



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Bronx Academy High School

High School 560

1440 Story Avenue

Bronx

NY 10473

Principal: Patrice English-Young

Dates of review: May 27 - 28, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Georgie Beasley

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Bronx Academy is a high school with 392 students from grade 10 through grade 12. The school population comprises 45% Black, 52% Hispanic, and 3% White and Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 73.3%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 75% eligibility.

Bronx Academy is a transfer school for students who have not graduated from their previous schools. The principal has been in post since August 2007. The school shares the building with another school.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has a clear vision for the school's success, backed up by high expectations and aspirations for student achievement.
- The school gathers a wealth of data about student attendance, progress and achievement and so knows each one's strengths and growth areas.
- The principal and various staff teams have ensured that every aspect of the school's work has been evaluated this year.
- The school has used data well to identify and adjust whole school goals and action planning for improving student achievement and attendance.
- Strategic decisions about budget, staffing and scheduling are based on a secure analysis of data.
- Good opportunities for students to express their views and to discuss personal issues and concerns result in positive relationships and conduct.
- Effective partnerships with community groups enrich students' learning and experiences well.
- Students are encouraged to develop their creativity through the arts, including poetry, dance, art and music.
- Special education students make good progress because they receive well-targeted support.

What the school needs to improve

- Use data to set class and subject long-term and interim goals that target the achievement and progress of individuals and groups of students.
- Ensure lesson objectives focus on planned learning, and are shared at the start and reviewed at the end to inform next-step goals for student learning.
- Continue to build staff capacity to use data to differentiate instruction, and to plan relevant and interesting learning activities that fully engage students as learners.
- Develop the monitoring skills of administration to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching by its impact on learning and then set goals for improving teacher outcomes.
- Embed systems to rigorously improve student attendance.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The principal has set up a strong team structure to oversee the work of the school. As a result, considerable data has been gathered and analyzed to evaluate all aspects of the school's work. The teams have identified clearly what the school does well and what it needs to improve. The information has led to a reinforcement of the principal's vision for higher expectations and aspirations of staff, students and parents. In response, students and staff consider college as a real possibility and strive to gain a mark of at least 65 on Regents exams, a message that is prominently displayed around the school to act as a reminder. The school has clear whole-school goals for achievement and attendance. Since the previous review, parental involvement has increased and students take part in regular physical education classes despite there being no gym. Students can express their views through the student government and at regularly held Town Hall meetings, led by the students themselves. Various partnerships with community groups enrich student learning and experiences well.

Professional development has built staff expertise in analyzing and using data to plan a more differentiated curriculum. Teachers meet regularly to plan lessons that enable students to build on skills and knowledge learned in one subject in another. While improved, there are still inconsistencies in the way teachers plan for differentiated instruction and activities that engage students' academic and personal interests. Teachers do not routinely identify and share lesson objectives that focus on what they want students to learn and then conduct a review during and at the ends of each lesson to assess what learning has taken place. Classroom monitoring activities focus too much on what teachers are doing and not enough on what students are learning.

The school is starting to set long-term and interim goals that target the needs of individuals and groups of students who are close to achieving a higher level in each class and subject and so reduce the number of students still dropping out each year. It has a clearer view of the performance of its ethnic groups and has improved its services for English language learners this year. The school knows that its special education students make good progress. In comparison, it has identified that its English language learners are not gaining the credits they need to graduate fast enough. The inquiry team is monitoring the achievement of this group and looking at data more closely to find the reasons why. As a result, support is more focused this year and this group of students is making faster progress.

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The school has collected a considerable amount of data over the last few years to build up a secure picture of each student's achievement and progress towards graduation. The credit accumulation sheets clearly set out the credits gained before students enter the school and enable the school to quickly identify course needs. In the absence of ARIS until recently, the school used its own computerized spreadsheet system to track student progress over time by subject and class. Credits and Regents pass and fail scores are logged so administration can see at a glance who is passing what and when. Individual teachers and guidance counsellors have individual student records that inform targeted support. This is particularly beneficial to special education students and English language learners whose progress and achievement are tracked more closely.

The principal has started to disaggregate data by gender and ethnicity to build a more detailed picture of trends in student achievement. Questions this year focus on why Black students perform less well than other students and why boys and girls achieve higher in some subjects than others. She has also identified students who are close to achieving the next level so that the school can target their learning more closely next year. She compares the school's attendance and graduation performance closely with its peer group of schools. She is working with the inquiry team to research one similar school's successful strategies in accelerating the progress of English language learners to adopt in the school. Professional training to build teachers' personal expertise in using data to support instructional planning and track student progress is ongoing.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school has measurable goals for improving student attendance, and achieving higher passes in Regents exams and in writing standards. Staff, students and parents know the goals and most strive to reach them. Actions plans detail how the school will achieve the goals and by when. Collaborative subject department, administration and guidance teams monitor progress closely by analyzing data and looking at student work. The school tracks the needs of special education students and English language learners closely against the goals in individual education plans. This is leading to more focused support from teachers in class and from specialist staff. A closer analysis of data is leading to more targeted goals for individuals and groups of students next year.

The school has increased opportunities for parents to get involved in the school's work this year. Attendance at workshops and parent teacher association meetings has increased as a result. The school conveys its goals and high expectations to students and their parents when they attend a personal interview before being admitted to the school and during the regular parent teacher conferences and progress reports. During this meeting, the school stresses the importance of student commitment and the need for parents to support their children fully and parents share information about their children's previous

school history. To reinforce this, parents and students receive perfect attendance awards. Expectations have been raised this year. Staff, parents and students know and understand the school's motto "65 or higher on examinations". Despite this, there are still too many students dropping out before graduation.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

This year, the school has used data more effectively to differentiate the curriculum. It has analyzed data more closely to identify precisely which questions students have more difficulty with on the English and math Regents exams. There has been a dramatic increase in the numbers of students passing the exam at 55% and 65% levels because teachers and coaches targeted these areas. A strong focus has been given to developing students' writing skills in all subjects and so achievement in this aspect has also shown a remarkable increase. Teachers have widened the range of instructional activities this year by giving more thought to the different ways students learn. This is not yet consistent in all classes. Some classes do not always motivate students' interests. Teachers do not generally identify lesson objectives that focus on what they want students to learn. Lessons rarely finish with a review of learning and so missing the opportunity to assess what students know and can do as a result of instruction and so to identify more precise learning goals. There are good opportunities for students to develop their creativity through the arts, including poetry, dance, art and music.

Strong focus is given to developing students' personal development. Relationships are positive and so students feel that they can talk to staff, knowing that the school will do its best to support and help. The school has flexible scheduling to allow some students to attend around their personal commitments, including afternoon and Saturday schools. In response to an analysis of assessment data, the school schedules double-block English and math to give students who are close to the next level an extra boost. The school monitors attendance closely and analyzes the data for trends, and so is able to identify quickly whether the reason for absence is personal or indicates a general trend. When absence from school causes concern, students and their families attend a face-to-face counseling session to identifying ways to improve attendance.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

All members of staff have clear roles and responsibilities that hold everyone accountable for their contribution. Assistant principals have until this year focused on operational management to ensure that day-to-day routines and systems are followed consistently and the school runs smoothly. The new principal has put more focus this year on their instructional leadership roles. As a result, the principal and assistant principals regularly visit classrooms and attend department meetings to monitor the quality of teaching. Until recently, walkthroughs focused on teachers' strategies and methods. A renewed emphasis on evaluating the quality of teaching by its impact on student learning is resulting in more focused professional development this year. Consultants now deliver

differentiated professional development according to each teacher's individual needs. Strong focus has been given to widening the range of teacher methods and strategies including how to differentiate instruction and organize group learning. Teachers share ideas and successful strategies at the varied range of team meetings, which now always focus on how to improve student achievement. Teachers new to the school and profession receive good support from colleagues and the administration team. There are plans in place to develop targeted professional development next year.

There is good guidance for all students that supports their academic and personal development effectively. Focused support ensures special education students make good progress and some exceed their achievement goals. Students' strong commitment to success results in a positive school climate that is fully conducive to learning. Students receive theater instruction from professional actors through the school's strong partnership with the Learning through Expanded Arts Program (LEAP). Work with the Women's Project enables students to create and perform at an off-Broadway theater. Some students recently performed a monologue to families and friends. Visits from a professional poet have inspired students to write poems about social issues. A number of people from local community groups and businesses speak at Career Entrepreneur College Day to motivate students to be successful at school and at work. The All Stars project is starting to widen the use of internships as an alternative route to graduation.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The principal is very clear about what she wants to achieve and how to achieve it. Following an initial analysis of data, she immediately put improvements into place to improve student achievement in Regents exams, specifically Tasks 3 and 4 and writing, and to improve the attendance rate. She sought and responded to staff, students and parents' views by setting up various teams and committees, each responsible for evaluating an aspect of the school's work. Subsequent action plans detail who will do what, how and by when. Several new initiatives have been started or are planned for early next year to respond to specific priorities. For example, the school is starting a sorority for girls in an attempt to engage them more fully in learning.

Pre- and post-tests provide baseline information about each student's starting points and teachers are more closely tracking student credit accumulation. Although the school tracks progress towards graduation closely, goals do not yet include interim measures against which to evaluate whether this progress could be faster. Teachers grade student assignments to evaluate whether students are passing or failing the course. Additional tuition and Saturday school helps some students to get back on track. However, except for special education students and English language learners, there is still too little adjustment and targeted instruction in some classes to enable students to make these gains during class.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Bronx Academy High School	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
Quality Score			X		

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather and generate data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the students progress over time.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?				X	
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?				X	
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?				X	
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?			X		
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?				X	
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?				X	
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?			X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 1				X	

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set rigorous, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?				X	
2.2 focus on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area?			X		
2.3 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?				X	
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?				X	
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?			X		
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?			X		
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?			X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X		

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?			X		
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?				X	
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?			X		
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?			X		
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?				X	
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?				X	
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness?			X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X		

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?			X		
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?			X		
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?			X		
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?			X		
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?				X	
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning, and effectively address discipline related incidents?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X		

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?			X		
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?			X		
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?				X	
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?			X		
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X		

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped