

NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Office of Accountability

Differentiated Accountability - School Quality Review (SQR)

SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW REPORT

DBN:	32K556
District Name:	District 32
School Name:	Bushwick Leaders' High School for Academic Excellence
School Addresses:	797 Bushwick Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11221
Principal:	Catherine Reilly
Accountability Phase/Category:	Improvement (Year-1) - Comprehensive
Areas of Identification:	English Language Arts - All Students; Hispanic Students; and Economically Disadvantaged Students Mathematics - All Students; Hispanic Students; and Economically Disadvantaged Students Graduation Rate - All Students; and Hispanic Students
Dates of On-site Review:	February 28 – 29, 2012

PART 1: MISSION STATEMENT

“The school will prepare ninth through twelfth grade students from the Bushwick community, regardless of prior academic performance, to become active leaders with an emphasis on academics, college preparation and technology. In collaboration with East Brooklyn Congregations, parents, teachers and the community, student will develop skills to become critical thinkers and problem solvers who will reach their highest potential enabling them to compete in the global economy. The school will take advantage of its small size to develop strong interpersonal relationships based on trust and shared high expectations for students.”

PART 2: SCHOOL STRENGTHS

- The school has a dedicated staff willing to support students academically, as well as socio-emotionally.
- Various community partnerships supplement many of the school’s educational initiatives.

PART 3: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND UTILIZATION OF DATA

FINDINGS:

- There was evidence that the school collects data; however, data from the summative and formative assessments are not used to drive instruction in the areas of English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. Although Regents analysis was done by staff, in many cases the results were not shared with individual students. This practice has resulted in students repeating the same examinations and not showing progress.
- The school uses the Achievement Reporting and Innovation System (ARIS) and Graduation Tracker, and staff is aware that the graduation rate is on the decline; however, there is no clear strategic plan in place to address the decline in graduation rate.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders, with the support of the Network, should develop a schoolwide system for collecting, distributing and analyzing data from formative, interim, and summative assessments. Professional development (PD) should be provided to teachers on how to use data to inform instruction and provide support as needed. School leaders should routinely monitor the use of data through classroom observations, as well as through team and individual meetings.
- School leaders, with the support of the Network, should review and modify the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) to address the decline in the graduation rate. Prevention strategies that promote successful cohort progression that leads to credit accumulation and meeting New York State examination requirements should be investigated and implemented.

II. TEACHING AND LEARNING

FINDINGS:

- There was limited evidence of a consistent curriculum, course syllabi, and pacing calendars for mathematics and ELA course offerings.
- In classrooms observed by the review team, there was little evidence of effective instructional strategies to meet the needs of all students in all subject areas, despite recent PD.
- Student engagement in meaningful instructional activities was limited. There were many lessons where instructional activities lacked challenge and did little to interest students. Although students were working in groups, the groupings were usually random, and students were off task.
- There was limited evidence of the use of higher order thinking questions in classrooms observed. Questioning skills varied greatly among teachers, with a majority of questions requiring factual, recall and one-word answers.

- There was no evidence of differentiated instruction in the classrooms observed by the review team. There was little evidence that current data was used to group students or to match activities to the differing ability levels of the students.
- Although students and parents reported that students feel safe in the school community, there have been a high number of documented discipline incidents in the school; especially in the classrooms. The review team observed some classroom disturbances that impeded learning.
- The school has implemented Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), as evidenced by the posters displayed on the walls and through documentation review. However, students interviewed by the review team were either not aware of the schoolwide expectations or felt that the expectations were not relevant to the school structure.
- Although there are afterschool programs to support the needs of students, there is limited evidence that school leaders monitor these programs for consistent attendance and academic rigor.
- The school does not have a schoolwide grading policy. Currently, each teacher determines the grading policy for the courses he or she teaches.
- There was evidence that the school's Inquiry Teams meet regularly, have targeted a group of students, and discuss student progress and the instructional strategies employed; however, the teams are not sharing best practices with the school community.
- Displayed student work did not consistently include specific and concise rubrics or feedback and did not consistently indicate what each student needed to do to improve and reach the next level.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders, with the assistance of the Network, should provide course syllabi and pacing calendars based on a consistent curriculum for every course and in each department. The school leaders should monitor the implementation through classroom observations.
- The school leaders should ensure that teachers incorporate the instructional strategies learned during PD sessions into their instructional practices and should provide in class support to teachers where needed. School leaders should monitor these practices through both formal classroom observations and focused instructional walkthroughs that give teachers short, immediate, written feedback.
- Through collaboration during common planning time and PD opportunities, teachers should ensure that all instruction is appropriately challenging and demanding. Teachers should provide regular opportunities for students to work collaboratively and use evidence from the text to inform and make arguments so that they become more proactive learners. The school leaders should carry out regular observations of lessons to monitor that this is done consistently.
- PD should be provided to support teachers in developing a variety of questioning techniques aimed at promoting critical thinking and problem solving skills appropriate to student development.

Teachers should ensure that strategies identified in training are integrated into their daily instruction. School leaders should make questioning techniques a focus for classroom observations.

- The school leaders should provide PD opportunities for teachers on a variety of instructional strategies to promote differentiation of instruction. The focus of the PD should be on the use of data to drive lesson planning and instruction. Strategies should focus on ensuring that tasks are scaffolded and match the academic needs of students. School leaders should regularly monitor teachers' planning and instructional practices in the classroom to check that differentiated activities are in place throughout the school. Ongoing PD should be provided for teachers who continue to struggle with using data to match work that meets the individual needs of students.
- The school leaders should contact the Network for assistance with the development and implementation of a classroom management plan and the provision of PD for school staff. The school leader should monitor the implementation of the plan to ensure that classrooms are conducive to learning.
- The school leaders and the PBIS team, with the assistance of the Network, should attend PD on how to fully implement PBIS schoolwide. The staff should regularly provide positive behavior expectation instruction and modeling to all students. School leaders should monitor the implementation and activities of the PBIS through building and classroom walkthroughs and incident data.
- An attendance system that can quickly and easily identify at-risk students' participation in afterschool programs should be developed. The afterschool programs should also be monitored for academic rigor, and student progress data should be shared with the students' subject area and advisory teachers.
- The school leaders and teachers should establish a schoolwide grading policy that students easily understand to ensure they are aware of their academic progress and the next steps needed to make adequate progress. School leaders should monitor the successful implementation of the policy through informal and formal classroom observations.
- The school leaders should create regular opportunities for Inquiry Team findings to be shared and discussed with the school community to build capacity and incorporate best practices into instruction.
- Rubrics should be used as an integral tool in planning and assessing assignments. Teachers should participate in PD activities that model the use of rubrics to provide teacher feedback, peer feedback and student self-assessment. School leaders should monitor student work in books and on display and evaluate the quality of feedback that is provided to ensure that it helps students improve and move to the next level.

III. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

FINDINGS:

- The school leaders do not set high enough expectations for the performance of all students and staff. The CEP does not clearly and specifically outline how progress towards challenging and achievable goals is to be measured. A culture of high achievement is not fully embraced by all staff and school leaders.
- Through interviews with the school leaders and review of the documentation, the review team determined that classroom observations are done regularly; however, the feedback provided to teachers is often general and has not led to academic progress for students in the areas of mathematics and ELA.
- Based on interviews with school leaders and teachers, the review team found no evidence of a plan-assess-adjust cycle. The use of data by teachers is inconsistent, and there is little evidence of the use of a uniform systematic plan-assess-adjust cycle to target individual student goals for graduation or student academic needs in mathematics and ELA.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leadership, with the support of the Network, should re-visit the school's CEP for schoolwide improvement. The school leaders, in conjunction with all stakeholders, should articulate within the CEP a clear vision and strategic plan that drives the school towards high student achievement and clearly outlines the responsibilities of staff and school leaders. The plan should include goals, action plans, and PD and use all resources available through the Network. The implementation of the plan should be carefully monitored and its impact on student achievement measured.
- The school leaders, with the support of the Network, should receive PD on how to provide targeted feedback in observation reports, including next steps that address specific pedagogical strategies.
- The school leadership, with the support of the Network, should develop a plan to use the grade and department team structure to systematize the plan-assess-adjust cycle and monitor on a regular basis the cycle's effectiveness in supporting grade and department level team structures.

IV. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

FINDINGS:

- The school's year-to-date attendance rate was 82.6 percent and teachers interviewed indicated that class attendance is also low. There was no evidence of a school specific attendance plan in place.
- The school offers a few programs to support post-secondary transition options for students; however, there is limited evidence that the needs of high achieving students are being met by the two advanced placement (AP) courses currently being offered.

- The school has developed partnerships with various community based organizations (CBOs); however, there was limited evidence that the support provided by the CBOs have been evaluated to determine the impact these services have on student achievement in mathematics and ELA and the school's graduation rate.
- Parents interviewed stated that the availability of content specific workshops and a well-stocked parent library would further assist them in addressing their children's academic and socio-emotional needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leaders should seek guidance from the Network for strategies for improving class and school wide attendance that have proven successful in similar schools. The school leaders should work with all stakeholders, i.e., the attendance teacher, parent coordinator, parents, school counselors and assistant principals, to develop and implement strategies to improve attendance.
- The school leaders and teachers, with the support of the Network, should implement more AP courses, as well as identify opportunities for students to enroll in courses at post-secondary institutions or in online college level courses.
- The school leaders and CBOs members, with the support of the Network, should evaluate the current programs in place and develop prevention and intervention strategies based on data, if needed. School leaders should closely monitor the programs to ensure that the prevention and interventions programs improve the academic success of students.
- The school leaders should conduct a survey to determine the needs of all parents. Once those needs are determined, a plan should be developed to address and support parents.

V. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FINDINGS:

- Although the school provides various PD activities, there was no evidence that an assessment was conducted to determine the needs of all teachers. As a result, specific teacher needs are not being met.
- There was evidence that PD activities to motivate students and impact student academic success was provided; however, there was limited evidence that these strategies have been integrated into teachers' instructional practice.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leaders should use teacher surveys and informal and formal observations to develop a PD plan that meets the needs of all teachers.

- The school leadership should monitor through informal and formal observation the use of PD strategies learned and provide extra support to teachers where needed.

VI. FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

FINDINGS:

- Based on interviews and classroom observations, the review team found there were a limited number of classroom resources (textbooks and literature books) available for student use in English and other languages.
- Based on interviews, a review of documentation and classroom observations, the review team found that laptop carts were not regularly used, resulting in students having limited opportunities to develop technological literacy skills.
- The school does not have a librarian, as required for secondary schools.
- The library collection contained minimal resources for general education students, students with disabilities and English language learners (ELLs).
- The hallways were clean and graffiti free; however, the numbering system on the classroom doors on each level was confusing. The review team noted that students were also confused about the classroom numbering system.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leaders should seek the support of the Network in securing grants and supplemental funding to evaluate and upgrade the collection of classroom literacy resources to better support the learning needs of all students. Inventories should be kept, and school leaders should oversee and monitor use of resources through classroom observations.
- The school leaders should seek the support of the Network to identify high performing schools that have embedded instructional technology in classrooms in order to develop an effective technology plan for the school. The school leaders should prioritize the implementation of the plan in order for students to master technological literacy skills. PD should be provided to teachers to ensure the successful integration of technology in all classes.
- The school leaders should seek to hire a librarian/library media specialist to encourage and reinforce reading and research for all students.
- The school leaders should facilitate the organization of the library's current book donations. Inventories of library resources should be maintained and monitored. Also, open access periods should be provided to students on a regular basis with appropriate supervision.
- The school leaders should work with facilities staff to develop a plan to re-number all classroom and office doors to facilitate smooth transitions and overall movement throughout the building. This

would also provide a safe and orderly environment for staff, students, school security personnel, visitors, as well as first responders.

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 State Learning Standards, Data Driven Instruction and the Annual Professional Performance Reviews for teacher effectiveness.