Quality Review Report

2017-2018

Bronx Regional High School
High school 12X480
1010 Rev. J. A. Polite Avenue
Bronx
NY 10459

Principal: Colin Thomas

Dates of Review:
October 17, 2017 - October 18, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Rosemary Stuart
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 Regional High School serves students in grade 10 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>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards</td>
<td>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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Developing</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## 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>
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</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>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>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

| Quality Indicator: | 1.4 Positive Learning Environment | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings

The school community fosters an environment of trust and positive attitudes and puts structures, such as family groups, in place to support young adult students.

Impact

Students and staff respect each other, and student voice is valued. Supports are designed so that each student is known well by at least one adult to meet their academic and social-emotional needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Students and staff feel safe and reported feeling relaxed, happy, and purposeful while at school. Respect for the students as young adults is the basis of interactions and decisions regarding programming and services. One teacher described the importance of the support provided to students and said, “We help them transition to adult responsibilities.” One student explained that before coming to this school, he and his friends were spending a lot of time during the school day in the halls instead of the classrooms. “Here,” he said, “all the cool kids are in class.” Another student described the feeling of being rejected at other schools before being accepted here.

- Student voice is sought and valued by school leaders and staff. Teachers administer a perception survey that gathers information about classroom climate, student engagement, pedagogical effectiveness, rigorous expectations, and teacher-student relationships. For one teacher, the survey revealed that the social and learning climate of her classroom had improved significantly since the last survey and that instructional changes she had made resulted in a rise in the approval rating for classroom engagement from 41 percent to 57 percent.

- The school partners with a community-based organization (CBO) to provide guidance and advisement for college and career options. Counselors meet regularly with each student to review transcripts and plan for transition after graduation. The CBO focuses on the population of over-aged and under-credited students and those who are living in temporary residences. Another partnership provisions the pantry, which provides food and personal supplies to the students and their families on weekends.

- When students enroll they are placed in a family group that forms the nucleus of their interactions with teachers and advisors. Social workers, including interns from local universities, facilitate the family groups which continue as the framework for support from enrollment to graduation. The purpose of the family group structure is to promote the values of the school, reduce isolation for newly enrolled students, and build confidence and self-esteem in young adults who have experienced failure at other schools. Teachers agreed that students maintain relationships formed in family group long after the orientation process has ended. One graduating student said, “I still talk to the people in my family group. I have my own social group now.”
## Findings

Teaching practices and strategies do not consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula and the tasks assigned to young adult students at this transfer school.

## Impact

There is uneven engagement in challenging work products and discussions in some classes, including those for English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

## Supporting Evidence

- In some lessons, students were actively engaged in group work with a focus on student to student discussion and writing, however, this was not consistently seen in all classrooms. In one class, students were discussing the role of the Federal Reserve in banking policy. One student proposed that the need for regional banks was to allow for the different investment needs of a wide variety of communities. In another class, students were conducting an experiment to determine how safe municipal water supplies are. Students questioned whether soft or hard water is safer to drink. Other lessons were teacher directed or students were unevenly engaged in high-order tasks. For example, in two classes, many students were copying the directions for the task and did not progress to addressing the question before the teacher proceeded with the lesson.

- Some tasks and activities ensured access to all students, including ELLs, but this was not always evident. In an English Language Arts (ELA) lesson, the teachers guided students to analyze the poem, “The Clod and the Pebble,” in both English and Spanish language translation. This strategy was observed in a science lab class but was inconsistently implemented across classes. In an art class, students explored the process of creating three-dimensional sculptures from slabs of clay. Students independently sought and cared for tools and materials while the teacher conferenced with individual students about their work, encouraging them to use vocabulary words to describe ergonomics.

- There were inconsistent opportunities for students to participate in high-level discussions or extended writing. Students in a social studies lesson, exploring guilt and responsibility during wartime, prompted and supported each other as they prepared to reenact the Nuremberg Trials. In another class, students answered the teacher’s questions with one word or short answers without supporting their answers with evidence from the text. In a math class, students debated how to find the solution to a set of linear equations while they used graphing calculators to illustrate their solutions.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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Findings
Teachers are planning units of study and lessons using an online curriculum mapping program and are in the process of aligning curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards and incorporating the instructional shifts.

Impact
Some lesson plans provide access to students with a variety of learning needs and styles to engage them in cognitively challenging tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders have implemented an online program, Curriculum Mapper, which enables teachers to update and revise lesson plans and guides them in aligning lessons to the Common Core. One schoolwide curriculum planning initiative is to include four to six extended writing assignments per semester in all content areas, including argumentative, informative, thematic, and literary essays. This emphasis on writing was seen in some lesson plans. For example, a science plan outlines the writing stages for a scientific inquiry report. Writing tasks in math lesson plans generally include short answer responses.

- Lesson plans do not always outline learning activities addressing the varying learning needs and styles of learners. Some teachers use a template that allows the teacher to indicate beginning, intermediate, and advanced strategies for ELLs and students with disabilities, however, these sections are not completed consistently. To meet the needs of ELLs in one class, the plan details strategies such as using Spanish-English translations, native language support, and definitions of key vocabulary, multiple meaning words, and figurative language. An observation report for one teacher recommends that she “list students’ names as you classify them and clearly explain how you plan to address their needs in order to enhance their understanding.”

- In a social studies lesson plan, the teacher identifies individual students to monitor and guide during the note-taking portion of the lesson. The plan does not indicate what prior student work or data indicated the need for support. The differentiation section of another lesson plan includes a general description of possible misunderstandings of the task without specific interventions or supports for ELLs and students with disabilities.
Additional Finding

<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

There is uneven use of curricula-aligned rubrics. Students in some classes are using checklists for self-assessment.

Impact

Teachers provide rubric-based feedback on some student work and inconsistently adjust instruction in lessons based on checks for understanding.

Supporting Evidence

- Writing tasks, based on past Regents exam thematic essays, are accompanied by rubrics that include categories such as introduction and conclusion, task, analysis, and organization. The rubrics rate each category on a scale of one to five. Other State rubrics are used to assess student work, for example, those used on the ELA Regents Exam for argumentative writing. However, not all student work is accompanied by rubric-based feedback. At a meeting with students, they discussed that rubrics help them to understand what will be expected when they take Regents exams.

- Feedback to one student praised him for using sophisticated vocabulary in stating a thoughtful claim. On a math exploration of midpoint and distance, the teacher used a task-based specific rubric to assess how well the student calculated the distance between locations on a grid map of a shopping mall, but customized rubric-based feedback was not consistently provided on all student work.

- There were missed opportunities for teachers to check for understanding to inform adjustments to instruction. Some teachers circulated throughout their classrooms monitoring group work while others did not monitor completion of one task, such as a do now, before moving on to the next. In one lesson, the teacher determined that students needed more time to complete the problem set and adjusted the pacing of the lesson accordingly.

- An annotation checklist is displayed on many desks in classrooms. The checklist urges students to “Mark it Up!” and reminds them to number paragraphs, underline or highlight main ideas, and make connections to self, other texts, or the world. In addition, students are encouraged to write quick summaries in the margins of the texts.
### Additional Finding

**Quality Indicator:**

| 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: | Proficient |

**Findings**

School leaders consistently communicate expectations to teachers through a weekly newsletter, the Monday Memo, and by observations aligned to the components of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Students receive comprehensive information about school expectations during new student orientations and through ongoing guidance and advisement supports from advisors and through a variety of programs.

**Impact**

School leaders hold teachers accountable for meeting expectations. Teachers and staff provide support to students and their families to prepare them for career and college responsibilities.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School staff conducts orientation sessions throughout the school year for students who transfer into this school to provide information on what is expected for them to achieve academic success. The young adult students are encouraged to take advantage of the school’s flexible educational approach “to navigate the changing global technological environment.” College advisors regularly review transcripts with students to determine what credits and exams they need to meet graduation requirements. As students near graduation, these sessions focus on the transition to college or career. Customized programs of study and course offerings are supplemented by tutoring and online learning programs such as Castle Learning and iLearnNYC so that students have access to a wide variety of courses. One student explained that being programmed for an art class helped her realize that learning could be enhanced by working with her hands and that the experience is shaping her thinking about careers. She added that she had doubted herself, but expressing creativity gave her confidence.

- Report cards, prepared every six weeks, outline the progress students are making toward earning course credit and preparing for Regents exams. In addition, students track their daily progress using PupilPath, an online grade reporting system. A student stated that using PupilPath, “Lets you know where you are in the course.” To increase awareness of college and career programs that are available to students, the school conducts visits to local colleges and has a partnership with North Central Bronx Hospital to promote medical career paths. Several students expressed interest in pursuing careers in health-related fields, such as neonatal nursing.

- The principal communicates expectations for professionalism through the staff handbook, meetings, and weekly memos. The staff handbook, Bronx Regional’s Professional Guide, includes information about using technology to enrich instruction, the requirement that curriculum maps include Common Core aligned lesson plans, and the policy that homework should be graded and returned to students to provide immediate feedback. At one staff meeting, the agenda included information about the citywide goals for college and career readiness and outlined a new schoolwide practice to share instructional strategies through intervisitations. A memo from early in the school year informed teachers of the upcoming deadlines for entering grades into the online grade book.

- School leaders reinforce expectations by observing and providing feedback to teachers and through frequent discussions about student progress. For example, one observation report commends a teacher for incorporating the instructional shifts and making the learning objectives clear and aligned to components of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. In another report, the school leader reminded the teacher to “ensure that all students are challenged at their level by providing appropriate entry points and learning extensions.”
Additional Finding

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<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

All teachers engage in professional inquiry-based collaborations on content teams that focus on analyzing student work and data.

Impact

Teachers align instruction to the Common Core standards and increase their pedagogical skills through frequent intervisitations.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers on collaborative teams regularly use protocols to analyze student work. Content teams meet three times a week to update curriculum maps, examine student work, and identify the learning needs of their students. Teachers indicated that they use the Tri-State rubrics in math and ELA to help them align their units of study, lesson plans, and tasks to the Common Core standards.

- In addition to work on inquiry teams, teachers conduct intervisitations with each other to share best practices and improve their pedagogy. After the visits, they provide low-inference feedback to their colleagues and reflect on the strengths and challenges of the lesson. Teachers indicated that this peer support is a key component in helping them improve their practice. School leaders also note areas for improvement during observations and suggest setting up intervisitations with teachers who are skilled in that practice.

- At a team meeting, teachers were observed reviewing the results of an Algebra Regents exam to determine the students who would benefit from additional instruction on specific topics. The teachers identified skills the students had mastered, such as shading the solution set of an inequality. They also noted students who misinterpreted the problem and may need help with content-specific vocabulary. The team members discussed strategies they could implement in their lessons to address the learning needs of their students and determined that they could get additional strategies from colleagues who have expertise with students with disabilities.