Quality Review Report

2018-2019

Bard High School Early College

High school 01M696

525 East Houston Street
Manhattan
NY 10002

Principal: Michael Lerner

Dates of Review:
November 14, 2018 - November 15, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Debra Tasioudis
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


School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</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>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</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>Proficient</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### School Culture

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.4</strong> 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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.4</strong> 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>
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</table>

### Systems for Improvement

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

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.3</strong> 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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.1</strong> 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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4.1</strong> 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>Area of Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4.2</strong> 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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5.1</strong> 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>
</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>
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Findings

The school maintains an inclusive culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes, through small class sizes and advisory program activities. Professional development, family outreach, and student learning experiences are strategically aligned to foster academic and personal growth by all students.

Impact

Students and adults treat each other respectfully and students adopt effective academic and personal habits, including collaboration and self-advocacy, as they develop and lead school improvement initiatives.

Supporting Evidence

- A theory of action within the school is that if students are nurtured, they will build trusting relationships with peers and adults and achieve academic and social emotional learning goals. To foster these relationships, there are small classes with no more than twenty four students per class. In some classes, the first assignment for students is to write letters to their teacher about who they are, in and out of school. This letter then becomes the foundation for student and teacher conferencing and helps students and teachers to build relationships. Students and families praise the close relationships between students and teachers and several families shared that students like coming to school because they are respected and treated like adults. This positive attitude to school is also reflected in a 95 percent attendance rate to date. As one parent shared, "There is an eagerness to learn from students. They want to be at school every day because they want to talk with their teachers about their projects and love sharing ideas in the classroom."

- A schoolwide diversity initiative run by the student organization, fosters dialogue on race and inclusion. The group hosts town hall meetings with students, staff, and families to discuss issues of race and inclusion and allows students to have a strong voice in schoolwide decision making. There is also an equity team, comprised of staff and students, that works to promote equity throughout the school. The team created a survey about inclusive classrooms, that allowed students to anonymously voice concerns about gender and identity, tell whether teachers and peers make students feel included in the classroom, and whether students face micro-aggression in the classroom. Based on the survey results, school leaders created professional learning sessions focused on growth mindset principles for teachers, and advisory lesson plans were adapted for students. In a meeting, one student cited the survey and described interactions with teachers and peers, stating that, “I really appreciate how students here are very mature and accepting of normally marginalized communities. I am a queer woman of color and I feel more comfortable here than anywhere else. The school provides community and social acceptance.”

- The school offers advisory classes for all students, with tailored supports for individual students. Students working on college applications have the same advisor for the year to ensure that they get strong college recommendation letters. There are also advisories tailored to groups of students, such as the Smart Scholars group, which includes students from under-represented groups and provides additional peer mentoring and support. Students and families stated that the advisory curricula support a growth mind set for students. One student shared, “I have grown a lot as a student here, socially and intellectually. I am challenged and get a lot of support from students and teachers.” Students also praised office hours held by school staff, offering them constant access to their teachers, to discuss academic needs and other issues, and to develop self-advocacy skills necessary for success in college. Teachers praised the professional learning and support that they receive around growth mindset and the advisory curricula, which equip them to support all students’ academic and personal development.
Findings
Teacher feedback is not yet fully connected to the Danielson Framework for Teaching nor effectively used as a system to monitor teacher observation data to design and facilitate professional development, make informed decisions and develop succession plans.

Impact
The system which demonstrates a connection between feedback, professional learning and student engagement has yet to reinforce clear expectations towards teachers’ instructional growth areas.

Supporting Evidence
- One observation report indicated that a teacher earned the rating of highly effective in four components of the Danielson Framework for Teaching, including questioning and discussion and using assessment in instruction. The teacher earned the rating of effective in five components of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. However, the school leader did not include any instructional next steps that the teacher could use to improve his/her practice. The only next step that was shared with the teacher is to provide more copies to students when they are given a reading to share.

- Although cycles of observation are intended to promote professional growth and reflection, the feedback does not clearly articulate clear expectations for teacher practice. Feedback to promote professional growth and reflection for some teachers were not yet fully connected to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. For example, “Student questions were excellent.” There are a variety of observation reports that contain either generic or no feedback, lacking actionable next steps that teachers could use towards their growth. In an observation report, a teacher earned the rating of effective in five components. The teacher received a developing rating for questioning and discussion however, the feedback offered was not actionable or specific to support the development of the teacher. This feedback stated, “The discussion between students never materialized in that only two students responded to the presenter. Some simple adjustments to the plan would address this.” While this feedback surfaces challenges in the lesson, it does not provide the teacher with clear next steps to support the teacher’s development.

- Professional learning occurs via school-based committees and school leaders meet to discuss their noticings from observations. However, a review of observation reports and other documents do not yet demonstrate a system that reflects a connection between the feedback provided and the professional learning teachers are receiving across the year. Some workshops have been provided in support of improving student engagement, co-teaching techniques, and lesson planning. Other areas of support have been through intervisitations. Yet, a review of observation reports reflects feedback that is limited in providing clear next steps connected to their specific professional learning needs. Furthermore, the evidence has yet to demonstrate how succession planning is informed by observation data. Thus, the limited system does not clearly demonstrate a link between the school’s areas of improvement, professional learning, and growth in instructional practices.
Additional Finding

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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Findings

Teachers and staff ensure that the curricula align to the Common Core and Bard College standards and expectations, and strategically focus on writing from sources and text-based answers to embed rigorous habits across the content areas.

Impact

Coherence of curricula across grades and subject areas promotes college and career readiness for all students. All learners must demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and faculty, many of whom serve as faculty at both Bard College and Bard High School Early College, ensure that the curricula are aligned to the Common Core and promote college readiness, through a program that includes two years of high school level coursework and two years of college level course work. Members of staff create all curricula in the school, in collaboration with faculty from other Bard Early College schools within their network. All students experience a seminar sequence in which they explore literature ranging from Greek classics to post-modernist works. Students are also offered a menu of electives to choose from, with options that include a college level elective on World War I. In this elective, as in others, students analyze primary sources connected to the discipline, synthesize primary and secondary sources, conduct research independently, and write college level essays. The syllabus for this course and others, focuses on discussions and writing from text-based evidence, all of which offer students varied opportunities to hone college and career readiness skills.

- In math, all students take a combined Algebra and Geometry course in grade nine, Algebra II, Trigonometry and Modeling in grade ten, and a college-level mathematics seminar which represents a bridge course designed to help students appreciate the “beauty” of mathematics, understand why mathematical thinking is useful, and explore typical modes and strategies of mathematical argumentation. Through these courses, students are exposed to curricula strategically aligned to Common Core and other relevant content standards and deliberately sequenced to deepen their understanding of topics in the high school program. The curricula for these courses also prepare them for topics in subsequent college level courses, such as Calculus I and II and Statistical Modeling.

- Consistently across lesson plans, lessons include differentiated tasks and pre-planned questions for students to use in discussions, writing or both. A lesson plan for a college level political studies course, *Reason and Politics*, aligns to the school’s writing and thinking workshop structure, that promotes frequent opportunities for students to create and share their ideas via writing and discussion in the classroom. The lesson plan includes a focused free-write, with a written response to the prompts, “What is rationality?” and, “Are human beings rational?” The focused free-write and writing prompts provide students with opportunities to build their ideas in writing, ahead of class discussions. Scaffolded tasks are another common way that teachers embed opportunities for all students to demonstrate their thinking. In a deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) barcoding post-lab assessment lesson, the task required students to create an outline of their lab, by illustrating the points to be addressed in each paragraph and making a list of subsections. The task sheet showed a list of guiding questions for all students to demonstrate their thinking.
Findings

Across all classrooms, teaching practices align to the belief that students learn best through collaborative work grounded in speaking, listening and writing, as reflected in student work and discussions.

Impact

Through small-group instruction, all students produce meaningful work products, including writing projects and discussions, which demonstrate high levels of thinking, participation and ownership of learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Across the vast majority of classes, teaching practices promote text-based discussions and collaborative work, with students explaining their thinking and engaging in meaningful writing and discussion tasks with one another. In a Physics with Calculus class, students worked in small groups to solve problems provided by the teacher. The students discussed different ways to approach the problems, with some students deciding to try different strategies and then compare answers, while others worked through the problem together, talking through their next steps. The teacher provided the students with a model, conferred with groups, asking questions about their process but not providing any answers, and pushed students to share their thinking with one another. This focus on collaborative student work grounded in speaking, listening and writing was also evident in documents from department meetings. Notes shared from content team meetings across the school show teachers and school leaders in discussions about what engagement looks and sounds like, and how to foster high levels of thinking in writing and discussions. For example, in math, as in other subject areas, the department team outlined classroom activities that promote high-level discussions. This included having students engage in small group discussions to make sense of mathematical ideas, as they grapple with mathematical tasks that require reasoning and problem solving, and when they participate in discourse that requires questioning and explaining of mathematical ideas and making connections across mathematics constructs.

- In a literature class, students worked in pairs or trios to provide one another with feedback about their introductions to exploratory writing pieces. The teacher provided students with a model text that the class had previously annotated together, a rubric for the development of an introduction, and guiding questions for their peer reviews. This allowed students to spend the period reading one another’s work, providing each other with written, rubric-based feedback, and then engaging in text-based discussions that led to them taking ownership of the criteria for the task and the discussions. These student-centered small group discussions based on writing were common across the vast majority of classes.

- In the vast majority of classrooms, student work products and discussions demonstrated high levels of thinking and ownership, as the students took ownership of whole class discussions, posing questions of one another, or supporting or refuting each other’s ideas, and inviting comments from their peers. In a Latin class, students engaged in a Socratic seminar about Aeneid and posed questions to one another about the author’s use of foreshadowing, changing roles of suitors, and wives and gender roles throughout the ancient Greek and Roman world. One student asked her peers if they thought the author was trying to make a political statement through an exchange between characters. Students posited ideas and agreed and disagreed with one another, making connections to prior knowledge and extending the conversation to larger themes, such as the concept of piousness. This high-level thinking and participation in discussions was also common across the school in partner work, as seen in a grade nine class on the Americas, where students explored the role of geography during the Trans-Atlantic trade. Students read and discussed accounts of the Stono Rebellion from different perspectives, questioning one another and the text.
Additional Finding

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

Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics and assessments aligned with the school’s curricula, to evaluate students’ performance on tasks. Teachers’ assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment tools such as checklists.

Impact

Students receive actionable feedback regarding their achievement, from teachers and peers. Through questioning, teachers make effective adjustments to meet student learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of written tasks shared in classrooms, online assignments and work samples exhibited in a meeting with students, indicates that regular use of rubrics with aligned peer and teacher feedback and next steps is a common practice across classrooms. In a literary response essay shared, the student received rubric-based feedback from a peer and a teacher. The teacher provided feedback about the student’s claim, encouraging the student to be more specific and to flesh out more details in a supporting paragraph. Similarly, on a graded math assignment a student lost points and received feedback from the teacher about issues with arithmetic and a missing definition of a limit. The student was allowed to go back and use this actionable feedback to correct the work for half credit. This very specific feedback to students from the teacher, with opportunities to correct or revise their work, was evident in student work shared across the school.

- In classrooms, teachers routinely check for understanding as small groups of students work, asking questions to elicit student understanding or to help students adjust their thinking. In a literature class, the teacher listened-in as two students discussed the development of a character. As the students talked, the teacher shared that there might be more evidence to support their thinking in the text and then referred students back to a section of the text to incorporate more evidence from the text to support their thinking. While the teacher did not tell the students what to include, the guidance back to a specific area in the text reflected an effective adjustment that allowed the students to go back to the text on their own and deepen their thinking.

- Teachers across the school shared that they use a variety of assessment tools to routinely engage students in self-assessment activities. This includes the use of online formative assessment tools, such as students completing surveys, exit tickets, or journals online, detailing their understanding about key ideas and posting questions that they still had at the end of the lesson. Lesson plans demonstrate teachers’ use of data from these assessments to create or revise student groups and teaching points. Student self-assessment activities were also demonstrated during instruction in classrooms visited. In some classes, the teacher visited groups of students, listening in on their discussions or examining their written work and then bringing the whole class together to make an adjustment to meet observed learning needs. In a math class, the teacher paused the lesson to highlight a step of a problem that several groups had missed. The teacher followed up with a brief re-teach of the strategy for addressing the problem, which involved finding the base value of a rate. Students engaged in self-assessment, discussing how their mis-step brought them to a different answer and revised their work to get the correct answer.
Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations in teams. Through distributed leadership, teachers develop curriculum and discuss students, including ways to improve engagement, to help students meet Common Core Learning Standards.

Impact

Teachers are strengthening their instructional capacity through intervisitations and have a voice in curriculum development, which affects students’ learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers used the Progressive Redesign Opportunity for Schools of Excellence (PROSE) program as a lens to strengthen teachers’ capacity to provide instruction that is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and incorporates the instructional shifts. For example, teachers decided to implement activities to reinforce speaking, listening and discussions in student work products. In an observed teacher team meeting, a group of science teachers reviewed end-of-term grades and possible interventions that they each would use to address learning needs of students. Teachers shared what they were individually trying in their own classes, though one teacher mentioned using a strategy from a peer, which involved assigning random reporters for student group work to bolster student engagement. Teachers discussed their own students and shared possible next steps that they might take in their designated classrooms.

- A distributive leadership structure is part of the school culture and high expectations. Teachers serve as faculty at both Bard College and Bard High School Early College, which ensures that the curricula are aligned to the Common Core and promote college readiness. Teachers share intervisitation schedules and support colleagues in instructional decisions that impact curriculum development. Minutes provided an overview of department-specific initiatives to enhance student engagement which is strengthening the capacity of teachers and supporting student learning.

- The discussion of the science teacher team meeting observed included a focus on student engagement. Teachers autonomously shared they have been tracking instances of students’ non-engagement during classroom activities, for the purpose of teacher reflection. Teachers’ voice is an outgrowth through intervisitation. Teachers recognize the need to adjust curricula and support their peers. This has resulted in teachers building their capacity on how to improve student engagement.