



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Bronx Health Sciences High School

High School 249

**750 Baychester Avenue
Bronx
NY 10475**

Principal: Miriam Rivas

Dates of review: May 4 - 7, 2007

Reviewer: John Collings

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

This empowerment school is part of the Bronx's New Visions High School Initiative. Currently it has approximately 270 students in grades 9 through 11, but by September 2007 it will have grown to its planned range of grade 9 through 12. Of these approximately 5% are special education students and 10% English language learners.

The school has Title 1 funding for 82.5% of students. The student population comprises approximately 53% Hispanic, 43% Black and 4% from other ethnic groups. At around 83%, attendance is slightly above City averages, and compared with similar schools. The school shares the campus with a significantly larger high school.

Empowerment schools have more flexibility to make key decisions and control the resources for their school community. Empowerment schools are free to develop or purchase professional development services, choose which schools to affiliate with, and benefit from reduced reporting and paperwork requirements.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- There is a strong family climate in the school, where students are well known by all staff and feel well supported and safe.
- There is good support for special education students and English language learners.
- Students find work challenging and engaging and as a result, achieve well.
- Day to day use of data that is firmly based on students' recent previous attainment is used effectively to plan challenging lessons.
- The school's cross-curricular planning enhances and support students' achievement well.
- To develop students' sense of community responsibility the school is committed to including community service within its curricular provision.
- There are good links with Lehman College and Council for Unity that significantly enhances the learning opportunities for students in the school.
- There are good relationships between students, and staff and students that results in them learning well.
- All staff, including the principal, are well respected.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to develop classroom assessment in order to inform planning for more precisely differentiated instruction.
- Continue to develop the cross-curricular planning to allow knowledge, understanding and skills learnt in one subject to be more systematically applied in others.
- As grade 12 is accommodated into the school, review the use of space to enhance the facilities for practical subjects.
- Extend the use of data to identify students' year on year progress more accurately.
- Rigorously pursue current strategies to improve attendance.
- Review and revise progress towards long-term goals more regularly.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school

In this relatively small high school there is a strong family atmosphere and teachers know their students very well. Students feel safe in the school and able to discuss problems, whether academic or personal, with staff. All students are very well-supported, including special education students and English language learners. Students find work challenging and engaging. They respect both their teachers and the principal. Data is generally used well to support teachers in planning work that is based on students' prior achievement. Planning is becoming increasingly effective in creating good cross curricular links to help students bridge their learning across subjects, thus rehearsing and applying knowledge, understanding and skills. There is a strong commitment to students taking part in community service within after school provision. There are good links to Lehman University and the Council for Unity that support and enhance student experience, learning and opportunities.

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 uses a significant amount of data internally, to compare performance with its own past, and to compare itself with other schools to monitor the performance and progress of students. The data is aggregated effectively to monitor performance in classrooms and across grade levels. Data is used to plan differentiated instruction that is firmly based on students' prior attainment, which ensures work is generally challenging and engaging.

The school pays particular attention to monitoring the performance and progress of English language learners and special education students. As a result of data analysis it has recently committed significant resources to supporting these students. Although in the early stages of implementation, indications suggest that this intervention is having a positive impact. The school is also paying particular attention to students who entered the school in grade eight at levels one and two. Use of 'New Visions' data for comparing progress with other schools shows that the school's overall performance is improving, particularly for those students whose achievement on entry was at these levels.

Although the school monitors students' performance and progress at classroom and grade level effectively, it is less clear about the value added progress of individual students: that is, whether students progress from year to year faster or slower than expected. It is currently adapting procedures to take this into account to enable judgments to be made whether the four-year targets identified for individual students and ethnic groups are being met.

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 small size of the school enables involvement of all teachers in a collaborative process through professional development and case conferencing sessions to set expectations and action plans to improve student performance. These plans and goals are reviewed regularly, particularly for immediate and midterm improvement. The school is less clear about the long-range improvement of pupils and classes; for example, over the four years students are in the school.

Students are monitored through scholarship reports and the data is aggregated by classroom and grade level to create appropriate goals. The school has used the data well to identify the low performing grades and classrooms so that particular support and interventions can be implemented to ensure they make the best possible progress.

The school has made a significant commitment to the support of special education students and English language learners by appointing staff with particular expertise in these areas. Students get the support they need through specific interventions. This is beginning to have a positive impact on performance.

Expectations are high in the school as college preparation is at the centre of its ethos. Many of its students enter the school with attainment lower than required for college entry. Students find the work challenging and engaging and work hard to realize their aspirations to enter college in an area related to the health sciences.

The whole school is highly focused on improving performance and progress. This also includes the parents and other partners to the school. In order to improve, the school is focusing on developing more innovative methods of classroom assessment to inform short and longer-term planning for differentiated instruction so that instruction meets student needs more precisely.

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 mandated curriculum is interpreted through finding, wherever possible, links to health sciences. A developing strength is the cross-curricular interdisciplinary planning that takes place. This effectively facilitates the application and consolidation of knowledge, understanding and skills learnt across subjects through project work. This is having a positive impact on students who find working this way interesting and engaging, and as a result the school is investigating ways of extending and refining this approach in order to build on this success.

Because of the joint team planning aimed at further developing the cross curricular approach, teachers feel accountable not only to the students but also to each other and the administration. Teachers differentiate their instruction through project work, additional support, ‘push-ins’ and after school programs. Teachers are currently using the workshop

model of differentiation more frequently. They plan for a range of expectations for different groups of students in the each class based firmly on data identifying their prior achievement. Students appreciate this approach as they feel work is challenging, engaging and it helps them to do the best they can to meet their targets. They feel their efforts are respected.

As the numbers of special education students and English language learners has increased since the school opened, additional staffing and resources have been put in place to support these students. This is beginning to impact on performance. The school has limited space and as grade 12 is accommodated there is a need to enhance facilities, particularly for practical subjects. Budgeting and scheduling are used proficiently to help the achievement of the school's vision.

Students feel well supported and safe. There is a strong family climate in the school, where students are well known by all staff and there are good relationships between students themselves and with staff.

Although attendance is slightly above City schools, through rigorous monitoring and improved parental support it is the school's aim to improve attendance to 90% or more.

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 high expectations of new staff. Potential teachers are expected to not only have a commitment to using data to inform instruction but also to demonstrate vision and innovation and to be reflective about their practice.

The school has used its empowerment status to personalize the school's professional development. It is concentrating its professional development on supporting teachers in using data more effectively. The resulting information is used to ensure that expectations of groups of students are firmly based on their prior attainment and aids the planning and implementation of cross-curricular links. To support ongoing classroom assessment the school is also introducing professional development in the use of 'concept mapping' as a means of identifying initial understanding, or misunderstanding, of a topic as a basis for planning appropriate instruction. A similar assessment is made at the end of the topic to identify what progress has been made. Early indications are that this method of assessment is informative, and is effectively aiding lesson planning that is well targeted at student needs.

The principal not only makes frequent informal classroom observations but also reviews student work, portfolios, lesson plans, takes part in planning meetings and enables up to six teacher intervisitations per year. All these strategies are making a good impact on the effectiveness of instruction. The principal is respected and is guiding the school very effectively to its full complement of students from September 2007. The school runs very smoothly and all involved are very clear about what is expected of them.

There is a good range of support services provided. In addition to the special education and English language learner teachers, the school provides guidance counselors, an outreach worker and after school tutoring. A particular strength is the expectation that all students take part in some community service and there are good links with Lehman

University and the Council for Unity, all of which significantly enhance the learning opportunities students have 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 uses a range of measures to assess whether its goals are being met, for example, attendance, promotion rates, graduation, scholarship reports and discussions with parents, students and teachers. Periodical reviews promote good evaluation of progress towards short and intermediate term goals but progress towards longer-term goals is less clear because they are not so clearly articulated.

The school uses data effectively to monitor student progress and also to review the success or otherwise of interventions, modifying them where appropriate. Additional classes have been introduced, for example, and double period classes scheduled or tutoring in subjects where students were not making the expected progress. The school has also used the cross-curricular planning approach to address other identified areas. For example, English teachers have supported other subjects to enable students to practice English skills such as paraphrasing. These have all had a significant impact on student performance.

Overall, goals are reviewed and used as a means of modifying and setting new goals. There is good collegiate involvement by all in this process, including students. There is systematic yearly review of the Comprehensive Education Plan but there is less attention given to longer term planning.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Bronx Health Sciences High School (HS 249)	∅	✓	+
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	