



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

West Bronx Academy for the Future

Intermediate/High School 243

**500 East Fordham Road
Bronx
NY 10458**

Principal: Wilper Morales

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Reviewer: John Collings

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The school opened in September 2004 with grades 6 and 9 in a large building with four other schools. Since then, it has added a grade a year and currently has grades 6 through 11 serving both the middle school and high school communities. There are 463 students enrolled. At 3%, the proportion of special education students is below similar and City school averages. There is an average proportion of English language learners (11%). The student population is made up of 60% Hispanic, 36% Black, 2.5% Asian and 1.5% White students and other ethnic backgrounds. This school has Title 1 funding with 64% of students qualifying, which is above the average for similar schools and just below that of City schools. Attendance is lower than similar and City schools averages, at approximately 85%.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- There is a very strong climate of care, support and individual attention that enables the students to learn effectively.
- The school aligns the curriculum well to meet the needs of its students.
- The school has clear goals which help to direct its work.
- Instruction is differentiated to meet the needs those students in greatest need of improvement.
- There is a positive climate for learning in the school that is shared by the staff, students and parents.
- There are good after-school and Saturday programs to meet student need.
- There are clearly developing structures, routines and practices that support student progress.
- Technology is used effectively to engage student interest and motivate and support learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Make better use of its data to track the progress of individuals, grades, subjects and other groups of interest to the school.
- Clarify the criteria through which the school monitors and evaluates progress towards its goals and evaluates the effectiveness of its actions.
- Refine and develop the use of differentiated teaching to ensure that higher achieving students are challenged in their learning and their progress is accelerated.
- Build on and refine current strategies to improve attendance and lateness of students.
- Find ways to more actively involve parents in the school.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

There is a positive climate for learning in the school that is shared by the staff, students and parents. A strong sense of community has created an atmosphere of care, where students are supported well, particularly those who find work difficult. This school has become increasingly more adept at using data to inform instruction and modify the curriculum in order to meet student needs. There is a strong emphasis on the use of technology in the school to enhance instruction and to motivate students' learning. The school has clear goals, and their implementation is being established. Teachers plan differentiated work, but expectations of higher achieving students are not always high enough. As a result, work is not sufficiently challenging and they do not make the progress they could. In spite of the school's efforts, student attendance and lateness remain issues.

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 a good range of data and so knows its students well. It uses data appropriately to inform the curriculum and instruction. It has created its own database to record the performance of students and to give it a means through which it can monitor student progress effectively. Data is used to identify how well students are performing and where additional support is needed, especially for those who are not meeting the standard and those in greatest need of improvement. The school uses State and City test data effectively to gain a secure understanding of student performance. Teachers use formative assessments well to identify programs support for individual students, by class and by grade.

The school analyzes data to gain a secure understanding of special education students and uses the information to identify additional programs and support. It does not analyze data to ascertain the progress of English Language Learners and different groupings that are significant to the school, including by ethnicity and gender.

The school compares itself with other schools using State data, but as the school has not yet got its full complement of grades, analysis relating its own past performance has not yet taken place. Procedures are still new because it has only been open for a year, but the school has put systems into place for checking student progress from class to class and eventually grade by grade to build up a clear picture of performance and progress across the school. These systems are not yet established practice.

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 uses data effectively to identify goals that focus appropriately on increasing student performance across a range of curriculum subjects. Goals are derived through good collaboration within the cabinet and through discussion and surveying, as appropriate, staff, students and parents. The goals are realistic and challenging and based on a general percentage increase in performance each year for each grade. The school is less clear about how it evaluates its progress towards them because it does not use data to set precise measures for success based on students’ expected performance. In addition, there are no specific goals for improving the performance of different groupings within the school. Goal setting clearly drives the school’s work.

The school has a strong emphasis on supporting students who need most help to learn through good classroom support, and after school and Saturday programs. Special education students’ needs are discussed through regularly held academic intervention team meetings and their progress checked to make sure that they are on track to achieving their goals as set out in individual education plans. English language learners receive suitable support to enable them to develop the vocabulary they need to access learning in class.

The school has high expectations of student performance and progress and these are shared and so well-known to students and parents. It is developing means by which expectations and goals can be made more explicit to all concerned in terms of linking measures to students’ expected end of year performance. The school makes itself very available, to students during and after the school day, and to parents usually when they ask for an appointment. Regular meetings and very good availability of class teachers, assistant principals and the principal enable parents to discuss academic progress and personal problems, particularly those affecting academic performance. Parents support the school’s work in a number of areas. They attend formal consultation evenings and are keen to support their children at home. The school has organized some workshops to inform parents of how subjects are taught in school but these have been poorly attended. In addition, not all parents support the school’s drive to improve attendance and tardiness.

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 implements the mandated curriculum effectively. It uses a significant amount of flexibility to ensure it creates courses of study that best meet the needs of most students. It develops this flexibility through instruction in the classroom and through after-school and Saturday programs. Teachers are held accountable for improving their instruction and student outcomes through informal and formal observations and through a developing professional development program. Instruction is largely differentiated through support for special education students and those struggling to reach grade standards, such as additional teachers ‘pushing-in’ in lessons and extended day activities. Members of staff willingly give of their time to help students. Differentiation through expectations by

planning lessons where students of different abilities are given work that extends and builds on previous knowledge and skills is not well developed. This is especially so for higher achievers who are not sufficiently challenged in many lessons.

The school has used budgeting and scheduling well to reorganize its curriculum and programs. The good organization of staffing has enabled the school to maintain a small number of students in each class and to meet the needs of students identified by data as requiring extra support. The school has done well to manage the complexities of having a middle school and as yet an incomplete high school within the same administration.

The school has very good links with community-based organizations to help implement one of its central goals of using technology to support learning. Laptop computers are used frequently in many classes. The use of technology has been instrumental in engaging students in learning and maintaining their involvement and interest in lessons.

There is a very high level of respect for all staff including the principal. The students feel safe. The school's mentoring program assigns each student an adult who has a secure knowledge of their academic and personal achievements. Students have a member of staff whom they can trust with both academic and personal issues about which they are concerned.

Student attendance at approximately 85% is considerably lower than the City and similar schools' averages. The school is proactive in telephoning parents before the end of the morning to follow up any unexplained absences. Lateness has also been an issue and so improving attendance and lateness is one of the school's goals. Recent improvements in attendance and lateness show that its efforts are becoming more effective.

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.

The school has effective procedures for selecting staff. Last year, there was a significant increase in the number of staff because of the school's expansion. The selection was well organized and involved all established staff in telephone interviews as well as face-to-face interviews and demonstration lesson observations. Whole staff involvement has been effective in clarifying the school's expectations of teachers, as well as their expectations of each other.

The school has sufficient training opportunities to support the work of staff, although, at present, professional development is not well aligned to the school goals. The school is talking this issue effectively through regular reviews of its priorities and looking at ways to more closely align training with its needs. There has been good professional development recently on how teachers can use technology to engage and support learning, and on how to help English language learners develop the vocabulary they need to solve problems in mathematics.

The principal, assistant principals and coaches carry out frequent observations of classroom teaching to gather information about strengths and areas for development in each class and across the school. As a result of these observations, the school has identified that teachers do not differentiate instruction sufficiently well to more frequently ensure a range of expectations for students of different abilities. For this reason, the

school has plans to organize training for improving teachers' expertise in how to differentiate instruction to meet students differing abilities and learning styles. Teachers review and evaluate their teaching plans at regular team meetings and systematically carry out analyses of tests to identify individual student errors and also general performance trends. Such analyses have identified areas that have not been taught well, and which areas of the curriculum need revision or require modification.

The principal is highly respected by all. He has managed the challenge of an evolving school very effectively. Students feel safe, respect staff and each other and many feel challenged to do their best. The school runs smoothly and there are clear procedures for communication particularly with parents who value the school's supportive climate.

The school makes effective use of youth development and support services. It has a number of connections that are making a significant impact on school performance. 'Teaching Matters' supports the school and students in the use of technology in the classroom, through use of laptops and smartboards. The school is working in conjunction with Lehman College's 'Gear Up' program to support students from seventh grade to apply for college. The school is also making links with Fordham University to support struggling students, as well as trying to create a partnership with 'America's Choice' to create a mathematics lab site in the school.

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 has a range of systems for monitoring and reviewing its work. These include a team structure that looks specifically at assessment data and student work to evaluate how successful certain action plans are being. Interim assessments are used to identify areas that students still need to learn to be successful and to measure progress towards goals. However, it does not evaluate its work frequently enough and so is not able to ensure interventions put in place are effectively meeting interim goals and enable appropriate adjustments to be made to teaching methods and programs.

The school has goals that are clearly identified in the Comprehensive Education Plan. These are currently being reviewed to identify the 2007-2008 priorities so that each year's development builds on a review of the previous year's accomplishments. Some of the current goals are objectively measurable although these are based on general percentage increases each year rather than being closely linked to students' actual and expected performance. The school is making appropriate progress towards implementing its action plans and is making comparison of student performance across classes at regular intervals to inform and revise its priorities. There is good capacity to improve.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: West Bronx Academy for the Future (IS/HS 243)	∅	✓	+
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.	∅	✓	X+
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	