

# Quality Review Report

## 2016-2017

**Bronx Dance Academy School**

**Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 10X308**

**3617 Bainbridge Ave.  
Bronx  
NY 10467**

**Principal: Sandra Sanchez**

**Dates of Review:  
December 8, 2016 - December 9, 2016**

**Lead Reviewer: Kevin Bradley**

## 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 Dance Academy School 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

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	<b>Additional Finding</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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	<b>Area of Focus</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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	<b>Additional Finding</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## School Quality Ratings continued

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

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.4 Learning Environment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

The school's approach to culture-building, discipline, and social-emotional support includes an afterschool partnership, student government and other structures to ensure that each student is known well by at least one adult.

### Impact

A culture of mutual trust results in a safe and inclusive environment that is conducive to student and adult learning; student voice is welcome and valued generating high interest and involvement. Each student is known well by at least one adult who helps to coordinate supports that align with student learning needs.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school's afterschool partnership with Mosholu Montefiore Community Center (MMCC) involves 177 students participating in MMCC enrichment activities. These include customized student activities supporting academics, performing arts, art and design, leadership, technology, and sports. Students have a voice in the design of activities and choice amongst options that generate high interest and student involvement. Student government has input to suggest new programming, including BDA Girls Rock, Man Cave, and Real Talk, all student-generated groups discussing issues and society in their community. Teachers work with MMCC to offer specific homework help and MMCC staff tutors students by offering a study lounge. Parents spoke very highly about the afterschool opportunities that the school offers in partnership with MMCC, indicating that it was an important resource that helped develop academic and social-emotional supports for students.
- Parents reported that their students are known well by a number of staff members, including teachers, the guidance counselor, and the dean, who treat their children as if they were their own. One parent reported that, "Her [child's] ELA [English Language Arts] teacher contacted me about an area of weakness she was having in reading and told me different methods she needed to do to improve. This is the first time she's been excited about reading and learning." Another parent pointed out that, "She's very weak at math; they gave her the opportunity to come in early for help at 7:30 a.m. and take online courses." Additionally, a parent commented, "Our child is having a great experience, especially in history and science; she talks about it coming home all the time."
- Both parents and students noted the efforts of the school staff, including the guidance counselor, to conduct high school workshops informing them about the high school application process. A large parent turnout demonstrated high interest and parents felt informed and prepared to make the right high school choice with their students. Students reported that their guidance counselor "has been a great help during the high school process," "...by explaining the process to us and giving us applications for high school." In addition, students pointed out that, "After school for the eighth grade, we have high school prep. Our ELA teacher used to teach high school."

## Area of Focus

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best. Across classrooms, student work products reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

### Impact

Although students are grouped, and their work products reflect high levels of thinking, teaching practices sometimes result in teacher-centered instruction and a lack of high levels of participation and student ownership.

### Supporting Evidence

- Across some classrooms, students are involved in turn and talks, collaborative group work, student discussions which demonstrate alignment to the schools articulated beliefs about how students learn best. However, some classrooms do not provide opportunities for students to be engaged in student-centered instruction as lengthy, teacher-centered practices prevented students from fully realizing a student-centered environment. For example, in a seventh grade math class, relevancy is evident as students are working together in collaborative groups figuring out how much per gallon each different gas station is charging. They are asked to determine, which gas station is trying to rip you off? The exit ticket includes, “How was unit rate used to decide which pump was ripping us off? Examples of unit rate could help you evaluate a situation.” However, in an eighth grade social studies class, the lesson was designed as a peer-editing project for a narrative essay written from the perspective of an immigrant to America that was frontloaded with a teacher-centered introduction to the lesson delaying students from getting to the task.
- In an eighth grade English Language Arts (ELA) class, students were reading *Inside Out and Back Again* and the lesson included student choice in how student groups can display their objective summary, either by creating a rap/poem, a picture/poster, or a timeline. To reinforce literacy, all students also create at least two diary entries that convey the objective summary from the character’s perspective. Students in groups of three to four chose which objective summary they want to produce, thus taking ownership of their work. However, in some classrooms, although there was a high level of student participation, students were not encouraged to take ownership of their work. For example, in an eighth grade math class, as students were working on finding the slope and y-intercept to determine the equation of a line, they were predominantly silent during expected pair work time. Many students were working individually or waiting for the teacher to continue the lesson or call on a student to share their work.
- In a math class, students use the method of study the problem, organize the facts, line up a plan, verify your plan with action, examine your results (SOLVE), to solve a ratio word problem. Students use their color-coded foldables with next steps and rubrics as they work collaboratively in assigned groupings based on previous math diagnostic data. The teacher conferences with groups to assess their learning. As the groups independently work together through the SOLVE method, they are focused and on task as evident by students confidently progressing through the steps and checking their work. One student responded, “My answer was right because I was able to find the amount of flour and eggs I needed to triple the ingredients. My answer was reasonable because I was able to triple the ingredients and check my work using a ratio.”

## Additional Finding

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

School leaders and teachers ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts, including work on implementing cross-curricular thematic units. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

### Impact

Purposeful decisions result in curricular coherence, building college and career readiness for all students, and incorporating the school's focus on writing while a diversity of learners, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, have access to the curricula and tasks and are cognitively engaged.

### Supporting Evidence

- A grade seven science unit plan on plate tectonics in geology shows evidence of modification through multiple drafts, the final version includes more clarity in alignment to the Common Core literacy and math standards, clearer definition of academic vocabulary, further clarity regarding essential questions to drive instruction and learning. To address the needs of ELLs, as identified by the science team examining assessment data for ELL students and students with disabilities, the modified version includes specifics on supports for ELLs and students with disabilities, such as, students having a scaffolded evidence catcher graphic organizer to support them in developing the evidence portion of their letters. According to the unit plan, "Several students will be allowed, after they have completed their final draft, to use dragon dictation to produce a clean copy of their work."
- School leaders and faculty are further building curricular coherence by working on implementing cross-curricular thematic units, beginning with unit one: relationships and how they define identity. All units in sixth grade ELA are planned thematically, to enable both students and teachers to examine a variety of genres throughout the year. During the unit, students read nonfiction articles about relationships, short stories that center around relationships, and independent reading books that showcase character relationships. In writing, students use the Teachers College Writing Workshop to construct a personal memoir that reflects one of the most important conversations they have ever had.
- All students have access to cognitively engaging tasks such as, in an eighth grade social studies class, students are asked to use text-based evidence from at least two sources to support their claim to a prompt in a document-based extended response. The assignment includes identifying academic vocabulary in context, identifying specific text evidence, a short response, determining main idea and author's purpose. Students use the planning page to review and note document highlights in preparation of writing their extended response regarding the main idea of both documents.

## Additional Finding

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics, such as the State Writing Evaluation Rubric and diagnostic assessments through an online tool, and grading policies aligned with the school's curricula. School leaders and teachers use common assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas.

### Impact

Teachers provide students with actionable feedback regarding student achievement. Assessment data is used to adjust curricula and instruction that is tailored to student needs in venues such as the Saturday academy.

### Supporting Evidence

- Samples of student work products showed teacher-written, actionable feedback directing students to the steps they should take to strengthen their work. Some examples of that feedback were: "Your use of high-level vocabulary is impeccable! You did a great job of 'showing' in your writing. Moving forward we will work on pacing yourself and expanding your thoughts"; "Relevant annotation, detailed response!" "A good start, but incomplete. Next time, we'll discuss a complete response for the midline [midyear benchmarks]"; "Some relevant evidence and explanation. Needs connection between thesis and evidence."
- To support the school-wide instructional focus on literacy, teachers across grade levels and content areas use the grades six through eight State Writing Evaluation Rubric, a zero to four point rubric that evaluates content and analysis; command of evidence; coherence, organization, and style; and control of conventions aligned to Common Core Learning Standards in writing. Feedback to students regarding their writing is based on the same rubric, using student friendly language. The school has focused on getting students to use the rubric for a foundation of writing, as students use the rubric to guide peer feedback, and they understand how the rubric translates into their grade. Students make connections between the rubric language across levels to set goals on how they can continue to make improvements in their writing.
- The school offers a Saturday academy as a Response to Intervention (RTI). The students that participate are identified through predictive student performance data in ELA and math, aligned to State standardized assessments and quantitative data from the school's use of *iReady*, an online diagnostic and instructional tool. Specifically, the Saturday academy was launched in response to a decrease in city rank in 2016 ELA and math standardized scores. *iReady* data tracks individual students, students by grade level, and students and groups of students by performance levels. This data is also accessible to parents and students via online login. *iReady* provides schoolwide diagnostic assessment results by performance tiers for RTI, disaggregated by individual students. *iReady* also reports to determine the domain-specific instructional needs of students, categorized by phonics, high-frequency word, vocabulary, comprehension: literature, comprehension: informational text, identifying average scale scores and numbers and percentages of students below level giving the school a clear picture of how to focus their RTI Saturday academy opportunities tailored to student needs. Also, students use the online *iReady* program during the Saturday academy as a way to improve and document their knowledge regarding areas of need.

## Additional Finding

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations and provide training to the entire staff by implementing a teacher development plan. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to all students who engage in student-led conferences and maintain portfolios of work and assessments.

### Impact

Effective communication and professional development results in a system of accountability for high expectations for teacher-level goals and student academic growth goals. High expectations for all students are sustained and supported through clear, focused and effective feedback so that students are prepared for the next level.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school has implemented a teacher development plan to address teachers' professional growth. The plan identifies in priority order, the teacher's areas for development and growth. There is a tiered approach to supporting teachers, that is, first year teachers in level one and two, first year or new teachers in level three, new experienced teachers in level one, experienced teachers who need more support in level one and veteran teachers. Level one receives the most support and level four, the least. New teachers are paired with mentors. Teacher development plans are tracked with time stamped supports, including support meetings, baseline observations, verbal observation feedback, sharing of lesson plans and ideas, informal observations rating data using the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, and expected professional development opportunities.
- Teacher-level goals include a student academic growth goal. For example, all students will demonstrate growth in the area of eighth grade science, specifically topics on reproduction, heredity, and evolution. Progress is monitored by collecting student performance data on unit assessments, three times per school year. In addition, professional goals aligned with the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* are included, such as, moving from developing to effective on indicators that measure content knowledge and pedagogical skills, moving from developing to effective on indicators that measure lesson structure and its pacing. Feedback, noted in an *Advance* observation, also includes resources such as, Component 3b: using questions and discussion techniques; articles and a video about strategies for student-centered discussion. Implementation is time bound and specific: "Schedule an intervisitation by 10/31/16. I will conduct another observation on or after 11/18/16; 3b: Using questioning and discussion techniques – It is important that you continue to create and design lessons that use open-ended questions in order to invite students to think and/or offer multiple possible answers. Utilize the DOK [Webb's *Depth of Knowledge*] to create and design question stems that invite students to challenge and deepen each other's thinking about real world applications of the [lesson's] material."
- Teachers emphasize high expectations for students, with feedback and guidance for the next step, grade level, and high school. Student portfolios are maintained and include work samples, benchmark assessments, and progress reports enabling students to analyze and assess their own progress and present their task to their families during student-led, parent-teacher conferences. Students reported that they felt that the school challenges them and consistent teacher feedback prepares them for the next level. Student goals are posted on a bulletin board in the hallway, for example, "My goal at The Bronx Dance Academy is to get good grades to get into a good high school and do better this year than I did in the sixth and seventh grade."



## Additional Finding

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations that promote achievement of school goals with a focus on literacy and writing, and implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Teacher teams consistently analyze data and student work for students they share.

### Impact

Teacher collaborations have strengthened their instructional capacity. Teacher team work typically results in progress toward goals for groups of students and progress evident in the school's increased student achievement on the State standardized exams.

### Supporting Evidence

- The eighth grade inquiry team, including teachers across content areas, was observed reviewing student work representing specific students, ELLs, students with disabilities, and the lowest third to refine and guide practice in specific content areas and to observe common trends across classes. Each teacher brought examples of student work from specific identified students and explained to their colleagues what the assignment was in their class and provided a rubric for the assignment. Each teacher took three to five minutes to describe student work with a focus on their use of evidence and any systems put in place to support the students. Teachers made inferences regarding: whether students understood the task; did students incorporate evidence in their response; what was the student most effective in; what did the student struggle with? Collectively, the group decided how they can help these students improve in their use of evidence going forward with instructional changes in the classroom. The team arrived at a different set of solutions depending on which student they were reviewing; the responses were targeted and specific to the student based on identified needs.
- Teacher team agendas are approved in advance by administration. School-wide agreement ensures the use of a unit-planning template and performance task rubric to review unit plans and performance tasks at content meetings. Content meeting teams have identified lead teachers per each core content area and are held accountable by submitting drafts of unit plans and performance tasks for review by the principal and assistant principal. Grade-level meetings are required to use student data, including State assessments, *iReady* reading and math diagnostics, and current class assignments to assess student learning by identifying trends, strengths, and gaps. Each grade-level team has an identified lead teacher.
- The focus on literacy and writing across content areas through the work of teacher teams to refine curriculum and instruction, has led to increases in student achievement in State ELA standardized test scores in seventh and eighth grades. Seventh grade State ELA results showed an increase from 2015 to 2016. Eighth grade State ELA scores increased six percentage points over the 2013 to 2016 years. Similarly, seventh and eighth grade State writing results increased over the 2013 to 2016 years, outpacing the increase that was citywide.