



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**Bronx High School for Performance and
Stagecraft**

**High School 262
1619 Boston Road
Bronx
NY 10460**

Principal: Mark Sweeting

Dates of review: May 24 – 25, 2007

Reviewer: Roy Blatchford

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Bronx High School for Performance and Stagecraft is a high school with enrollment of 292 students, covering grades 9 through 11. The population comprises approximately 49% Hispanic students, 47% Black and 4% Other students. Approximately 11% of the school's population are special education students and a further 5% are English language learners. The average attendance rate for students is 78%, below that found in similar and City schools. The school is Title 1 eligible with 80% of students qualifying, which is above that found in similar and City schools. The school opened in September 2004 and shares the Rider Campus with two other schools. The school has had three principals since opening. The current principal took up his post in July 2006.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal provides strong leadership in securing the right tone and climate for learning; he has clear capacity to take the school forward over the coming years.
- Students, staff and parents recognize the significant improvements that have been made this year in providing a safe and welcoming environment for study.
- Improvements in instruction are being made, with examples of very good teaching.
- The school has made good efforts to review all its data, and to begin to harness the data for tracking and monitoring student progress and outcomes.
- The strong focus on securing the best graduation rates for the class of 2008 has begun to have a measurable impact.
- Many staff know well their students' academic strengths and weaknesses.
- The work of the guidance counselor is valued by students.
- Scheduling for intervention and catch-up has responded to student need.
- Special education students have received well-targeted interventions.
- Staff have given their time generously to establish a range of clubs and activities.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that necessary improvements to the fabric of the building and investments in classroom resources are made for September 2007.
- Improve the attendance of students and the systems for monitoring lateness and absence.
- Raise further the expectations the school has of how students conduct themselves in hallways.
- Ensure consistency in how data is used by individuals and teams to inform planning, teaching and target setting.
- Continue the drive to improve instruction through targeted professional development and peer-observation.
- Review the roles and responsibilities of the principal, assistant principal and administration cabinet.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is an undeveloped school with some proficient features.

The Bronx High School for Performance and Stagecraft is three years old, and in that time has occupied two buildings and been led by three different principals. Students and parents testify that the first and second years were characterized by a poor climate for learning: students' absence rates were high, classrooms and hallways were disorderly, and credit completion rates were low.

The picture today has changed significantly. At the start of this academic year, the new principal and his staff set themselves three key priorities: establishing a positive culture for learning; developing instructional strategies; and winning student support for the significant changes to the running of the school. Success in all three aspects has been measurable. The students talk of now being "a well grounded school", and parents speak highly of the dedicated and tireless efforts of the principal to bring a sense of order and discipline to the school environment. Behavior by some students in the hallways remains overly boisterous. Classroom practice is variable but improving, with many teachers beginning to use the school's data to monitor student performance. The curriculum has largely been aligned to student need, with a particular focus on ensuring 11th graders complete their required credits. While student attendance to school remains low, with a significant minority of long-term absentees, there are encouraging signs of students being more involved in the catch-up classes, clubs and activities the staff are offering.

The school remains in transition and at an early stage of its recovery from the inadequacies of the past two years. A continuing obstacle to effective change is the unacceptable state of the environment: drab décor, doors that cannot be closed, poor furniture, inadequate facilities for staff and, in a high school, no library for the students. Nonetheless, the principal and staff, strongly supported by students and parents, are determined to secure success in the years ahead. The school has begun to put in place the requisite curriculum, instructional programs and assessment procedures to ensure that each student's learning is accelerated and their potential achieved.

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.

Incorrect data on student performance and progress has, until recently, been an obstacle to effecting improvements for all students. The school is engaged in a major review, supported by external consultants, of all the data that it holds on the students and how it best shares that data with administration and staff. The gathering of appropriate data is now taking place, and is being used to update the performance and progress of each student. There has been a purposeful focus on grade 11 students to ensure that by June 2008 increased numbers will be in a position to graduate. The work of guidance counselors has been particularly valuable in this regard, with regular updating on student

progress. The school has a fair grasp of the relative performance of different groups of learners, particularly special education students and English language learners. It does not yet have a secure understanding of the performance of its highest performing students, nor the relative achievement of boys and girls. It has begun to track its students' performance and progress when measured against other schools, and staff have put in place preliminary systems to compare how students are performing across the different classes in mathematics and English language arts.

Data about students as they enter the school is highly variable; some baseline testing has taken place with 9th graders which is informing classroom practice, particularly with special education students. The school's use of information technology to manipulate data at all levels is in its infancy, although appropriate plans are in place to develop this from September 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.

This area of the school's work is undeveloped.

Given the inadequacies of whole-school systems of the past two years, this area of the school's work remains undeveloped. While data is now available in a more consistent format and the administration cabinet has begun to examine it in a more focused way, this has not translated into staff setting demanding goals for all students. Teachers keep records of their students in disparate ways, and there is a lack of consistency in record-keeping across faculties and across grades. Individual education plans for special education students are used appropriately and English language learners' needs are largely being addressed. Progress checks and report cards are issued on a regular basis, although the school is rightly working to improve these.

Teachers' expectations of students are gradually being raised but are not yet as high as they need to be. The school has not conducted surveys among students and parents to inform goal setting, and the evaluating and revising of academic programs. There is not yet the whole-school drive to improve student performance and progress. Bulletin boards are beginning to be established in the classrooms and hallways, although these do not promote expectations of high achievement; good quality student work in different subject areas is not displayed.

A small group of parents is working hard to establish ways in which communication between home and school can be made effective.

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 is now providing a curriculum which enables high school students to gain the required credits for graduation. The school's specialisms of drama, dance and musical performance play an increasingly important part in the academic program for all students, and shows in the school's auditorium are helping build the collaborative learning culture of

the school. Parents and students commented that they would like to see aspects of stagecraft given a higher priority in the future.

Teachers are more and more aware of their accountability for the progress of the students they teach. The most effective classrooms are characterized by strong teacher knowledge, secure behavior management, and warm relationships between teachers and students. The teachers' questioning is skilful and probing, group work is suitably differentiated so that all students are working to their full potential, and the modeling of language and number in classroom displays is well judged. Collaborative team teaching is a successful feature in grade 9. Where teaching is less successful, teachers rely on didactic instruction and do not capitalize on students' oral contributions. The use of information technology is limited throughout the school, and in many classrooms there are inadequate textbook and library book resources.

What is clear is that the principal and assistant principal, working together, have successfully raised awareness among teachers of the constituent features of high quality instruction, including the importance of using prior assessment data to inform lesson planning. Increasingly, the school is ensuring that budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions arise from an analysis of what individuals and groups of students need to ensure strong outcomes in their learning. For example, electives and the 37.5 minutes have been properly targeted for students needing catch-up.

Students speak positively of the way in which most teachers know their individual academic and personal needs, and there is evidently a growing climate of mutual respect between students and all staff. Attendance remains worryingly low, and the current systems for tracking and monitoring student lateness, which is widespread, and absence are not having the desired impact.

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 principal and assistant principal have begun to develop a team of teachers who understand how data can be used to inform teaching practice and raise expectations of student outcomes. Formal and informal lesson observations serve to share effective practice and identify points for development. New teachers' skills and interests are thoughtfully nurtured through weekly meetings with the principal. Professional development opportunities are being extended though require a more systematic approach to be fully effective. The school has suitable plans to promote observation by teachers across grades and across teams.

The school has English and language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies teams, but what is not securely in place at team level are the evaluation of results, and revision in planning to accelerate the learning of each student.

By common consent, the vision and day-to-day practice of the principal, relentlessly securing the basic discipline and well-being of the students, have been decisive in moving the school forward from its previous inadequacies. The assistant principal and administration cabinet have begun to grow in their respective roles, but insufficient thought has been given to setting out clearly defined roles and responsibilities which would make

the school more effective. Too many aspects of the daily running of the school revolve around the principal.

The school has developed a number of partnerships with external support services and these are starting to contribute to student performance. Some parents feel the school, given its performing arts designation, should do more to take students to the great array of theatre and dance activities on its doorstep. Students in 11th grade commented very positively on the links with neighboring colleges which have been made to help them secure credits, and which have raised horizons about future college and university education. The school has rightly identified that it is not currently in a position to meet the needs of some of its high achieving students wishing to pursue the advanced Regents diploma, and is exploring ways of making this happen.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This area of the school's work is undeveloped.

This year the school has rightly focused on creating a basic climate for good learning and developing instruction. Its systems for self-evaluation remain undeveloped. Current structures are not conducive to detailed examination of what is working for students and how, day by day and term by term, improvements can be made. The Comprehensive Education Plan was written by the previous principal and does not fully reflect current practice. Action plans are not fully objective and measurable, although work has begun to make them so. Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and the school are at an early stage of development. The school's periodic assessments have not yet impacted on revisions to goals. Much remains to be done before the school, at all levels, is characterized by nimble realignment of practices and resources to accelerate student outcomes.

However, judging by the preliminary steps that the principal, assistant principal and staff have taken to monitor and revise the school's procedures and practices, this area of the school's work has begun to assume a higher profile. The hearts and minds of the students have been won and the majority are increasingly focused on their studies. Equally, most of the staff appreciate that the school has reached a tipping point which, if capitalized upon over the coming year, can lead to improved student outcomes, for every individual and group.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Bronx High School for Performance & Stagecraft (HS 262)	∅	✓	+
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		