

Quality Review Report

2017-2018

Bronx Envision Academy

High school 12X511

**1619 Boston Road
Bronx
NY 10460**

Principal: Emily Shu

**Dates of Review:
April 25, 2018 - April 26, 2018**

Lead Reviewer: Robin Posner

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 Envision Academy 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

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area	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 Finding	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	Area of 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 Finding	Well Developed

School Quality Ratings continued

School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area	Rating
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults	Additional Finding	Well Developed
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	Area of Celebration	Well Developed
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area	Rating
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	Additional Finding	Well Developed
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	Additional Finding	Proficient
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	Additional Finding	Proficient
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	Additional Finding	Well Developed
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	Additional Finding	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and staff systematically emphasize high expectations for professionalism and academic excellence to the entire school community. There is an established culture for learning that challenges students and communicated expectations for their academic achievement.

Impact

The culture that exists in the school results in the demonstration and expression of student ownership of their educational experiences, as well as preparedness for college and careers. Communication structures ensure a high level of trust and mutual accountability between administration and staff.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers engage in professional development focused on aligning instructional practices with the expectations of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Meetings address subject area content, as well as grade level issues. Additionally, expectations are provided through the observation and feedback cycles. Teachers also provide feedback to one another to improve assignments and lesson planning. Some warm and cool feedback addresses pedagogical practices, instructional goals and planning and questions. The teacher group believes that the feedback they receive through observations by colleagues and supervisors is meaningful and leads to self-reflection and improved practice. Specifically, teachers state that this feedback specific to the quality of questions being posed during their lessons helps ensure accountability to the high expectations needed to provide the best possible learning experiences for the students.
- High expectations for students includes the instructional goals developed every semester that are both personal and school-based. Students shared that all school staff works to ensure they meet their goals. Students shared goals around passing classes, meeting certain grade requirements, the college application process and improving time spent at home on studying and school work. Core values are reinforced through a scaffold of advisory curricula that includes the development of study skills, preparedness for the world of work, higher education and citizenship. Students are given opportunities to participate in internships and career day events that enable them to make real work connections between academic excellence, community awareness and the school's emphasized core values.
- The school's numerous activities for students support their development with the appropriate tools to succeed in college and the workplace. Rigorous coursework including advanced placement courses in math, science and English Language Arts (ELA), as well as numerous art, music and drama classes are regularly offered. Parents and students state the administrators and staff have high expectations for excellence and success beyond high school. Students are exposed to a variety of colleges and post-graduation opportunities beginning from ninth grade and feel supported and confident that they are making sound and realistic decisions regarding their college or career.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect a set of adopted instructional priorities about how students learn best as observed in student work products and purposeful student discussions.

Impact

Students produce meaningful work products and high levels of student thinking and participation, although lack demonstration of instructional ownership across classes.

Supporting Evidence

- The instructional priorities for all classes include a focus on visual thinking strategies, questioning, student-to-student discussion, peer feedback and review, actionable feedback and checks for understanding. Most of these adopted priorities were coherent throughout classes and provided students with opportunities to produce meaningful work, although in some classes, a few students were not as engaged as others, limiting their critical thinking and demonstration of content. In a geometry class, students were reflecting on the many ways to prove that quadrilaterals are parallelograms. Students worked individually to jot down on a post-it their biggest learning from the lesson. In a grade-nine ELA lesson, students spoke with partners to determine if they believed love at first sight was real. Students jotted down their answer along with their partner's answer and shared out their findings. As pairs shared, they were asked to agree or disagree with other pairs and build on to their findings. However, in other classrooms, there were missed opportunities for rich student-to-student conversations or for students to elaborate or build on to other student responses.
- Across classrooms, students were arranged in pairs, triads or small groups to promote discussion and critical thinking, often strategically to support the needs of individual learner's literacy competency. In a US History class, students were placed into teams to argue for/against the Lend-Lease Act. Students had to work together to cite specific evidence from primary source documents in their arguments. The students engaged in critical thinking discussions purposefully knowing it's an instructional focus expected of them as communicated by the teacher. Discussions in some other classes, reflected a similar instructional focus on attempts at rich discussions, although in other classes, groups did not seem purposeful and meaningful leading to students not being engaged in rigorous conversations with peers.
- In most classes students were engaged in small groups or partner discussions. In an advanced placement biology class, student groups discussed various ethical situations pulling evidence from articles to support their thinking. However, in an algebra class student groups did not seem purposeful and many students were off task or not having productive conversations. In a Global History class, students were sitting in groups, but asked to individually respond to the teacher who then reiterated student thoughts.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and staff ensure that ELA and math curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts and are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

Adoption of Common Core-aligned materials and strategies across subjects, as well as consistent planning ensures that curricular are coherent across the school and cognitively engaging for a range of learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers consistently refine academic tasks to make sure all students can access the Common Core. Unit plans across the school illustrate vocabulary and key terms, skills and strategies, essential understandings, content, activities, assessment and resources, such as the different manipulatives needed for specific lessons and units. Lesson plans and academic tasks include the integration of the instructional shifts across subject areas. Student in all levels of ELA are asked to write from sources, use academic vocabulary and read complex texts. Math unit plans evidence focus, coherence, fluency, and deep application of concepts.
- Curriculum support is provided by the Learning Partners Program (LPP) who works with teacher teams to ensure alignment to the Common Core. Teachers' review and adjust curriculum documents in peer review teams, department teams and interdisciplinary teams. Teams collaborate to revise curriculum and assessment based on feedback from students and outside reviewers and based on analysis of student work. Teachers submit revised curriculum documents twice yearly for review.
- Teachers plan and refine lessons and tasks based on assessments of student work, Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and teacher observation data. Teachers adjust lessons to provide scaffolds and supports for students. An AP Biology lesson indicates that while students will start out in heterogeneous groups, they will move into pre-selected groups of two for needed support. The lesson plan also includes notes on a student who needs support with reading comprehension and students who she could be paired with. An AP English Literature and Composition lesson plan has high performing students paired with lower performing students to help provide peer-to-peer feedback. Other student groups indicated that students will be pre-assigned to high, mid and low groups.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Across most classrooms, teachers use assessment and rubrics that are aligned to the Common Core and the curricula. The school uses common assessments to determine student progress towards goals across grades and subject areas.

Impact

Actionable feedback is provided to students and teachers regarding student achievement and it is used to adjust curricular and instructional decisions so that all students, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, demonstrate increased mastery.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses a web-based reading assessment to support all teachers in providing students with appropriately leveled materials based upon students' reading levels. Teachers also utilize a teacher-designed writing baseline across all disciplines. This data is used to determine strategic groups, refine whole class instruction and determine student needs for additional instructional support. The analysis of assessment results has led to the development of instructional goals for staff and students and the reinforcement of skills across all subject areas. The use of data to inform and adjust instruction in all content areas is consistent across classrooms and classroom checks for understanding lead to instructional adjustments that support all learners. As such, current Lexile levels show an increase for students with disabilities and for ELLs.
- A review of student work, and meetings with teachers and students revealed that feedback on student work includes next steps. Comments on an ELA task provided students with positive feedback and next steps. One teacher noted, "I like how you stated your claim/position in the opening. That made it easy for me to follow your claim throughout your essay." And next steps included, "Don't be afraid to include a hook. This will help engage the reader to continue reading." Across subjects, feedback is detailed and provides students with clear next steps. On a social studies writing piece, the teacher offered the following next steps: "Try to mention another position or counterclaim and explain why the evidence for your claim outweighs the counterclaim. Try to prove the other side wrong."
- All teachers utilize item analysis and disaggregated data to identify learning gaps, trends and patterns. Analyzed test scores of specific subgroups of students have enabled teachers to pinpoint which standards have been mastered and which groups of students require reteaching, remediation or enrichment. Based on a review of the Living Environment Regents, the school realized that students needed more scaffolding before the regents. As a result, the school created a new course for students that was not just straight test prep and placed all students who had previously failed the assessment into this class and set an interim goal of fifteen percent passing. Eighteen percent of the students placed in this class passed the Regents in January.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leadership supports the development of teachers through monthly observations and feedback cycles and uses observation data to design and facilitate professional development.

Impact

Current observation and professional development practices provide teachers with effective feedback, next steps and support.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and peers support all teachers with frequent cycles of observation and support. Support and supervision is grounded in the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and the analysis of student work. Teachers at a question and answer session shared that the debrief of lessons includes low inference observation notes from the lesson, the lesson plan, student work samples (if applicable) that included high, medium and low level work. Prior to the debrief of the lesson, leadership follow up the observation within thirty minutes with an email that poses some questions for the teacher to think about prior to the debrief, as well as some areas of celebration. Teachers agreed that they feel supported and encouraged by observation practices. One teacher shared, “Their feedback is specific and they will target something like asking high level questions if they know you need to work on it. They really try to help you fix your developing areas.” In addition to the observations and support from administrators, peer teachers and other teacher leaders and coaches also work to support the development of teachers, including those that are new to the profession or the building.
- School leaders have an effective system in place that uses teacher observation data to make some informed decisions about professional learning. Professional learning for teachers is connected to the school’s advance data and as one teacher shared, “is sometimes connected to teacher goals.” Professional learning records demonstrate a sense of being strategic in supporting teacher development. For example, school leaders have built partnerships with organizations such as Learning Partners Program (LPP), which is targeting professional learning for teachers. There are also peer leaders that work closely with the school leaders and with teachers to help teachers better utilize student data to identify professional learning needs of teachers. Succession plans are emerging as school leaders are identifying teachers for leadership roles within the school.
- Another focus for the administration is internal professional learning and leveraging the expertise found within the school. To support growth in teacher practices, teachers have collaborative periods with opportunities for leadership and growth for teacher leaders, grade leaders and department leaders. One classroom teacher shared that increased collaboration has strengthened her practice. She stated, “There is more structure to our meetings now and we are aligning practices across the school and using a common language.”

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

All teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations both in content areas and at the grade level. Teachers are empowered to positively affect student learning through teacher leadership opportunities.

Impact

Collaborations within teams have strengthened teachers' instructional capacity and established a level of school-wide instructional coherences as demonstrated through gains on the Living Environment Regents exam. Teachers have built leadership capacity and have a voice in key decisions regarding curricula that affect student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers across the school collaborate in professional teams where they develop and implement school-wide instructional practices, embedding Common Core and instructional shifts to continuously promote improved achievement for all learners. In an observed History department meeting, teachers analyzed student work using a protocol to identify trends, create groupings and design scaffolds. One teacher shared, "All of my students can give some basic level of analysis but sometimes an attempt at analysis can just be basically a restatement of a quote from the text." Another noted, "The explanation of text evidence is very basic in these student examples." A third questioned, "Do they know that the point of analysis is to explain how the quote connects to the theme?" Teams have an established protocol for sharing and reflecting on student work and assessment data and to track their meeting progress. Their meeting minutes' show clear next steps for classroom implementation which included using Socratic seminar to bring more academic conversations into the classroom. This would, hopefully, help them write about it more with simplified activities that show them contexts via quotes for sourcing.
- Teachers collaboratively plan and refine curriculum through the school year in inquiry-based teacher teams. Teams use a structured protocol in which everyone has a role. As one teacher noted about the shared protocol, "It gives us a shared language and a solid way of thinking about, and talking about the work." As part of this, the teams revise curricula and the portfolio process by looking at student work, and the rubrics and the expectations on how to spiral up the skills beginning in ninth grade. Teachers examine all curricula to ensure it is Common Core and shift aligned, is rigorous and supports ELLs and students with disabilities.
- School leaders and teachers can identify distributed leadership practices and structures that are deeply rooted in the school's day-to-day operations and articulate how these structures foster a culture in which teacher leaders provide continual input into strategic decisions that affect student achievement. Teacher leaders at both the grade and department level are on the Instructional Cabinet, Consultation Committee, and School Leadership Team and are model teachers within the LPP. Teachers cited involvement in the designing and facilitating of all curricula, the decision and planning of banning cell phones and ensuring leaders meet their goal of 50 percent of all observations done by January. As one teacher stated, "We started here knowing we would be wearing different hats and that we each would take on a piece of the responsibility pie, and school leadership ensures that we do."