
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 Community 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><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>Area of Focus</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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Proficient</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>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>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>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>Developing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings

Students’ social-emotional needs are addressed through activities that occur during weekly family group meetings. House structures ensure that all students are known well by at least one adult who personalizes supports.

Impact

Students who were previously off-track for graduation feel welcomed, supported, and respected. Students’ academic and attendance supports are provided through the familial environment of each house, which provides supports that align with students’ learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Students meet every Friday within the family group structure. During the first three Fridays of each month, staffers from a Community Based Organization (CBO) visit with family groups to facilitate activities that guide students to improve their awareness of life skills, handle difficult feelings, and to serve as peer mediators. All students reported feeling safe in the school, one stating “when we have problems, we bring them to the ‘family’.” Another student stated, and all present agreed, “This is a big family, everyone helping each other. We all use our first names, adults and kids. This feels like a second home to me. There’s a lot of respect here!”

- Every student is assigned to a house based on the number of credits earned and State exams passed prior to admission. The school year is divided into trimesters that are called cycles. At the beginning of each cycle, each student reviews their individualized student achievement plan, which is designed immediately upon admission to the school. Each student’s plan details all courses required for graduation and their progress toward passing those courses. After this review, students set personal goals to help ensure that they achieve on-track status, and once that is attained, remain on track. Multiple teachers are assigned to each house, each of which is assigned a cohort of students for whom they conduct targeted attendance outreach as well as review academic progress.

- Students praised the advisement supports provided in the different houses. One student reported that he understands his transcript and has been able to set goals based on that document because of the many times he reviewed it with his house leader. Another student stated, “If it weren’t for my house, I wouldn’t be graduating.” Additionally, one parent attributed her child’s success to the house structure, the supportive teachers, and to the ceremonies at which students are celebrated for earning placement into a higher level house as a result of stepping closer to graduation.
Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 1.1 Curriculum | Rating: Developing |

Findings

While school leaders and faculty are in the process of aligning curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards, content standards, and integrating the instructional shifts, this alignment and integration is not coherent across subjects. Additionally, planning is beginning to reflect an effort to provide diverse learners access to the curricula and tasks.

Impact

Unit and lesson plans reflect inconsistent integration of the instructional shifts and planning that does not ensure that the needs of English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities are met.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of curricular documents reveals that while lesson plans note the Common Core Learning Standards or content area standards, where appropriate, integration of the instructional shifts is inconsistent. An example of instructional shift integration is in an English Language Arts (ELA) lesson plan and its accompanying curriculum maps, where students are tasked with supporting their arguments with text-based evidence during a Socratic seminar in which three short fiction pieces are to be discussed. A U.S. history lesson plan details how students are to support their arguments as to whether or not Abraham Lincoln was justified in issuing the Emancipation Proclamation. Similarly, a lesson plan on argumentative writing directs students to write essays in which they are to support their arguments with text-based evidence. In addition to these, a geometry lesson plan includes activities around the bisecting of angles and finding their points of congruency in an effort to determine where the placement of new cellphone towers would increase the signal to a geographic area.

- Examples of lesson plans that reveal the inconsistency of instructional shift integration include an algebra lesson plan in which an essential question reads “How can we apply functions to model real life situations?” There are no activities or assignments within the planned lesson that would enable students to deepen their understanding by applying algebraic concepts to real-world situations. An additional geometry lesson plan includes the expectation that students “Make formal geometry constructions with a variety of tools and methods,” which would evidence planning around deepening students’ understandings by applying concepts to new situations. However, there is no activity within the lesson plan that directs students to complete tasks connected to this goal.

- An ELA lesson plan details that students with disabilities would have the opportunity to talk with a partner prior to sharing responses with the entire class and that ELL students would be provided with additional vocabulary supports. Another ELA lesson plan lists the names of students who require specific modifications as mandated by their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). However, there are also lesson plans that contain statements about possible methods of differentiation without the inclusion of specific strategies. For example, a geometry lesson plan includes a statement under the term differentiation that states “extended time, complete worksheet and reflection questions.” There was no evidence that students would “complete [a] worksheet and reflection questions” that had been differentiated or for which additional supports would be provided. An earth science unit plan includes identical statements for three separate lessons within the unit. Each statement reads “guided notes, partner and group work, vocabulary terms/word wall.” Additionally, a majority of lesson plans collected during the school visit reveal no evidence of differentiation.
# Additional Finding

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

## Findings

Teaching practices are becoming aligned to curricula and are beginning to reflect an articulated set of beliefs that students learn best when their unique learning needs are met. However, there are uneven levels of student-thinking and participation.

## Impact

Student progress is limited by teaching practices that are often geared toward a single learning style and due to the inconsistent facilitation of student-to-student discussion.

## Supporting Evidence

- In a geometry class, students were tasked with bisecting angles to construct points of concurrencies. Students with disabilities were seated with students who required additional supports who had been identified either through progress data analysis or excessive classroom absences. However, in multiple classes, all students worked on the same assignment without accommodations for different learning styles via scaffolded materials, additional support from the teacher, or through differentiation of the assigned materials. For example, during an algebra lesson, all students were engaged in identifying identical $x$ and $y$ intercepts. Students were instructed to turn and talk with their partners as they worked to determine the height of various points on a topographic map during an earth science class, as they all used the same worksheet. In an ELA class, students wrote an introductory paragraph for an argumentative essay assignment.

- In an ELA class, students engaged in a Socratic seminar based on three works of short fiction during which students challenged each other to support their claims with text-based evidence. In two geometry classes, students dissected angles and worked with partners in order to discuss responses and self-correct where necessary. However, during an algebra lesson, the teacher solicited answers from individual students to each question posed without opportunity for student-to-student discussion.

- In another ELA class, students shared with a partner introductory paragraphs they had written. After reading their partner’s paragraph, students discussed their findings and recommendations with the author. However, in a social studies class, a discussion about the Emancipation Proclamation and other factors that led to the Civil War was interrupted by the teacher when students were unclear about the protocol for a Socratic seminar discussion. Similarly, lack of a discussion protocol in a Participation in Government class limited the impact that student voice could have had in preparing for a lesson about a Supreme Court decision focusing on search and seizure issues. The resulting discussion was dominated by two students and was marked by tangential comments that, while compelling and interesting, were not germane to the topic. In an art class, students were asked to look at their partner’s project and then discuss recommendations and areas that deserved praise. However, the majority of students did not look at their partner’s work, or conduct the requested discussion.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create rubrics and grading policies that are loosely aligned with the school's curricula. Teachers' assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

Use of aligned rubrics does not result in teachers consistently providing actionable feedback to students regarding their achievement. Teachers’ ability to consistently make effective adjustments is limited, thereby not meeting all students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Analysis of teachers' written feedback to students revealed that teachers inconsistently offer actionable feedback, and that when offered, the quality of actionable feedback varies. Examples of actionable feedback to students such as “choose appropriate evidence to support your claim,” and “use analysis to strengthen your claims and evidence” were posted on essays in an ELA class. In another ELA class, teacher written feedback advised students to review their work to check for proper grammar and the inclusion of evidence to support claims. Feedback added to geometry assignments advised students to include details in explanations and to identify the relationships between angles. Similarly, in a government class, students were advised to use additional details in supporting claims and strengthen their analyses.

- Examples of teacher-written feedback with limited capacity for impact on students' growth were observed in a geometry classroom. Comments included “Well Done,” and “rigorous work,” along with other complementary statements that contained no actionable feedback on next steps students could take in order to intellectually grow. In an earth science class, written feedback identified areas where students left out an important step on a project around the use of scientific inquiry. While one posted student work product included feedback from the teacher praising the student with the comment “Great work!” the next step instructed the student that the product could have been more neatly configured.

- Another posted student project contained feedback indicating only that the units of measure for the x and y axes were missing. Additionally, a bulletin board used to display students’ geometry work contained no actionable feedback. Attached to each posted assignment was a sheet of paper that contained stars, with the number of stars directly connected to the following statements: “Reached your Goals,” “Met Expectations,” and “Exceeded Expectations.”

- In an algebra class, an opportunity for adjusting the lesson was missed after a check for understanding made clear that a majority of students did not agree with a student’s answer. Students were directed to move on to the next lesson activity when only one student positively responded to the teacher’s question asking who agreed with the student’s answer that was written on the board. During an earth science class, students were tasked with determining the height of the top of a mountain on a topographical map. After the teacher explained how to arrive at the correct answer for a question that was answered incorrectly by a majority of students, students were directed to answer the next question that was an identical task, although the mountain was a different height. There was no check for understanding to verify that students had benefited from the reteaching of that strategy. Additionally, when a teacher asked all students to analyze their partners’ projects and offer recommendations as to how they should proceed, no students followed these directions. There was no check for understanding for the teacher to ascertain why no students followed those directions or any subsequent adjustment to the task.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings

The school’s leaders and staff consistently communicate high expectations and share information with families regarding student progress toward college and career readiness. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations for all students.

Impact

Communication from school leaders and staff, through an online grade book system and other platforms, provides frequent opportunities for families to understand their children’s progress towards meeting standards. Ongoing and detailed feedback and guidance and advisement supports by house-based teacher teams ensure that students are preparing for graduation and college.

Supporting Evidence

- Parent workshops are held regularly where school staff members guide parents to help them support the improvement of their children’s attendance, their understanding of high school credit accumulation and graduation requirement policies, applying for financial aid, and the college application process. One parent reported and all present agreed that “Whenever there is a school event, I get multiple notifications by phone calls and letters. And whenever I have a question about anything, I just call and if I need to leave a message, I get a response the same day.” Parents also praised the school faculty for communicating students’ progress as they move from one house to another.

- A team of teachers ensures that students are engaging in conversations and activities designed to prepare them for college. This team works with a CBO to arrange for college visits as well as plan an event at which a college will be visiting the school to conduct application reviews and interviews, possibly leading to on-the-spot college acceptance offers.

- The house team structure consists of three houses, each catering to the needs of students based on one of three levels of high school credit accumulation and graduation readiness. The Intro House includes all students with zero through fourteen credits, the Junior House includes students with fifteen through twenty-nine credits, and the Senior House includes students with thirty or more credits. Each teacher within a house teacher team has a role in ensuring that students are on track toward high school graduation. Teachers serve as either data analyst, attendance tracker, student portfolio manager, or social activity coordinator.
Quality Indicator: 4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development  
Rating: Proficient

Findings
The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations that promote achievement of school goals and implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Distributed leadership structures are in place.

Impact
Teacher teams conduct inquiry cycles that increase teacher capacity. In addition, teachers have a voice in decisions around attendance improvement, grading policy modification, and house structural changes to further promote students’ academic progress.

Supporting Evidence

- A teacher team that regularly meets to analyze student work found that students were having difficulty analyzing quotations and effectively using them as text-based evidence to support their claims. This team met to review student work in order to assess the use of a tool designed to help students with this skill. This tool, referred to as QPI, guides students to identify a Quote, Paraphrase it, and then discuss its Importance as evidence of a claim. Using a discussion protocol, teachers reviewed one student’s work sample and found that the student identified an appropriate quote to use in support of the claim and successfully paraphrased it. However, the discussion of the quote’s meaning and how it supported the claim was insufficient. Teachers then discussed that students were having similar issues across their classes and that as a next step they would assign a point value to each of the three steps of the QPI tool as an added incentive for students to complete them all.

- In addition to the use of text-based questions, analysis of student work products revealed that students were struggling with answering open-ended questions. As a result, teachers decided that different strategies for student-to-student discussion around open ended questions would be implemented, including partner discussions, Socratic seminars, and having students share work with a partner through targeted conversations. This cycle of inquiry is not yet complete so no data is available yet to indicate the impact on student learning. However, experimentation with the implementation of these strategies was observed in multiple classes during the school visit, evidencing teachers’ work toward improving their practice.

- Teachers serve as leaders within their respective houses. Within these structures, teachers played a key role in the decision to hold ceremonies that celebrate students as they move up from one house to the next. Teachers worked with school administrators to redesign the school’s grading policy and create a process that incentivizes students to arrive on time. Preliminary data reveals that attendance during period one has risen as a result of this new process. Additionally, teachers played a key role in the decision to add New York State Regents exam success to the criteria for students to earn placement in Senior House. One student reported that when this decision was enacted, he was moved from Senior House to Junior House and that this inspired him to work harder to pass his exams and earn placement in Senior House again.