



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Bronx Expeditionary Learning High School

High School 227

**240 East 172 Street
Bronx
NY 10457**

Principal: Talana Bradley

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Reviewer: Alexander Ramos

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

The Bronx Expeditionary Learning High School shares a building with five other small high schools. It has an enrollment of 312 students from grades 9 to 11 to be expanded to grade 12 beginning the 2007-2008 school year. It serves a mixed population of 62% Hispanic, 34% Black, and a small proportion of students from other ethnic backgrounds. Fourteen percent of the students are English language learners, and 15% of the students are identified as requiring special education services. Attendance is in line with similar schools but lower than City schools. The school, in collaboration with New York City Outward Bound and Expeditionary Learning Schools, opened in September 2004. The school specializes in expeditionary learning, which includes project based learning, wilderness training, community service projects, internships and individual projects.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal articulates the vision of the school and has the leadership skills to bring about school improvement.
- The principal's cabinet plays an important role in planning for the future development of the school.
- A collaborative learning environment has been established among the teachers.
- Staff teams meet regularly to share best practices and develop curriculum.
- There are effective practices for addressing the needs of special education students and English language learners.
- The school has good procedures for providing academic intervention services to support student progress.
- There is a caring and supportive culture in the school.
- Parents have a high regard for the care given to the children.
- The school provides a safe and orderly environment for students.
- The partnership the school has developed with external agencies is having a positive impact on students' social development.

What the school needs to improve

- Further develop the use of data to provide consistent assessment practice at classroom and grade level in order to improve student achievement.
- Continue to develop goal setting to include consistency and challenge at student, classroom, subject, and grade level.
- Develop the consistent application of instruction practice to promote differentiation and engagement in the classroom to improve student progress.
- Improve the monitoring and evaluation of instruction practice to ensure established structures are used to improve student engagement.
- Establish and monitor the use of consistent grading policies and procedures and its use across all classrooms, grades and subject areas.
- Review the effectiveness of strategies to improve attendance levels.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The principal provides strong leadership, and sets high expectations for all students. These are reinforced through regular team meetings where data is used to monitor students' progress and achievement. A team of professionals share the school's vision for success and is dedicated to establishing a strong academic program for the students. They have developed systems to collect data on performance and progress in order to further develop the instructional program and the educational outcomes of students. Data is being used to focus on development planning, but is not yet used consistently at classroom and grade level. There is a strong collaborative, calm and respectful culture in the school. Teacher led conferences and teacher peer evaluations are providing good professional development opportunities for teachers. Students feel they are generally treated with respect and parents are pleased with the administration of the school and recognize improvements in the school over the last two years. The principal recognizes the need to continue to develop consistent instructional practice.

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 collects various sources of data, including credit accumulation, attendance data and Regents test data. Aptitude and reading assessments are administered to incoming grade 9 students to gain an understanding of their performance level. Data is shared with staff for planning and instructional purposes and to ensure that student progress is tracked. Teachers generate their own data to track student progress, but the principal is in the process of moving towards a more collaborative approach at classroom and grade level in order to provide consistency in the use and analysis of data to inform instruction and intervention.

Data for English language learners and special education students is effectively used to ensure good performance from both groups. There is good educational programming for English language learners at the beginner level through independent lessons and for other students through support within instruction. A combination of collaborative classes and resource room interventions are used to provide good support to special education students. Ethnic groups within the school have been monitored by the administration, but they report no significant differences in performance.

Data is analyzed to identify students capable of exceeding standards and to identify students in need of intervention services. Subject area teams undertake analysis of Regents tests and strand data to plan interventions for those identified as in need of improvement. The school compares individual student data to look for trends in relation to the previous year's performance, and the data is used effectively to plan improvement strategies and interventions. In some classrooms assessments are effectively used to

monitor progress of students in specific sub-skills in order to differentiate instruction to meet their needs. The school is not yet consistently using assessment data at classroom and grade level in order to improve student achievement. Having only opened in 2004, the school is limited in its ability to make comparisons with other schools, due to the lack of historical data and systems capable of providing such information.

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.

Teachers undertake curriculum planning during the summer as part of their commitment to the schools vision. Formal subject and grade level meetings ensure collaboration in the creation of the Comprehensive Education Plan and measurable goals are set and monitored regularly. Assessment data collected from progress reports, credit accumulation and Regent’s data are used as a basis for planning. This analysis is used to plan units of study for the semester and for the year, but there is not yet, at classroom and grade level, a consistent system for creating challenging short-term goals within marking periods in order to assess interim student progress.

Subject staff analyze Regent’s data and identify curriculum strands in need of improvement for individual and groups of students, who then receive intervention to consolidate those skills. Advanced placement classes are created to address the needs of gifted students. For students in greatest need of improvement individual programs of study are arranged and intervention strategies planned, with classroom instruction modified to address their needs. Special education students’ interim goals are reviewed to ensure they are making progress towards meeting their goals.

High expectations are conveyed to parents and students by staff through regular feedback on completed projects. Progress reports are provided six times per year and parents are invited to celebrate student’s success through student led conferences where they present their completed projects and display their achievement. Teachers also make themselves available to parents to discuss their children’s progress at any time during the year. Classroom teachers are driven by their school’s improvement agenda. They regularly meet during their lunch period to share best practices.

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 school develops their curriculum in subject teams and in collaboration with their partner New York City Outward Bound. Teachers create curriculum maps and study units covering the requirements of their respective subjects. In all subjects they engage students in project based study that help them develop collaborative skills. However, not all instruction practice provides consistent differentiation and engagement in the classroom. Teachers analyze Regents test results and plan instruction based on the identified needs of individual and groups of students. They plan instruction to address the

identified needs of students and the school offers after school classes to provide additional support.

Staffing decisions are based on identified student needs as demonstrated by the creation of team teaching classes to address the educational requirements of special education students. The schools budgeting and scheduling address students' needs through common planning time, scheduling double periods of English and mathematics for identified groups of students, and providing after school support.

A caring and supportive culture has been established for students and staff. Teachers regularly meet during lunch to share best practices learned at professional development conferences. Class sizes are small, which allows teachers more time to address individual student needs. Students generally report that they have teachers they feel comfortable approaching when they have a problem or need help with school work.

Attendance levels at the school are low. Recent changes have been made to address this issue, with a new attendance teacher making home visits. Although procedures and strategies to improve attendance exist, they are not effective. The principal acknowledges the need to urgently review and improve attendance procedures.

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 interviews are conducted by a committee of teachers and focus on knowledge of instruction practices and differentiation of instruction. Professional development decisions are made based on the school's needs as revealed by performance data, through feedback from teachers and the evaluation of goals developed by the staff committees. The school cabinet is made up of the principal and teacher leaders from the subject areas. They use the outcomes of data to make decisions about the professional development needs of teachers. Professional development is also provided by the Outward Bound partner and teachers have opportunities to attend regularly scheduled national conferences and summer institutes related to the school's expeditionary learning theme.

The principal frequently observes lessons formally and informally and provides feedback to teachers. However, the monitoring and evaluation of instruction practice is not having an impact on improving student engagement. Teachers regularly participate in peer evaluation and the establishment of a teacher resource center encourages teachers to meet frequently to discuss students' progress and aspects of instruction.

Planning and evaluation of results occur in team meetings integrated in the school's schedule and are communicated to parents through the parent coordinator and student led conferences. The principal is respected by teachers, parents and students. The school has a positive culture and procedures are followed by both teachers and students. Parents feel that the principal has created a safe environment and that her dedication demonstrates high expectations for all students. The school works cohesively with a variety of external partners that support the instructional goals. Community based organizations offer snowboard instruction, dance, chess, substance abuse counseling, peer mediation and a medical clinic which operates on the premises.

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.

The school leadership team meets weekly to develop school strategy and monitor progress of plans and goals. Activities of all teachers are directed through grade and subject team meetings to contribute to the following year's Comprehensive Education Plan and subject specific curriculum plans. Teachers use Regents test data, semester grades and school based assessments to measure student progress in relation to units of work. Academic intervention initiatives are reviewed and progress reports are provided to students and parents six times per year. An analysis of feedback from teachers and assessment data outcomes result in the allocation of additional support for students at risk and for gifted and talented students where appropriate. As a new school, plans are being adapted using information from performance data, feedback from teachers and general observations. Further development of procedures and practices are planned as a result of the outcomes of data analysis.

Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms do not yet provide reliable data due to a lack of consistent grading policies. The principal acknowledges the need for revisiting these policies and procedures across all classrooms, grades and subject areas. She is aware that planning does not have a clear focus on measurable outcomes and timescales and that monitoring and evaluation of activities are not yet effective in creating student engagement in instruction activities.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Bronx Expeditionary High School (HS 227)	∅	✓	+
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	