Quality Review Report

2018-2019

South Bronx Academy for Applied Media
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 07X296
778 Forest Avenue
Bronx
NY 10456

Principal: Roshone Ault-Lee

Dates of Review:
November 7, 2018 - November 8, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Jorge Estrella
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

South Bronx Academy for Applied Media serves students in grade 6 through grade 8. 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

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
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<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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</td>
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<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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### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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<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

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<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<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>
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<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>
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<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>
### Findings

The school’s theory of action and the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) provide a supportive, and mutually-respectful learning environment with structures in place to reinforce academic success.

### Impact

The school’s practices result in a safe environment and inclusive culture that supports progress toward school goals where student voice is meaningfully involved in decision-making. All students are well known by more than one adult who help support and coordinate academic and social-emotional learning.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and faculty have refined structures that promote an inclusive and positive learning environment. During the 2018 school retreat, school leaders and teachers designed a theory of action which states, “If we increase schoolwide norms for in-class procedures and student behavior, then we will decrease student opportunity for misbehavior and increase instructional time while improving class culture.” The school implements PBIS, a schoolwide program that uses the core values of respectful, responsible, organized, and safe to support scholars in making positive choices. As an incentive for all scholars to monitor their own progress, the use of Scholar Dollars and Extended Learning Time (ELT) Bucks are embedded within the regular school day, as well as the ELT program. Thus, the Online Occurrence Reporting System (OORS) shows that the, year-to-date suspensions and serious incidents, decreased from 32 level 1-5 incidents in November 2017 to one incident in 2018 and from 12 suspensions in November 2017 to one suspension as of November 2018.

- Scholar voice is welcomed and valued especially through the Scholar Government Association (SGA) which has representation from each class. The SGA Executive Board meets with the principal on a monthly basis to discuss effective ways to make changes around the school. SGA members plan, coordinate and facilitate middle school open school events, where they welcome elementary school families and potential new scholars to the school. SGA members promoted “Feel Good News” every Friday, when they use the loud speaker to acknowledge students and staff accomplishments. The SGA also helped to organize a rally to reinforce PBIS expectations. During parent teacher conferences, all scholars are engaged in “Scholar Led Conferences”. Also, with active participation of SGA members the school promotes activities to acknowledge the diversity within the school community such as the Harvest Festival where stakeholders bring dishes from their nationalities, perform dances, and poetry. The school also embeds activities related to different cultures into the curriculum. Scholars read texts during lessons, written by multicultural authors including such titles as *Thank You Ma’am* by Langston Hughes, *Seventh Grade and Oranges* by Gary Soto, and *Abuela Invents the Zero* by Judith Cofer Ortiz.

- Guidance counselors provide social-emotional support to students, as well as referring students to local agencies for social services. Students have weekly advisory sessions called Executive Functioning Skills class during which school staff have an opportunity to discuss issues such as bullying and college and career preparation, as well as reinforce and teach skills such as anger management strategies, active listening, self-discipline for success and habits of learning. In addition, the school offers extended learning time and intervention classes three times a week. These structures allow school staff to support the individual needs of scholars. Students stated that they have several adults in the school who are always available to discuss any problem or issue that may arise and provide one-on-one support as needed. Students demonstrate their positive attitude toward school through attendance, which is 91.3 percent year-to-date and is 1.5 percentage points higher than November 2017. As a result, the culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes fully support the academic and personal growth of students.
Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula as well as uneven levels of discussion, student thinking, and participation.

Impact

Opportunities for all scholars to actively demonstrate higher-order thinking in meaningful work products and discussions have yet to be manifested consistently across classrooms. The teacher dominated approach leads to uneven levels of student engagement in appropriately challenging tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- In an eighth grade self-contained special education English Language Arts (ELA) class, students watched an engaging video in which the effect of suspense is demonstrated. Students were supposed to record evidence from the video, however only a few students collected notes. The teacher then asked rapid-fire low-level Depth of Knowledge questions and the same few students continued to raise their hands to answer, whilst the majority of the class were not cognitively engaged. Similarly, in a sixth grade art class, during the mini lesson the teacher was explaining the skills that writers use when thinking about what they write. In that process the teacher asked questions such as, “Why are good observation skills important to a creative person’s work?” Only few students responded, so the teacher posed more questions without giving students time to process and elaborate their answers. As a result, few students were not cognitively engaged in the lesson and there were missed opportunities to have the majority of the class demonstrate their thinking.

- Although lesson planning reflects access to curricula through tasks that are cognitively engaging, delivery is inconsistent. Specific language acquisition strategies were not observed in most classes to support English Language Learners (ELLs). In two classes observed the paraprofessional was supporting ELLs by challenging them to understand the meaning of the lessons using the context of the text and the use of sentence starters for their writing assignments. Some instructional practices were limited to verbal or written models of learning, rather than a variety of sensorial modalities including visual, tactile, or kinesthetic approaches to learning. For example, in a seventh grade math lesson, students were working on ratios that relied solely on the exercises provided in the textbook without further entry points or supports. As a result, some scholars have limited opportunities to engage in activities that will challenge their intellect.

- In some classes, students participated in discussions by engaging in peer-to-peer interaction and in-depth analysis. For example, in the eighth grade Integrated Co-Teaching social studies class, scholars were working in small groups engaged in rich discussions around peers’ presentations on John Wilkes Booth, Andrew Johnson, and Black Codes. During presentations, students were writing down questions to presenters. Then, scholars asked follow-up questions to presenters. In this class, all students were highly engaged in the lesson and demonstrated the ability to engage in high-level thinking and participation. However, this level of participation was not consistent across classrooms where teacher-led discussions limited the opportunities for productive conversations. As a result, several students remained unengaged and quiet throughout the lesson.
Findings

Instructional planning documents and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills across grades and subjects. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

The use of *Data Wise* protocols to analyze data and scholars’ work ensures refinements to the curricula and academic tasks, which are planned to include supports and access for ELLs and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of instructional planning documents indicates that the school addresses scholars’ individual needs, using rigorous content, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills along with an English as a New Language component that is embedded into lesson plans. ELA curricula has been adjusted to ensure that students use more textual evidence to justify claims, thus reinforcing the instructional shift. The school incorporates into lesson planning the, restate, answer, cite, and explain (RACE) protocol, as well as graphic organizers which are included into all content area planning to scaffold learning and organize thinking. In math, students are using study the problem, organize the facts, line-up a plan, verify the plan with action, and examine the results or (SOLVE).

- Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are planned through the design of activities to involve scholars in collaborative and intellectual work about a text, facilitated with open-ended questions and strategies, specific learning targets, and performance tasks. In a sixth grade unit plan, the scholars’ performance task was to explore the essential question, “How are people shaped by the obstacles they face?” and will then write an informational text, responding to the following prompt, “Explain the strategies these writers (Derek Jeter and Barack Obama) use to convey their experiences, challenges, and goals.” An eighth grade social studies unit asks scholars to answer the question, “Was Reconstruction a success or a failure for the United States (US)?” To respond, students will engage in reading and interpreting a diversity of primary and secondary sources to gather information, analyze the effects of the Civil War on various Americans, identify, describe, and evaluate evidence and multiple perspectives about Reconstruction Era events, and discern how characteristics of a region affected the history of the US. The culmination of these tasks is to write an essay and prepare a slideshow presentation on specific topics of the Reconstruction Era. As a result, students are able to further their thinking by using a diversity of sources to arrive to their own conclusions.

- Teacher teams use a *Data Wise* protocol to review student work in order to adjust curricular units to meet the needs of students. The review of observed lesson plans lessons demonstrated that most teachers are incorporating tasks that are planned and refined using student work and data. For example, the seventh grade math lesson plan about ratios includes support on how to break down the task into small and achievable sections, modified graphic organizers, calculators, manipulatives, glossaries, one-on-one support and strategic grouping for students with disabilities and ELLs to cognitively engage them. A similar approach in an ELA lesson plan includes visuals, native language supports, graphic organizers, and sentence starters.
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

The school uses common assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas. Teachers consistently reflect on the use of ongoing checks for understanding and allow students time to self-assess their work.

Impact

Teachers’ use of ongoing assessments aligned to the curricula, and analysis of common information on student learning through the use of the Scholar Work Analysis Protocols, results in effective adjustments to purposefully support students.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers review the results from common assessments and disaggregate the data to note specific strengths and establish targeted goals for individual students. For example, the review of the Scholar Work Analysis Protocols revealed that teachers collaborate and determine scholar performance into three levels: high, expected, and low. In these categories teachers identify the mastery, misconceptions, wrong information, and what scholars did not demonstrate that was expected. In a text-based response about how the author builds suspense in *Tell Tale Heart*, 65 percent of the scholars met the objectives (understood the types of suspense an author uses), 17 percent partially met (only cited one piece of textual evidence and missing the analysis, only explained a portion of RACE) and 18 percent did not meet the objectives (no explanation of textual evidence lack of transition words). The analysis of information from common assessments lead to instructional adjustments, resulting in targeted academic support for improved scholar achievement.

- During classroom visits, teachers frequently confer with students to help them hone in on their learning targets, concepts, and/or essential skills for academic improvement. Most teachers and paraprofessionals were observed using a formative assessment tool to capture students’ responses and progress. For example, during the seventh grade ELA lesson, students were engaged in citing strong evidence to support valid inferences to determine the meaning of at least three words and phrases as they are used in the text. As the teacher confers with students, she was monitoring their progress on an assessment tool. The teacher then made adjustments by regrouping students or providing a different graphic organizer to push students’ thinking. This effective way of implementing checks for understanding through conferring is capturing scholars’ progress and is consistently reflected across classrooms.

- Students shared that teachers give students opportunities to reflect and self-assess their work. In most classrooms visited, students were engaged in peer-assessment and used self-reflection forms and checklists to give peer feedback. In one classroom, the teacher allotted time for students who presented their work to groups to receive feedback about their presentation. Scholars used a presentation rubric that assesses the following criterion: voice level, eye contact/body language, content organization, and group work. Peers provided feedback using the expectations of the rubric. In most classroom visits, scholars used exit tickets which include a self-reflection rating scale and space to write about their levels of understanding of the learning target. Teachers use these exit slips to adjust student groupings, curricula, and instruction for the following day.
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

High expectations are consistently communicated to staff via the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, through professional learning and ongoing feedback. Staff and school leaders consistently communicate the message of college and career readiness.

Impact

School leaders have a system of accountability for high expectations through a variety of forums and documents. Staff help families understand that student achievement is the key to a successful path to college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders regularly convey high expectations for all members of the school community, through discussions at regular teacher meetings, department meetings, Instructional Leadership and Assessment Team and data team meetings. These also communicated during ongoing professional learning sessions, one-on-one and team conversations. Also, the staff handbook details expectations related to pedagogical practices aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, professionalism, school culture, and logistics. School leaders and teachers have collaboratively developed a professional development (PD) plan in response to a needs assessment and aligned to schoolwide goals. School leaders and teachers collaborate to send a weekly newsletter highlighting student achievement.

- The PD calendar includes topics grounded in the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, for each week. The topics focus on lesson planning, assessments, school climate, and school culture. In addition, teachers are partnered with mentors, and engage in weekly mentoring meetings once per week. Mentoring sessions include, but are not limited to, conferences about their practices, curriculum development, and building content knowledge. As a result, the 2018 School Environmental Survey shows that 100 percent of teachers say that their PD experiences this year have been sustained and coherent. School leaders hold staff accountable through formal and informal observations, where they offer verbal and written feedback. School leaders meet with teachers at the end of the unit assessment results, utilizing this information to determine instructional and curricular next steps as well as to inform interventions to students. As a result, both teachers and school leaders discuss strategies based on student outcomes to meet expectations.

- School leaders and staff communicate with families through, phone calls, emails, flyers, workshops, report cards, and student progress reports. In addition, parents indicated that teachers use an online grading system to communicate their child’s academic and socio-emotional progress and school events. Parents shared that during weekly parent engagement time, they have opportunities to address their children’s academic and social-emotional progress, or convey any concern that they may have. Constructive conversations between teachers and parents, as well as timely detection of at-risk scholars result in the design of collaborative plans to help the scholar receive the necessary support to meet goals. The school also offers opportunities for parents during open school night, parent-teacher conferences, and one-on-one sessions with teachers to help them understand students’ grades and scores, as well as offering workshops for middle school articulation. In addition, teachers provide workshops for parents on how to use the online grading platform. As a result, parents are informed about their children’s progress and partner with the school’s staff to support their children on a path to college and career readiness.
Additional Finding

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

All teachers are consistently engage in inquiry-based, professional collaborations to analyze student data through the use of Data Wise protocols and participate in leadership roles and schoolwide activities to support students’ progress.

**Impact**

Embedded structures for professional collaborations promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of the Common Core, strengthening teachers’ instructional capacity and building teachers’ leadership capacity to have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School leaders ensure that all teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations. Teachers meet two periods per week, for data meetings and common planning, and Mondays are dedicated for PD. These professional collaborations allow teachers to reflect on teacher practice and its implications. During data meetings, teachers review, evaluate, and analyze scholars’ data using Data Wise protocols. During common planning, teachers unpack learning standards, modify the pacing calendar, plan lessons, and share best practices. Teachers agreed that these collaborations have been critical to better understanding scholars’ needs and help inform specific areas where they need to work to improve their instructional capacity to support student learning.

- Teacher teams share effective strategies to impact scholar learning schoolwide. For example, in the observed ELA/social studies team meeting, teachers analyze student work from ELA tasks in writing and short text-based responses, to identify writing patterns of students’ strengths and challenges. Teachers worked in pairs analyzing students’ responses and noted their findings on a graphic organizer. Teachers agreed that most students are getting better using RACE strategies. However, students with disabilities and ELLs are still facing challenges with providing proper evidence or understanding inference. They agreed that next steps include more structure for writing and how to provide evidence, and support for understanding inferencing and the question posed. The review of agendas and minutes from teacher teams revealed that teachers have an ongoing process in place to look at scholars’ work and data, reflect on their practice and make adjustments to instruction while adding strategies to build instructional capacity. The 2018 School Environment Survey indicates that 100 percent of teachers say that they talk with one another about instruction.

- Distributive leadership structures are embedded in teacher-led collaborative meetings and opportunities to participate in committees, thus building capacity. The main focus of these meetings allows teacher teams to make decisions about implications for instruction and communicate their findings and noticing to colleagues across grades and subjects in order to address any gaps in teaching and learning. Teachers expressed that they have influence and decision-making control involving lesson planning and the delivery of instruction. In the grade team leader meeting, teacher leaders create goals for each team, design and facilitate PD and plan schoolwide activities. Teachers also have opportunities to participate in committees such as the Lincoln Center collaboration (Broadway Jr.), SGA, academic parents teacher team, and technology advisory committee among others.