Quality Review Report

2015-2016

Bronx Envision Academy

High School X511

1619 Boston Road
Bronx
NY 10460

Principal: Emily Shu

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Lead Reviewer: Jacqueline Gonzalez

The School Context

Bronx Envision Academy is a high school with 399 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 2% Asian, 34% Black, 60% Hispanic, and 2% White students. The student body includes 12% English Language Learners and 22% students with disabilities. Boys account for 43% of the students enrolled and girls account for 57%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 82.0%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
To what extent does the school…	**Area of:**	**Rating:**
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	**Additional Findings**	**Proficient**
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	**Focus**	**Proficient**
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	**Additional Findings**	**Proficient**
School Culture		
To what extent does the school…	**Area of:**	**Rating:**
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	**Additional Findings**	**Proficient**
Systems for Improvement		
To what extent does the school…	**Area of:**	**Rating:**
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	**Celebration**	**Well Developed**

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed

Findings

Teacher teams systematically analyze pedagogical practices and resulting student work products for students they share. A wide range of teacher leadership opportunities are embedded across the school in structured professional collaborations.

Impact

The work of teacher teams results in improved instructional practices and mastery of goals for groups of students. Teachers play an integral role in making decisions that affect student learning school wide.

Supporting Evidence

- The structure and content of teacher team meetings are aligned to a strategic professional development plan that engages all teachers and staff in collaborative inquiry focused on student learning. Teachers meet in vertical teams by departments and horizontal or grade teams twice weekly. Decisions to increase frequency of teacher collaboration stemmed from teacher input. Teachers interviewed stated that the opportunity to engage in inquiry and common planning around specific students' learning needs has strengthened their pedagogical capacity across the school as evidenced by feedback they receive from colleagues during Learning Walks. Teachers say they have refined their practices across content areas, for example, in requiring students to make their thinking visible in written and oral responses to prompts.

- In a tenth grade team meeting, teachers utilized a "Kid Talk" protocol for analyzing student work with the goal of targeting needs for a particular student and extending strategies to similar students across the grade. In addition to student work products from recent lessons, teachers also reviewed documents from an artifact box which included transcripts, attendance data, middle school achievement information and anecdotal data about the student's overall profile. After an in depth analysis of students' writing including notable gaps and strengths, teachers determined that they would focus on key strategies including the use of outlining scaffolds, sentence starters and guidance during writing conferences with the teacher. Teachers extended this analysis and solution to other students they teach and agree to revisit the impact of their decisions in an upcoming meeting. This structure is representative of what other teachers interviewed highlight as a strength across the school.

- Systematic data analysis conducted by teacher teams, enable teachers to target supports so that groups of students attain mastery of goals. The January English Regents exam results indicated improvements, even for students reading far below grade level.

- Teacher leadership is exemplified in roles such as grade team leaders, department facilitators, and participation in Learning Walks. Additionally, teachers make key decisions about what and how students learn. Teachers interviewed say that the school's culture encourages genuine collaboration that is also understood by students. Teachers may decide to co-teach a lesson that is not typically their assigned section or subject but based on students' needs and teacher strengths. They also provide feedback to colleagues after observing lessons in Learning Walks which are often teacher led.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

Across most classrooms, lessons, curriculum and instructional practices consistently reflect the school's focus on making thinking visible. Teachers provide scaffolds, language supports and varied instructional supports to address diverse students' learning needs.

Impact

Lessons include multiple entry points ensure that all learners participate in tasks that are appropriately challenging. In a few classrooms teaching strategies and activities sometimes limit student demonstration of higher order thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- Learning activities in classrooms visited reflect the school's instructional values: Connections, Project-based learning, and Reflection. Administrators and teachers alike articulate that students learn best when content is contextualized in the contemporary world and they are able to engage in hands-on activities that help them demonstrate their thinking. An art lesson provided opportunities for students to reflect on their own and their peers' projects by engaging in art critique of graffiti as art or vandalism through understanding the connection to relevant contexts.

- In a Global History lesson, students worked in groups, some with additional support from the teacher based on needs, to analyze a variety of primary source documents to develop a response to the daily question, "How did the idea of Nationalism influence Latin America's independence?" Students wrote their ideas on chart paper once consensus was reached. Students shared ideas and checked their thinking against primary source documents. However in some lessons, the teacher's questions did not foster the critical analysis of text higher-level discussion and presentation. For example in a math class students responded with one word or short phrases and were not asked to expand their answer once it was judged as correct or incorrect.

- Across grades and content areas, students use a strategy for analyzing documents which promotes critical reading skills. The acronym APPARTS reminds students to ask questions about the author, place, prior knowledge, audience, reason, the main idea and the significance of the document. Students used this process in a Global History lesson as they reviewed primary source documents to determine the connection between nationalism and independence. These strategies and scaffolds support diverse learners in meeting their learning targets and requires that all students make their thinking visible in response to essential questions.

- In some classrooms teachers facilitated small group work by monitoring how students were approaching the task but did not always push strategically for students to demonstrate their understanding of the content objectives. For example, in a lesson on perspective the teacher walked to each group and ensured they had the procedural aspects of selecting roles for the assignment. However, several students remained unclear as to how to approach the task once roles were determined.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

School leaders and teachers ensure that across content areas, curricula are aligned to content standards, Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. Academic tasks consistently emphasize rigor and higher order skills for all students.

Impact

The school's purposeful decisions have resulted in instructional coherence across grades and content areas. Lessons accentuate critical thinking and analytical skills for all learners including English Language Learners and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- Across grades and content areas, curricular documents reveal a thoughtfully laid out progression of learning that is aligned to Common Core Standards and expectations for each grade level. Curriculum design and development, by administrators and staff, is guided by the school's instructional focus of "making thinking visible". Thus each unit of study reviewed includes an end product which requires students to work on projects, both individually and in groups, make presentations to peers as well as to external stakeholders such as business executives partnered with the school and self-reflective exercises such as in art lessons where students must share the thinking and decision-making process they engage in to produce a required art piece. This level of self and peer assessment offers all learners an opportunity to demonstrate their critical and analytical skills.

- In each subject, as curricular documents and units of study are developed, the school level accreditation committee and coaches from the school's consulting partners and instructional coaches provide feedback to teachers. Curricular documents require that every subject includes a backward planning model, focuses on rich essential questions and meets expectations of the Common Core and content standards. This process for example is reflected in a unit on argumentative writing which is explored via the essential question, "Does creativity matter?". Related tasks and discussion prompts aim to elicit opinions about graffiti in daily lessons that probe opinions about art vs. vandalism. The organization of lessons across subjects is consistent school wide.

- Expectations for rigor and higher order skills are emphasized for all learners. Lessons include supports for students with disabilities and English Language Learners, including visual supports, translated texts, grouping strategies and direct teacher support as defined in lesson plans reviewed. In a math lesson on linearity and functions, differentiated strategies varied from heterogeneous groups, handouts of drawn axes with numbers, tables for filling in possible solutions and vocabulary lists. Goals and tasks for all students are consistently rigorous and require that diverse students meet same expectations.

- In an English lesson, students served as teachers or facilitators of discussion on the identification of the author's use of literary devices in *Pride and Prejudice*. Student teaching teams asked their class of peers to identify events and characters used by the author to advance the conflict and the plot in the text. Teachers assessed understanding of students leading the discussion as well as those who participated in general discussion. Students were required to provide evidence of how the text supports their response to questions posed.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
The school's assessments practices are aligned to curricula and include a school wide grading policy, rubrics and common assessments that are used to determine student progress and learning.

Impact
Assessment data provides teachers and students meaningful feedback regarding student achievement. Teachers use the information to effectively adjust curricula and lessons.

Supporting Evidence
- Teachers use standards based rubrics and a common grading policy across all content areas to provide feedback to students about the quality of their work. Teachers school wide use the New York City (NYC) Performance Assessments as a baseline and develop interim benchmark tasks to determine student progress throughout the year. The school's accreditation committee reviews every assessment to ensure alignment to curricula and standards and provides suggestions for revisions if necessary based on learning goals and students needs within each unit of study.

- Based on the analysis of student performance data on Regents exams, teacher observations of students in class and review of student work products, teachers make adjustments to instructional and curricular materials to address students' learning needs. For example, history department teachers reviewed students' thematic essays and analyzed multiple choice questions that students answered incorrectly. As a result, teachers redesigned writing courses to support students with improved thematic essays.by integrating Global History content in the writing curriculum. Teachers state that student writing is improving school wide as a result of the humanities approach to content and writing.

- As a result of school wide analysis of student work and data, adjustments to curricular offerings were made. For example, the number of sections for Global History were doubled, including an English as a Second Language (ESL) section to address the needs of English Language Learners. Similarly, a special education teacher was added to the History team to ensure that diverse learners had access to the content with the appropriate scaffolds and supports.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations for instruction, aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, to the entire staff. Similarly, teachers consistently communicate expectations for college and career readiness to students and their families.

Impact
Teachers are effectively supported via a thoughtful professional development plan and are held accountable for meeting expectations. Students and their families also receive the information they need to understand their progress towards post-secondary readiness for academic and career paths.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers are provided with strategic professional development that aligns to the school's goals and to the expectations of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Expectations for instructional delivery are communicated through the school's core values as well which focus on making sure all lessons include Connections, Project based learning activities and Making thinking Visible. School leaders, coaches and consultants form the Institute for Student Achievement support teachers in meeting these expectations by providing mentoring and feedback about teacher practice.

- Among other collaborations, the school partners with College Bound Initiative to provide college counseling, summer intensive, college tours and scholarship opportunities. In order to support the large number of students and families that primarily speak Spanish, a bilingual college counselor holds informational sessions and workshops to ensure that all students have access to a wide range of colleges and scholarship opportunities.

- Parents interviewed describe the staff and administrators as caring and always available to provide information and support. Parents appreciate that their students are well known and that teachers expect all students to succeed. Parents are aware that the school has a clear focus on preparing students for college and careers. One parent said that the support and acceptance of her child in the school was instrumental in helping her overcome a negative middle school experience and that as a result of the positive attention her daughter is thriving and aspires to higher goals in life.