



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Jonas Bronck Academy

**Middle School 228
4525 Manhattan College Parkway
Bronx
NY 10471**

Principal: Maria T. Esponda

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Reviewer: David King

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Middle School 228 is located in the Riverdale area of the Bronx. It has 137 students in grades 6, 7 and 8. The school is known as the Jonas Bronck Academy. The ethnic breakdown is 71% Hispanic, 22% Black, 6% White and 1% Asian. The school does not receive Title 1 funding. Attendance is consistently around 95%, which is higher than similar schools. There are no self contained classes in the school and 10% are English language learners.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has a clear vision for the school.
- The school collects and analyzes data effectively to gain an understanding of the performance of its students.
- The school has good systems for monitoring students' progress over time.
- The high expectations conveyed by the principal are shared by the whole school community.
- The students enjoy learning and feel challenged by the instruction they receive.
- The professional development program and the learning walks are effective in improving teachers' skills.
- The principal undertakes rigorous observations and provides thorough feedback to teachers.
- The teachers know the students well and respond positively to their academic and personal needs.
- The principal manages the budget well to improve student outcomes.
- Attendance is a high priority for the school and is well monitored.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop a strategy for more sophisticated differentiation of instruction.
- Develop stronger links between all subjects of the curriculum.
- Systematically monitor and evaluate all whole school goals.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The Jonas Bronck Academy is a new school with a strong commitment towards giving every student the opportunity to learn and grow. It is a small school with a new principal who is aiming high and focusing on continually improving teaching and learning. The school's focus areas in its first two years have been on developing systems and structures, rebuilding relationships with the community, reviewing the curriculum and the use of data to drive instruction.

The principal is creating a school where the teachers are empowered to analyze their work as well as feeling valued and supported; where students actively enjoy learning and are challenged; and where parents are enthusiastic in their support for the school. The school core values refer to "Respect, Integrity and Dignity", an indication of the principal's very strong values and her drive to develop a positive environment for the students. The principal has the support of a skilled and dedicated staff to drive that philosophy. She knows the individual strengths of her staff, and supports their development well. As a result of this strong leadership and the hard work of the staff, the school's reputation in the community has been enhanced, beginning to make it a popular choice for parents.

The school has many strengths, a key one being the detailed knowledge that is held about each student. The drive for excellence is very strong and communication between school and home is good. Instruction is delivered by a small team of teachers working hard to ensure that students at all levels make progress. The students themselves enjoy school and they are well mannered and articulate young people. The principal's self evaluation statement, prepared in advance of the review is honest and accurate and shows a good understanding of the school's strengths and the areas which need 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 well developed.

Information about students is collected systematically including admissions data, formal assessments, interim assessments, conferencing notes and observations. With the wide range of data available the school has established benchmarks and can effectively track students' progress across all grades and in all subjects. The school is efficiently establishing a data base which enables information about students' progress to be accessed quickly by teachers. It is particularly effective at raising questions about the impact of initiatives such as the vacation reading package.

The school has a clear understanding of the performance and progress of all ethnic groups in the school and it has analyzed student progress data to create an accurate picture of the academic needs of all of the students in the school. The English language learners receive a program as part of their regular schedule and students who receive special

education services get well targeted support from the special education teachers, who are engaged in tracking progress and goal setting. Services for these students are carefully considered and efficiently deployed as an inclusion package.

The school has efficiently monitored the performance of many sub groups in the school, such as the holdovers, promotion in doubt students and students attending extended day classes. It has also focused on gender comparisons. The school is very knowledgeable about the students and the systems to monitor and compare the performance of sub groups are very effective. The school is fully aware of how its performance compares with other demographically similar schools. The school is competent at making comparisons of student performance over the years they are in the school. It also searches out useful benchmark data from the surrounding elementary schools on the performance of the students at grade 5.

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 advisory program in which each teacher is responsible for a small group of students. They receive the progress data on each of their students and use it to review that progress and establish goals. The advisors are part of the monitoring process in the school and provide a useful link to the parents. However, not all subject teachers are routinely engaged in a process of setting challenging goals for the students. The routines of goal setting in the classroom are not yet fully integrated although it is more apparent where teachers are secure with data.

The small size of the school has meant that there have been difficulties in scheduling meeting times for grade teams, however the mathematics and English language arts teams do meet periodically to have discussions about students. Particular focus areas are discussed and plans and goals are established. Teachers are aware of whole school goals and are engaged in their own goal setting to meet them. This is beginning to have an impact on teachers paying closer attention to students’ learning and groupings.

The students in greatest need of support receive an appropriate combination of targeted inclusion and pull-out support in addition to the extended day program. This is having an impact on improving self esteem and academic performance as well as requiring the teachers to more closely review their planning.

The principal has high expectations and she shares those expectations with staff, students and parents. The core values of “Respect, Integrity and Dignity” underpin the work of the school community and the principal expects the focus in the classroom to be on teaching and learning.

The advisory groups provide a regular direct link to the parents. Parents are provided with clear information about their child’s progress and any concerns the teachers may have. At conferencing meetings goals and plans are discussed and the parents are at ease with the process. This process is establishing strong relationships with the parents and has begun to be instrumental in enabling them to support their child’s learning.

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 selects its own curriculum and suitable curriculum maps have been developed. Teachers are diligent in trying to ensure that their planning is aligned with the students’ needs. Although the curriculum being delivered does generate data some relatively inexperienced teachers remain insecure about making accurate and consistent judgments of student progress and matching the instruction to students’ current levels of knowledge and understanding. Analysis of students’ work takes place during collaborative meetings and this is beginning to result in teachers revising units of study accordingly.

The principal has initiated a drive towards differentiating planning and instruction to meet the range of individual learning styles within a class. However, special education teachers are not yet fully engaged in modifying lesson plans or supporting teachers in making differentiation even more sophisticated. Resources have been allocated well according to the needs of the students. The “Gear Up” link with the Bronx Institute, a program supporting students and parents in thinking about college, has been very effective in developing students’ science and technology knowledge. This will be funded further for grades 7 and 8 next year. Classroom libraries have been improved and workshops for parents have been set up to help them support their children’s reading. Additional funding has been allocated to the purchase of furniture which has improved the general school environment.

Staffing and scheduling decisions are driven by the school’s plan to raise levels of performance. The principal has staffed the school well this year to support students with individual education plans. The small size of the school has meant that there have been difficulties in scheduling meeting times for grades or subject teams. The whole staff, however, has the opportunity to meet regularly to discuss student matters. Another limiting factor for the school is the space available which further inhibits creative scheduling.

The teachers are aware of the academic and social needs of all the students and the students themselves stated that they enjoy their lessons and that the work is challenging. The students have members of staff who they can trust and share their concerns with. In the lessons visited there were good examples of student engagement seen, in particular where students were given the responsibility to reach conclusions and respond to careful questioning. Attendance is good and a high priority for the school. It is higher than in similar schools and other City schools, although there is no complacency. The school is aware of which students have poor attendance and have a number of suitable initiatives in place including phone calls, letters home, home visits and incentives.

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.

When appointing new staff, the principal’s focus is on the needs of the students at the time. The staff is selected with care and interviews take place to ensure there is alignment with the philosophy and expectations of the school. Importantly, the principal is looking for teachers who would feel comfortable setting goals, thinking strategically and who are

capable of building good relationships with the students and parents. Candidates are expected to teach a lesson as part of the selection process and students' views are taken into consideration. Professional development programs are delivered throughout the year and are designed to improve teachers' skills. The focus is on teaching and learning and the overall improvement of practice. Retreats are planned at regular points during the year to reflect, plan and bond. Many teachers carry multiple responsibilities in this small school and the principal provides an evaluation of their progress. This program is effective in raising the level of expertise amongst the staff, improving the quality of teaching and improving learning outcomes for the students.

The principal has a high profile around the school and visits every classroom at least once a day. Every lesson she visits is judged and teachers are regularly provided with tips to improve practice. She is fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses of her teachers, who respect her views and respond well to her expectations. The principal completes the required formal observations and provides feedback. A significant number of informal observations are also undertaken and the feedback is provided as another strategy for improvement.

Planning, evaluations and goal setting takes place routinely in the mathematics and English language arts teams. In these meetings the teachers discuss students' work and evaluations are frank. The information generated is used to plan the next steps. Thorough discussions take place about how to support students and how to push them on to a higher level of performance. Planning takes place with standards in mind and the focus is always on raising student performance. However no specific grade meetings have been scheduled which places restrictions on the breadth of discussion about students' progress. The school has clear procedures and runs smoothly. The school has a range of enrichment and instructional partnerships which are used routinely as student motivators and to improve teacher expertise, such as the Manhattan College Enrichment Program, covering physical education, literacy and mathematics. The Renaissance Education Music Sports Program supports music and the arts. Both of these programs have been effective in improving academics and in developing good study habits.

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.

Goals have been established for the whole school and they have been shared with all members of the school community. Although appropriate, these are not written in an easily measurable way which makes it difficult for the school to monitor and evaluate their implementation effectively. Goals are reviewed at various committees and cabinet meetings and in November the cabinet undertook a useful series of learning walks to assess the school community's current strengths and areas for development.

Goals set by individual teachers within departments and grade teams are not based securely enough on data analysis and do not contain sufficient challenge for improvement. There is some linkage with the goals which teachers set for themselves at the start of the academic year. Targeted interventions take place with students and frequent reviews and modifications of goals take place in a limited way at the departmental level. At the moment there is no regular cycle of evaluation to be in place. Close monitoring of the work of the school at all levels is not yet an integral part of the planning cycle.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Jonas Bronck Academy (MS 228)	∅	✓	+
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	