

NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Office of Accountability

Differentiated Accountability - School Quality Review (SQR)

SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW REPORT

DBN:	10X243
District Name:	District 10
School Name:	West Bronx Academy for the Future
School Address:	500 East Fordham Road, Bronx, NY 10458
Principal:	Wilper Morales
Accountability Phase/Category:	Improvement (year-1) - Comprehensive
Area of Identification:	English Language Arts- All students; African American Students; and Economically Disadvantaged Students
Dates of On-site Review:	May 15 – 16, 2012

PART 1: MISSION STATEMENT

“West Bronx Academy for the Future is an urban community committed to accelerating student learning in a structured environment with a focus on technology.”

PART 2: SCHOOL STRENGTHS

- Parents hold the school in high regard and report that it provides a safe and welcoming environment for learning.
- The school’s guidance and counseling services provide support for students’ social and emotional needs.
- Teachers and other staff work well together and support each other, resulting in a collegial working atmosphere.
- The school’s on-site Montefiore Health Clinic provides a valuable community resource to support the health and well-being of students and parents.

PART 3: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND UTILIZATION OF DATA

FINDINGS:

- Document review by the review team indicates that school leaders collect and distribute a wide range of data to understand student performance. However, the school does not consistently use data to identify and then implement specific strategies to improve student achievement in English

language arts (ELA) within each of the identified subgroups, reducing the impact of data analysis on promoting student progress.

- Document review and interviews by the review team with teachers indicate that they collect data on student achievement through formal and informal assessments and refer to differentiation in lesson plans. However, classroom observation shows limited evidence that teachers use data to modify instructional strategies to meet individual students' learning needs, contributing to the underachievement of students in the identified subgroups.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders should analyze student performance data for each individual subgroup to devise specific strategies for improving student progress and achievement in ELA. School leaders should monitor data analysis and the use of data to inform classroom instruction and provide PD for teachers who need support.
- School leaders should provide teachers with professional development (PD) on strategies using available student data to differentiate instruction. School leaders should monitor PD through classroom observation to ensure that teachers use data to modify instruction to meet students' individual learning needs.

II. TEACHING AND LEARNING

FINDINGS:

- In many classrooms observed by the review team, teachers asked lower-level questions, requiring one-word and factual answers, thus not providing students with opportunities to develop higher order thinking skills and demonstrate their mastery of the concepts taught.
- Classroom observations by the review team indicated that many lessons were teacher-directed with limited opportunity for students to interact with each other through classroom discussions and group-work. This contributes to limited student engagement.
- The review team's examination of teachers' lesson plans shows that they generally follow the school's expectations for lesson plan content. However, classroom observation shows inconsistency in teachers' delivery of lessons, impacting student achievement.
- Classroom observations by the review team in ELA shows limited evidence of teachers using a variety of specific instructional strategies to improve students' reading and writing skills, contributing to limited progress in these areas.
- Document reviews and interviews by the review team with staff indicate that school leaders expect teachers to develop their own grading and marking policies. However, this expectation results in inconsistency in how student work is graded and has not provided students and teachers with a common understanding of the standards and expectations for work. For example, in one class the student portfolio was worth fifty percent, and in another class it was worth ten percent.

- Classroom observations by the review team provided limited evidence that the teaching model for Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) is implemented effectively in all classrooms. In most ICT classrooms visited by the review team, one teacher is primarily responsible for instructional delivery, with the other teacher in a supporting role. As a result, students do not fully benefit from having two certified teachers in a classroom.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders should provide teachers with PD on effective questioning techniques that provide opportunities for students to use higher order thinking skills and engage all students in classroom discussions. Questioning techniques should be included as a focus for walkthroughs and formal observations.
- School leaders should reinforce PD on the use of teaching strategies that promote active student involvement and create opportunities for student interaction. School leaders should also use classroom observations and walkthroughs to ensure that teachers implement the strategies learned in PD in order to increase student motivation and engagement.
- School leaders should monitor instruction to ensure that teachers produce and implement effective lesson plans. School curriculum materials should include model lesson plans, and PD should be provided to those teachers who need additional support in developing lessons.
- School leaders should provide PD on current research based instructional strategies for improving students' reading and writing skills. They should also monitor, through classroom observation, teachers' implementation of the strategies they have learned and provide additional support to staff as needed.
- School leaders should work with the faculty to develop a schoolwide grading policy. Content area teachers should work together to produce specific departmental grading rubrics, and each department should introduce standardization procedures to ensure common understanding and consistency in grading students' work.
- School leaders should provide additional PD for ICT staff on the various co-teaching models and include opportunities to visit model ICT classes to support the implementation of a model where each teacher in the collaborative partnership has an equal role in promoting student learning. School leaders should also monitor ICT classrooms and provide additional support as needed .

III. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

FINDINGS:

- Document review and interviews by the review team with school leaders show that they conduct formal and informal classroom observations to assess the quality of teaching and learning. However, a review of observation reports and interviews with teachers by the review team indicate that school leaders do not consistently provide specific, actionable, written feedback on some observations to help teachers improve their practice. This limits the impact that the observation process has on improving instruction.

- The review team's document review showed that the school's Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) contains goals for improving student achievement. However, the goals for ELA do not provide specific strategies for improvement that include timeframes, interim benchmarks, and success criteria. This limits the impact of improvement planning on raising achievement for the identified subgroups.
- The school uses part-time services from outside sources and the network to provide some support for teachers of ELA. However, review team interviews with teachers and school leaders indicate that it is unclear who is responsible for instructional leadership in ELA, leading to inconsistency in planning and delivery of the ELA curriculum within and between grades and classes.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders should produce a yearly schedule for formal and informal classroom observations and provide timely, actionable, written feedback to all teachers to support them in improving their teaching skills. Implementation of PD strategies should be noted and, where necessary, feedback includes identifying PD needs.
- School leaders should devise specific strategies to improve student achievement in ELA for all identified subgroups. The CEP should include timeframes, interim benchmarks, and success criteria to enable school leaders to monitor the effectiveness of strategies and modify plans accordingly.
- The Principal should designate responsibility for instructional leadership in ELA to a specific school leader and define clear lines of accountability for planning and delivery of the ELA curriculum in all grades.

IV. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

FINDINGS:

- The school shares the building with five other schools, requiring compromises in scheduling that result in academic classes not beginning until period four. Review team interviews with students and parents indicate that the late start to instruction contributes to student tardiness at the beginning of the school day.
- A review of teachers' lesson plans shows that they do not contain reference to specific accommodations and modifications to instruction for students with Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs) and, therefore, do not fully meet the identified needs of these students.
- Review team observations indicate inconsistency in the way in which teachers and security personnel monitor student movement in hallways during transitions, with more effective supervision in some areas than others. This allows some students to waste time in changing classrooms, contributing to tardiness at the start of lessons and disruption to learning for students who are engaged in instruction.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders, with Network support, should work with the school building council to negotiate use of the common shared spaces so that academic classes can begin earlier. The school should

reinforce incentives for punctuality and consequences for tardiness to encourage all students to be punctual at the start of the school day.

- School leaders should review lesson plans and conduct formal and informal observations of classes to ensure that teachers' lesson plans include modifications to instruction for students with IEPs and ensure that teachers implement IEPs in order to meet students' individual needs.
- School leaders should review current policies and procedures and revise them so that all available staff monitors student movement in hallways during transitions to ensure that students move purposefully around school, get to class on time, and do not disrupt learning through tardiness.

V. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FINDINGS:

- Based on review of documentation and interviews with school leaders, the review team found that teachers have had many PD opportunities throughout the year. However, the school's systems for identifying PD needs are limited in relation to key school improvement goals and for evaluating the impact of PD on instruction.
- School leaders consult with teachers and use classroom observations to identify PD needs. However, there is currently no comprehensive PD plan in ELA that identifies specific strategies for improving teachers' skills to raise student achievement. In addition, there is limited evidence that classroom observation reports identify PD needs for the teacher observed or hold teachers accountable for using instructional strategies learned in previous PD sessions.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders should use classroom observation and teacher surveys to identify specific PD needs that relate to the school's goals for improving achievement in ELA. School leaders should observe classes to evaluate the impact that PD has in changing teaching strategies and improving student progress in learning.
- School leaders should produce a schoolwide PD plan for ELA, augmented by individual PD plans for teachers, to ensure that PD supports school improvement goals and meets teachers' individual needs. Classroom observation reports should evaluate the extent to which teachers implement the skills acquired through PD and identify further training needs.

VI. FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

FINDINGS:

- Review team classroom visits and interviews indicated that students have limited access to textbooks and fiction and nonfiction books in different genres in ELA classrooms. This reduces students' opportunity to practice reading and develop independent research skills.
- Classroom observations by the review team found limited evidence of teachers making full use of the technology available to enhance teaching and learning. For example, SMART Boards are

primarily used as projectors in most classrooms. Students report that opportunities to use technology vary widely depending on the teacher.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders when making budgetary decisions should consider supplementing the available resources to support instruction and student learning in ELA, including textbooks and fiction and nonfiction books in different genres and at appropriate reading levels.
- School leaders should provide further PD on the use of technology to enhance teaching and learning. This should include subject specific applications to ensure that all teachers make the most of the technology available to support their content area. School leaders should use classroom observation to monitor teachers' implementation of skills they have gained through PD.

PART 4: CONCLUDING STATEMENT

The findings and recommendations noted in the report are intended to guide the school's inquiry, planning, and the development of the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) for school year 2012-13. The school should also continue its efforts in the implementation of the following Regents Reform Agenda initiatives: P-12 Common Core Learning Standards, Data Driven Instruction and the Annual Professional Performance Reviews for teacher effectiveness.