



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Bedford Academy High School

High School 595

1119 Bedford Ave

Brooklyn

NY 11216

Principal: George Leonard

Dates of review: April 18-19, 2007

Reviewer: Chrissie Pittman

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well
What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

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

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Bedford Academy is a small high school which serves an ethnically diverse population in the Bedford Stuyvesant area of Brooklyn. The school has 343 students from Grade 9 through Grade 12. The greatest proportion of pupils (86%) is Black. The next largest group (12%) is Hispanic, with the remaining 2% from Asian and other backgrounds. There are a very small number of students who are English language learners and special education students. The school does not receive Title 1 funding. Attendance is higher than in other schools of this type (90.8%). The school expects high standards in this aspect and follows up any absences or 'cutting' promptly.

The school is part of the Empowerment initiative. Empowerment Schools have more flexibility to make key decisions and control the resources for their school community. These schools are free to develop or purchase professional development services, choose which schools to affiliate with, and benefit from reduced reporting and paperwork requirements. This school is currently engaged in a research project to design its own periodic assessment materials.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is inspirational, has a very high profile throughout the school and is very well respected by parents, staff and pupils.
- Students' achievement in all subject areas is excellent and there is clear evidence of impact of the systems on the performance of the students.
- There are excellent examples of collaboration between the teachers and between the teachers and students.
- The school has very good immediate assessment procedures so that success and achievements are widely celebrated to consistently raise expectations
- Methods and structures for data gathering are clear systematic and used consistently by all staff.
- Excellent relationships with a wide range of external services, significantly enhance the education provided by the school.
- Students have excellent opportunities to develop to the best of their ability.
- The family atmosphere of the school is very highly praised by the parents.
- The group of students in greatest need of improvement are very well cared for and changes constantly in response to date analysis.

What the school needs to improve

- Strategic planning needs to be improved over a longer term so that it can be used proactively rather than reactively.
- The Comprehensive Education Plan should be organised into a useful working document which is continuously modified and realigned with clearly defined timescales to move the school forward.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well developed school.

Bedford Academy High School gives students an excellent start to adult life. This is a school where students are encouraged to do their best and become well rounded citizens, both academically and socially. The accent is very much on learning together to achieve high standards, celebrating each individual and creating a caring environment in which to work.

This community school has got everyone committed to being even better. The principal is an inspirational leader. Teachers are very well monitored and data is used very effectively to improve student progress. Lessons are lively and interesting and students actively assess their own learning because they want to do better. As a result of this very good teaching and learning, which is central to the school's success, students achieve standards well above those of similar and City schools. The school is characterized by a sense of drive and high expectations that enthralls students and staff alike.

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 student progress over time.

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

Bedford Academy High School is designed to support the needs of self-confident young adults and independent learners. Teachers consequently assess students in a variety of very effective ways: formally with well established Department of Education tests and informally with teacher generated assessments, checklists and teacher conferences. Staff are constantly looking at students' work and assessing the impact of the school's systems on their achievements. School generated data is clearly systemized and consistently used by all staff. Progress is tracked in relation to the students' past performance, class results, grade level, and subject area.

Each student is responsible for his/her own profile with examination scores, internship etc; Students build their folders during the course of the academic year: and identify the standard and reflect on the work in relation to their targets. These folders are used as a filtering system for their final portfolios. Teachers compile comprehensive assessment binders, containing conference notes on each student, to help differentiate their teaching so that each student is challenged appropriately. Scholarship reports showing the grade distribution of different subjects enables the school to analyze the progress being made in different classes more accurately. If a student is identified as needing help, there are numerous intervention strategies available such as academic intervention services. This excellent use of data is why the school is so successful in maintaining high standards and setting measurable goals for long-range improvement.

The school is very inclusive and caters very well for its few special education students and English language learners and provides a wide range of intervention strategies to ensure these students are well challenged and make good progress. The principal and his cabinet carefully analyze all language, gender and ability groups' performance ensuring that their achievement is in line with the goals set. Student outcomes are also effectively compared to other similar schools and the students' own past performance. Many students start at a very low level when they enter the school in the ninth grade. However the school sees this as a challenge to develop every student's potential both socially and academically. By the time they leave in grade 11, all students are graduating. 80% of the school's first graduating class will receive an advanced Regents diploma.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.

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

The school uses substantive data from, for example, Regents tests and Grow reports, to set whole school goals to ensure that students make good progress. Teachers are constantly adapting their teaching methods and ideas, to ensure that each student makes the best possible progress; for example with advanced classes, or in the case of students who are level 1 or 2 with individual assessment through an academic intervention service program. Goals for individual student and teacher success are created based upon classroom data which comprises school wide goals. Teachers meet weekly to annotate work and plan for the next week. Any student causing concern is referred to the guidance counselor and their improvement is closely monitored. The sharing of such expertise ensures teachers' planning is well matched to the needs of all students.

There is a wide range of support services to which students with learning difficulties are referred. These services work together very well ensuring a collaborative approach to any problems. Parents appreciate the help they receive and records show that the school ensures that all the students in greatest need of improvement make good progress.

Expectations for all students are very high. Targets are shared with them and their parents regularly. Parents are invited in to discuss their child's performance, and how to improve it. Progress towards the goals is well tracked to ensure all students are achieving according to their potential and new goals are set when appropriate. Both the students and their parents are aware of the school's high expectations and the very good attention given to enhancing their performance. Students self assessment skills in English and mathematics are developing well. Given the low starting point of a significant proportion of students when they first come to the school; most make very good progress in their learning. This is a clear indication of how the school's objectives are being reflected in the work and commitment of the school community. In response to parents the school instituted a junior seminar class to improve the college application process.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

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

The way the school aligns its teaching, learning and resources around the goals it sets for each student is impressive. The curriculum is regularly adjusted for groups and individuals in response to the needs identified through analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data. All areas of students' learning are well developed through a range of enrichment classes in subjects such as music, art and modern languages as well as the mandated subjects. Teachers work collaboratively. They constantly discuss the effectiveness of their teaching and how to improve students' progress. Teachers' high expectations and the exciting curriculum motivate students who thoroughly enjoy their lessons and find learning very interesting. Teachers are constantly adapting their teaching methods to make learning more relevant and to inspire students to take responsibility for their own learning. The commitment to improving students' performance is evident by the monthly progress reports generated by the teachers on all students. The results of this can be seen in the students' high achievement. Staff also know and respect students' individuality and respond to their personal needs. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her. Relationships between all adults and students are excellent

The school makes creative budgetary, staffing and scheduling decisions which clearly impact on student progress. The school budget is used carefully to support the curriculum and planned improvements. Teachers are very accountable for student's learning and make sure they get value for money in the range of resources that they use to inform their instruction and the ways in which they address the students' needs for example, through one-to-one tutoring, after school sessions, and Saturday classes. Information about students' progress is used well to ensure that high expectations are reflected in the range of reading material bought. The principal responds to needs, identified through data and analysis, with careful budgeting and the deployment of staff and resources without compromising the curriculum. Every aspect of the school is analyzed and scrutinized. Where necessary, teachers are asked to realign their planning and instruction. The school has an excellent breakdown of what is done to improve the performance of each student, class, cohort or grade level.

Attendance is above average at 90.8% compared with similar and City-wide schools. Absences are very promptly followed up. Positive strategies are in place throughout the school to encourage and reward good attendance. Students have excellent attitudes towards 'learning', which they see as a life long pursuit.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

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

Bedford Academy High school is characterized by its concern for the academic and social welfare of its students. All the students are known to the principal, who appreciates and respects them as individuals and takes pleasure in their successes. The principal has been at the school for four years. In this time he has won the respect and loyalty of the children, staff and parents. Parents are particularly pleased that their children are encouraged to develop as individuals and make good progress. They feel the principal is very successful in sharing his high standards with both the staff and students. His commitment to continued improvements in all areas of the school is exemplary. As a result, processes are in place to ensure regular opportunities for close collaboration and planning within subject teams, between grades and with support and other services. Good systems ensure that all staff are kept well informed about goals, plans and results so that

they are aware of every student's progress and achievements. Administrators ensure that procedures are clear, communication is good, and the school runs in quiet good order.

The principal and his cabinet are constantly in the classrooms, observing staff formally and informally, talking to students and looking at their work. Consequently, they have a very detailed knowledge of the strengths and areas for development for all staff and students. This is the basis of professional development at the school where there are very good opportunities for professional development for all the staff. Staff turnover is consequently very low. Appointments are made on the applicant's high expectations for student performance and progress and on their commitment and ability to develop and improve that performance. Teachers are all very well qualified, highly motivated, energetic and caring. Every semester they spend two or three hours in formal and informal observations of their colleagues' teaching. The climate of mutual support and collaboration is a key factor in why the school runs so smoothly.

A partnership with the Young Man's Christian Association has enabled the school to give students access to physical education classes. The Brooklyn Supreme Court is helping develop a free law program to provide students with specialist tuition to extend their learning experience.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

All areas of the school's work are carefully planned, drawing on all the available data. The effortless way that data is analyzed and used is a major strength. The monitoring and revision of planning for all students is systematic and almost taken for granted among staff. As a result, staff plan regularly and evaluate and revise interventions and initiatives according to the needs of the students. However, the school is not complacent, and all staff are committed to further improvement. This has started with the Comprehensive Education Plan. Although it is beginning to be used as a working document, it does not extend over a long enough time period to effectively support strategic planning for the school.

Comparisons of student progress across classrooms and schools are used appropriately to make interim assessments and measure the progress of plans and interventions. Plans are also revised when an analysis of students' results make it necessary to adapt their future work if they have not been successful. Immediate intervention in the form of one-to-one tutoring and after-school and Saturday academies are good examples of the school's flexibility in realigning its practices to improve student academic outcomes. Similarly, when the leadership team wanted to improve the standards of students achieving at the lower levels the school implemented several intervention programs and accelerated learning classes to address the students' needs. Teachers were inspired by this tenacious approach to not accepting failure.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Bedford Academy High School (HS 595)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score			X

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 student progress over time.	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • each student, classroom, grade level, 			X
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students* 			X
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all other categories of interest to the school* 			X
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X

* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.			X
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and 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 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			X
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.			X
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.			X
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.			X
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X
Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.			X
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.			X
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.			X
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.			X
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.		X	
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.		X	
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.		X	
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5		X	