Quality Review Report

2015-2016

Ballet Tech, NYC Public School for Dance

K-12 School M442

890 Broadway
Manhattan
NY 10003

Principal: Roy Oneill

Date of review: April 20, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Buffie Simmons

The School Context

Ballet Tech, NYC Public School for Dance is a K-12 school with 152 students from grade 4 through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 36% Asian, 25% Black, 16% Hispanic, and 19% White students. The student body includes 0% English Language Learners and 2% students with disabilities. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 96.3%.

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	**Celebration**	**Well Developed**
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**	**Well Developed**
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**	**Well Developed**
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	**Focus**	**Proficient**

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Well Developed

Findings
A coherent set of beliefs on how students learn best is reflected in teaching practices, aligned to the curricula, the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and school-level discussions. Student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking, participation and ownership.

Impact
Instructional coherence and high-level thinking result in the ability for all learners to demonstrate critical thinking and take an active role in elevating student work products and discussions.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers believe in student-centered instruction and student accountability in support of their own learning and behavior. A pedagogical shift toward increased effective practices that focus on strengthening writing instruction to foster student independence is an initiative across the school and is aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Teachers stated there is an emphasis on conducting lessons that allow for a high level of student thinking and engagement, which is reflected in teachers' observations and feedback.

- Across the vast majority of classrooms, work products reflected the application of skills such as analysis of text, synthesis of important facts, and formulation of central ideas while working in groups to complete a task. In a social studies class, students analyzed the internment of Japanese in America during World War II by reading a diary and making inferences and connections. Students were engaged in close reading, drew inferences and analyzed text and pictures. Similar practices were embedded across grades and subject area classrooms. Students explored real world applications, such as in a grade 5 math class where students used a basketball and carefully reviewed all of its dimensions in order to create a package for the ball. Students read and jotted their understanding of the problem and thinking to the group members. Each group presented their strategy visually and orally.

- There is a school-wide visible focus on student engagement and discussion. In a grade 6 math class, the teacher used a document camera to model proportional relationship. Students discussed if two people were traveling the same distance which person would get there last and why. Students discussed with partners and explained their strategies. The teacher challenged students to share different strategies. The teacher asked students to annotate their problems and to identify the most important evidence. The teacher asked, "What conclusions can we make based on the numbers?"

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in grade level teams for collaborative planning and analyzing student work that promotes the achievement of Common Core and the instructional shifts. Teachers take on leadership roles and are empowered to give input in key school-wide decisions.

Impact

While there is collaborative planning and evidence of teacher voice, school-wide instructional coherence and increased student achievement for all learners has not yet been actualized.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal created a school schedule where teacher teams have common prep periods. This time is used for planning, looking at student work, preparing materials and resources, and articulation. The teams provide reflections about student progress and look at patterns, trends and the next steps planned and provide feedback. As a result of these reflections and conversations, personal intervention plans (PIPs) are created. PIPs are designed for a targeted group of students to develop skills to help them move forward. This is a cyclical process and teams review the data and make adjustments.

- The school's instructional team meets, discusses and creates the school-wide professional development plan. The grade meetings, inquiry time and professional development sessions are then built from those instructional team meetings. The professional development plan is a living document based on the teachers' needs. Taking into account the new teachers as well as the experience teachers, the professional development plan that was created included topics such as expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards, classroom environments and the writing continuum.

- The school is building instructional capacity through the vertical teams and the principal has stated that the staff has improved as teachers of writing. For example, the English Language Arts (ELA) and science teachers attended Teachers College writing workshops and turnkeyed the information to colleagues. Teachers are explicitly modeling habits of good writers as evidenced in classroom artifacts and teacher team minutes. Members of the team looked at the writing progressions and teachers reviewed students' writing. As a result, teachers' instructional capacity has improved as they looked deeper at the argumentative writing and notetaking strategies. While teachers are in the process of integrating Teachers College writing instruction strategies into the curricula and measuring the impact of students' outcomes based on the Teachers College writing progressions, they have not yet achieved full instructional coherence in the field of writing, leading to missed opportunities for shared improvements in teacher practice and student achievement.

- Through the principal's distributive leadership, staff members were empowered to create ad-hoc meetings to address student academic behaviors. Teams of teachers review patterns and trends of their collective students. Teachers brainstorm strategies to improve student learning. Teachers created PIPs and a homework tracker tool for every subject. As a result, student submission of homework and class participation increased.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are emphasized in the school's curricula and academic tasks and are embedded in a coherent way across grades and subjects. Curricular and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data for individual and groups of students.

Impact

Rigorous tasks and access for all subgroups result in students being able to demonstrate their high levels of thinking and cognitive engagement.

Supporting Evidence

- In order to design rigorous units with extension for all learners, teachers include big ideas, essential questions, Common Core Learning Standards, standards for math practice, bridge standards, content, skills, vocabulary, activities, assessments, and resources on all unit plans. Additionally, unit plans address common student misconceptions, such as not recognizing multiple solutions in linear quadratic systems and supports including differentiated tasks to provide entry points for all learners. In addition, teachers stated these curricular units engage students in creative, rigorous, and reflective inquiry by incorporating questioning, problem solving, reflection, and real-world connections across grades and content areas. Teachers' document revisions to *Teachers College Reading and Writing* and the *GO Math!* program in binders as part of their curriculum mapping process during grade and content meetings. The principal provided examples of units in ELA and science that also implement modifications based on student work and assessment data.

- Expectations are coherent across grade levels and within each discipline, and students are given opportunities to be cognitively engaged through access to rigorous and high order tasks. For example, in a grade 7 dance lesson reviewed, standards were clearly articulated, formative assessment practices were embedded and students were given opportunities to demonstrate their learning. As part of the dance curriculum, students take a variety of classes, such as pointe, men's partnering, repertory, character dance, modern dance, gymnastics, and stretch class. The number of classes that students take increases with each grade/ballet level; grade 4 students take two weekly classes while grade 8 students take as many as eleven. Pianists provide live accompaniment for all ballet classes.

- Curriculum maps, pacing calendars and unit plans reviewed across content areas provide evidence of alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards and emphasize rigorous tasks. Both the principal and teacher team stated that, "Revisions to the curricula are an ongoing work-in-progress." The school had implemented *EngageNY*'s *Expeditionary Learning* curriculum for its ELA classrooms, but a review of student writing samples revealed that students' writing skills needed to be strengthened. As a result, the school is incorporating Teachers College units of study in writing into the ELA curricula. For example, teachers replaced *Expeditionary Learning* unit of considering perspectives and supporting opinions with a Teachers College writing unit on argument essay to provide students sequential opportunities to strengthen claims and counter claims, logic and evidence writing.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed

Findings

A culture for learning exists that consistently supports high expectations among most staff. School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations to families.

Impact

A culture of mutual accountability and successful school-family partnerships results in the vast majority of staff and parents taking ownership for school-wide expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- At the beginning of the year, school leaders discuss expectations and goals for the year. The principal continues to communicate high expectations to staff daily through instructional walkthroughs as well as through the professional development plan. More opportunities to provide teacher-to-teacher professional learning to support the instructional focus continues to be a goal for the school administration. High expectations and standards for teaching are also communicated through professional development cycles of learning. For example, the staff analyzed Danielson's *Framework for Teaching*, agreed upon what highly effective student engagement should look like in the classroom, and developed strategies that would support student engagement. Expectations are evaluated using the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* through multiple formal and informal observations. As a result, all teachers are currently rated effective or highly effective in student engagement in Advance.

- Shared accountability includes teacher-led professional learning opportunities. Administrators and teachers worked together to define high expectations for the learning environments as well as high expectations for classroom environments. Teachers visit each other and provide feedback to their colleagues around classroom culture. As a result, classrooms have more visual supports for learning and displays of student work.

- Parents indicate that the school has very high expectations and is committed equally to academics and dance. They state that they have open communication with the teachers through texts, e-mails, letters and parent meetings. Parents also indicated that the administration and teachers are proactive in addressing their concerns. Parents reported that they are consistently receiving information regarding their children's academic progress and that the school offers multiple opportunities for families to communicate with their teachers. Examples include: the Summer New Parent Cafe, September Curriculum Night, fall and spring student-parent-teacher conferences, middle school and high school application workshops, and individualized parent meetings. The school calendar shows monthly events for parents and families to engage in learning opportunities. A series of parent workshops are offered to support their understanding of the school's expectations, and students' academic growth. Parents shared they are partners in school decisions. For example, parents expressed to the staff that they felt their children were ready to take the Algebra I Regents. As a result, the school researched, rewrote the curriculum to incorporate Algebra I units, and this year the students are taking the Regents exam.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed

Findings
The vast majority of teachers use or create assessments, rubrics and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula and offer a clear portrait of student mastery. The school uses common assessment to create a clear picture of student progress toward goals across grades and subjects.

Impact
Actionable and meaningful feedback provides teachers and students with an understanding of their academic achievement. Common assessments are being utilized to create a picture of student progress toward goals to make effective instructional adjustments.

Supporting Evidence
- The school has a comprehensive approach to assessment that utilizes multiple assessment tools across all grades. For example, *Expeditionary Learning* assessments and mid-unit assessments data is used to evaluate student learning and teacher instruction, and helps guide future lessons and learning targets for the remainder of unit. The school uses end-of-unit assessments data to evaluate student learning and teacher instruction and guide future revisions to the implementation of the curriculum. *Fountas & Pinnell* reading tests are given 3 times a year and the resulting data is used to monitor students' independent reading level, decoding ability, comprehension and reading fluency. The grading policy is delineated into four categories: 50% for summative assessments, 30% for formative assessments, 10% for listening and speaking skills, and 10% for work habits.

- Assessments are created collaboratively during teacher team meetings, and administered across grade levels and content areas. Teachers use a rubric to assess the rigor in student work and alignment to standards. ELA and math teachers administer and use data from pre-assessments to work with students to create individual goals aligned to key skills identified in the instructional units. On a baseline assessment on personal narrative, teachers discovered that students need to focus on organization, paragraphing and planning. Teachers adjusted the instruction to focus on craft and mechanics.

- Across the vast majority of classrooms, students receive meaningful and actionable feedback. A student received the following feedback on an assignment, "The amount of effort and dedication you put into your work is evident. Your models and explanation are clearly organized. Next steps: In your explanation, I want you to include your reasoning. How did you decide on the parts? Did you assign them randomly?" Accompanying the feedback, the student was provided a paragraph checklist with each component graded, such as conjugation, possessive adjectives and re-writing the paragraph in third person singular female. During the student meeting, students spoke about how they use rubrics in class and when working on projects. Students had the rubric checklists in their notebooks. Students receive progress reports and PIPs, which are signed by the student, parent, and class teachers. The PIPs indicate the child's strengths, areas for improvement, goals, action plan and evidence of progress. Accordingly, teachers stated that students have improved in their respective classes based on detailed feedback.