



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Bayard Rustin Educational Complex

High School 440

**351 West 18 Street
New York
NY 10011**

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Bayard Rustin Educational Complex (formerly Bayard Rustin High School for the Humanities) is one of three schools at the humanities campus located in Chelsea, New York City. The educational complex is made up of four small learning communities and an upper school. The school is in its third year of restructuring into these communities, while currently phasing out the upper school.

The number of students enrolled is 1886 from grade 9 through 12. It is an ethnically diverse school population comprising 55% Hispanic students, 25% Black students, 15% Asian students and 5% White and other students. A relatively high proportion are English language learners (25.4%) and 7.2% are special education students. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding. Attendance levels at 78.9% are significantly below that of similar and City schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is an effective leader with a clear sense of purpose.
- Staff know and respect students and respond well to the personal needs that affect their academic performance.
- The collation of formative data from individual classes effectively informs lesson planning.
- The emphasis which is given to the promotion of literacy is providing a good focus for the school.
- There is a good team ethos among the teachers.
- Students are known well in the small learning communities, and this promotes better discipline.
- Parents are pleased with the way their children are cared for and support the changes in the organization of the school.
- Professional development is effectively focused on staff needs.

What the school needs to improve

- Achieve greater consistency in the collection and use of data to better inform instructional programs and monitor progress more effectively.
- Ensure that there is more differentiation to teachers' instruction and effective implementation of student centered and enquiry based approaches to teaching.
- Improve the use of data in relation to long-term strategic planning to promote greater effectiveness in monitoring and review.
- Ensure that there are more effective strategies to improve overall attendance levels.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The school is in a transitional stage of its development and consequently some of its procedures are still at a formative stage. The principal and senior leaders are working hard to establish common practices within the school and across its small learning communities. These communities provide a more effective context for students to be known as individuals and for their progress to be monitored more effectively. Currently the latter is an area where there is inconsistency of practice. Students appreciate the support that is being given to them. Similarly parents are appreciative of the changes that are being made but would like to see more effective communication procedures to be put in place. The quality of teaching is variable. This is in part a result of resistance to change from a didactic style of teaching to a more student centered focus. The school is appropriately addressing these issues through its professional development programs. Administrative procedures are sound and enable the school to operate smoothly. The senior leadership team is acquiring the skills and capacity to implement change. However the strategic use of data and its application to long-term planning are areas in need of further development.

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 proficient.

The school has access to significant amounts of objective data which it is able to analyze on a student, classroom and grade level basis. However the multiplicity of data collection systems means that access to information in a coherent and consistent form is an issue for the school. This need to systemize information processing is even more imperative due to the restructuring of the school along the lines of small learning communities. Nevertheless, the outcomes of external data such as Regents tests are periodically updated so that the school has an appropriate overview of the performance of specific classes and students. In this way it is able to identify the requisite support which may be given to staff or students.

The school has a broad profile of the progress and performance of particular subgroups of students based on ethnicity, English language competence and special educational need. Apart from the external data which is used to document the performance of these groups, the school has its own systems for creating formative assessment. Data is collected through conferencing activities, tests and interviews with parents. In a broader context the school generates its own benchmarking data for students who join the school at Grade 9. The school administers standardized mathematics and writing tests, the outcomes of which are shared with teachers. These tests effectively identify strengths and weaknesses of students so that teachers can use the information to inform their lesson planning. The school has appropriately identified as an issue the low standards of reading of Hispanic

students. Since this group forms a high proportion of the total student body the school has rightly focused on student literacy as its major goal for improvement.

The creation of small learning communities means that the analysis of data in relation to past performance is in its infancy. Despite this situation the school does look at trends of performance and has in place appropriate intervention strategies to support students or groups who are underachieving. Comparisons with similar schools are rather tenuous but there is increasing evidence for the school to be able to make comparisons about relative performance between the small learning communities.

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 proficient.

The school has an intensive focus on literacy and this expectation pervades the work of all of the small learning communities. The school is promoting collaborative discussions within these communities to achieve a consistency of practice. The intention is to move from a teacher-centered format to more student centered activities which are inquiry based. Although some teachers are finding this difficult to implement, clear benchmarks for achievement of this goal have been established and are reflected in the expectations of increased pass rates for coursework and improved standards in relation to Regents tests.

The analysis of student data in relation to performance in science has prompted a change in orientation in this area of the curriculum. Programs of study are being amended to accommodate more inquiry-based activities with a view to engaging students more actively in their lessons. The progress and performance of students is being appropriately monitored through formative assessments, interviews and tests. The school is conscious of the need for continuing support for staff in order to change teaching styles, for example through the drive to improve reading. In Grades 9 and 10 a formalized reading assessment has been effectively introduced to gauge specific weaknesses and identify relevant intervention strategies. In the case of students with special education needs the school recognizes the importance of supporting and monitoring the progress of this group. An extended day provision has been made available to these students. The outcomes of this provision are reflected in improved pass rates in the State tests.

The school conveys its high expectations of achievement through formal newsletters to parents and to students through assemblies in the smaller organizational framework of the learning communities. The drive to improve performance is reflected in increases in attendance levels, a drop in cutting rates and increased participation in extracurricular activities. The school is encouraging parents to support its strategies for improvement. It has surveyed parents with a view to emphasizing the need for home libraries and is prepared to help some families to do this. From the parents’ perspective they are supportive of the move towards the small learning communities but some parents feel that weak teaching in some areas and poor communication about their child’s progress is undermining its success.

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 proficient.

The curriculum is appropriately aligned to mandated requirements. A particular feature of the curriculum is that it is organized along thematic rather than subject lines. This has meant an increasing emphasis upon coursework which is proving popular among students. In order to get some coherence into its curriculum delivery the school has adopted a curriculum assessment planning template for use within the learning communities. This decision is increasing the capacity of the school to produce meaningful data about student progress. Instructional programs are closely allied to the improvement plans related to the students’ literacy. The changes in organizational structure have resulted in more robust accountability requirements for teachers. They are no longer exclusively content area specialists. This changing role has not been fully taken on board by all staff, which is reflected in a continued adherence to didactic teaching in some lessons.

Given the identified difficulties in data collection and analysis administrative decisions relating to the budget and staffing are guided more by reference to curriculum plans. Financial resources have been appropriately committed to the establishment of library centers in each of the small learning centers. In its staffing decisions the school has strategically appointed literacy coaches to support the learning communities in the promotion of the literacy objective. The school uses the information it has access to in relation to mathematics and English language arts results to prepare an early schedule for the September semester so that staff and students can plan more effectively.

The smaller numbers of students in the small learning communities enables each individual student to be known better by staff. Relationships between students and staff are positive. Students are appreciative of the support they get from staff. In lessons they enjoy the thematic approach to learning particularly when the activities are planned to accommodate their different learning needs. However they do remark that it is apparent that when some staff are working outside of their subject specialism the lessons are less challenging and interesting. Attendance levels have improved but are still significantly below comparable schools. Despite the priority the school gives to this aspect its strategies for improvement are not as effective as expected.

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 proficient.

Staffing decisions are based upon the willingness of applicants to commit themselves to a student centered approach to teaching rather than following a more specialist professional route. Despite the relative inexperience of the senior management there is a clear commitment to the philosophy of small learning communities. Most staff are willing to learn from experience and revise their plans in the light of that experience. This commitment is particularly evident in the professional development program which has been provided for staff. Many of the activities appropriately revolve around central issues such as project based learning and teaching, the development of literacy strategies and leveling student work. These programs enable collaboration between staff to promote the sustainable progress of students. This collaboration extends to the planning activities of

teams within the learning communities. However, teachers are not evaluating each other's instruction enough to systematically facilitate the sharing of good practice.

The principal is well respected and has clear expectations of teaching outcomes. He has a systematic program of lesson observations and uses the feedback process to establish a common basis of understanding about those expectations. The principal, with the support of his senior staff and external mentor, is acquiring the capacity to successfully implement change in this transitional period of the school's life. His good administration is reflected in the smooth running of the school and the effectiveness of the daily procedures. Communication procedures between the small learning communities, however, are not yet sufficiently effective for systems for handling data to be successfully implemented.

The school makes appropriate use of support services to meet the needs of students. Productive relationships have been established with the Institute of Student Achievement in order to improve student outcomes. Partnership links with business offer the opportunity of potential mentoring roles by business partners, and parents feel this is impacting positively on the students.

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 undeveloped.

The school has clearly identified plans for development. In broad terms these are reflected in the commitment to the creation of small learning communities with a specific academic focus. The school has instigated an appropriate organizational and management structure to promote these aims. A restructuring 'retreat' is programmed every six weeks which, allied with regular cabinet meetings and meetings with Intermediate Service Agency coaches, provides an appropriate forum for the review of progress in relation to interim plans. The outcomes of these meetings are reflected in the emphasis which is given to professional development, for example in relation to developing the staff's capacity to interpret data.

In the context of the separate learning communities, the monitoring of progress and the collection of assessment data is more variable. In general terms the small size of each separate learning community eliminates the anonymity of students and prevents them from 'falling through the cracks'. In this context the support strategies are successful but assessment procedures are not robust enough to begin to identify whether the progress being made by individuals is appropriate to their ability level. The school is not yet able to identify whether it is adding value. It is this aspect of diagnostic assessment which is not sufficiently developed in order for it to inform planning reviews at classroom or at learning community level. The cycle of review and evaluation is only at an early stage of development, and the school's long-term strategic planning is not yet sufficiently rigorous to promote greater effectiveness in monitoring and review.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Bayard Rustin Educational Complex (HS 440)	∅	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
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		