



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Bronx Academy of Health Careers

High School 290

800 East Gun Hill Road

Bronx

NY 10467

Principal: Marvia Lindsay

Dates of review: November 1 - 2, 2006

Reviewer: David King

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Bronx Academy of Health Careers, High School 290, serves an ethnically diverse population in the Bronx. There are 389 students in grades 9 through 12, the majority of whom are Black (55%) or Hispanic (42%). The rest are Asian or White. Twenty one (15%) are special education students; this represents a 100% increase on the previous year. In addition the school has identified another group of 31 lower-achieving students. This increase is taken from new students in grade 9. Just over two thirds of students are Title 1 eligible, which is higher than similar schools and the City average. Many families move in and out of the area around the school. Attendance is currently around 88%, above that for similar and City-wide schools. Tardiness to school is an issue. Many late arrivals are linked to family circumstance such as the need to translate for family members or care for a younger sibling. Because of its specialization, the school has a much higher percentage of female than male students, with over 70% of students being female.

The school is in its third year following the closure of a much larger school on the same site.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school uses its data to constantly update its understanding of the performance and progress of grades and subject areas.
- Information is regularly shared with parents, and all members of the school community have a clear focus on students' progress.
- The staff know the students very well and this promotes mutual respect between staff and students.
- Attendance is closely monitored and appropriate action is swift.
- The principal frequently visits classrooms and has a clear strategy for improving instruction.
- The principal's high expectations are shared by staff and students; she models high standards and provides strong leadership.
- The principal values the contributions of all staff who work in the school and the school runs smoothly as all routines are understood by staff and students.
- There is a very good partnership with the Montefiore Medical Centre which contributes to students' academic progress.
- The positive culture of the school is supported by well-developed structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and enabling flexible action to accelerate learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop the analysis of data to compare the performance of different ethnic or gender groups.
- Take action to improve student attendance at the planned intervention program of after school classes, Saturday school and summer school.
- Raise the expectations of some staff members and develop strategies to motivate those students who are currently not interested in their education.
- Make the use of assessment data to plan activities appropriate to the needs of individual students more consistent practice across the school.
- Develop the use of formative assessment during lessons, to inform students about the next stage in their learning.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school with some well-developed aspects.

This high school is giving students every opportunity to succeed. The ethos is very positive and the atmosphere is very welcoming. The principal is a strong leader with a clear vision for the school and her high expectations are conveyed to students, staff and parents. The school celebrates ethnic diversity; the staff reflects this and provides good role models for the students. The principal and assistant principal maintain a high profile around the school and a great deal of formal and informal classroom monitoring is taking place. Teachers know the students well and they respond well to their needs. Attendance is monitored very closely and there is a good system of contacting parents about any concerns in this area. Data is used well to support pupil progress and implement new schedules where necessary. The school recognizes the need to further develop the use of data in planning well-targeted work to engage students, and to be more explicit with them about how they can improve their work.

Parents are very satisfied with the school and the information they receive. One parent suggested the principal should receive a grade 'above 100' for the work she is doing.

The school offers a student counseling service which has a considerable impact in helping students to stay on track. There is a strong partnership with Montefiore Medical Centre which enriches the students' curriculum.

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 regularly collects its own reliable data about the performance and progress of each student. Rigorous assessments at regular points during the year produce data which teachers analyze in order to inform intervention and support programs. This is a well-developed feature. The principal also makes use of these data to monitor the effectiveness of teachers' instruction. The school uses the data to predict performance of the graduating cohort. The goal is to achieve 80% success in 2007, which would place the school slightly above the City average. The school knows how its performance compares with similar schools.

The school constantly uses its data to update its understanding of the performance and progress of some different groups of students. For example, data is collected on students in 12th grade who are failing more than one class. Also, data is used to compare the performance of different content areas. These indicate that English language arts and mathematics are currently showing improvements on last year. The school collected data from before and after the summer school of 2006 which clearly show the benefits of the program.

The school has not fully developed data to compare the performance of different ethnic or gender groups but the thorough knowledge the school has on each student means they are confident about monitoring individual progress.

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.

Data collected by the school is used by school leaders and faculty to set demanding goals that help the students make progress. The school knows its students well and that close knowledge is used to identify areas of weakness and plan for the next stage. For example, the school is aware that the new intake of freshmen has a higher proportion of students with low achievements in mathematics and English. The school has therefore built in an extra reading class for 9th grade and hired a new reading teacher and a phonics teacher to work with these students and help them catch up.

Progress is measured by end of term assessments; poor readers often get repeat assessments. The school gathers data on students who fail more than one course. Parents are immediately contacted and students are offered extra classes. There are currently 46% of 12th Grade supported in this way. The most successful areas are arts, mathematics and English, all of which have made improvements on last year.

The planned intervention program of after-school classes, Saturday school and summer school is hindered by poor student attendance.

Goals set by the school are well developed and clearly indicate its high expectations for students’ academic performance. Teachers’ detailed assessments of individual students enables them to convey these high expectations to their students. Students accept this as important information and respond appropriately. One student quoted ‘Who wants to be a failure?’ suggesting the challenges are being met.

Parents are pleased with the frequency and quality of information the school provides. They appreciate the interventions and additional support that students are offered. All members of the school community have a clear focus on students’ progress. This is a well-developed feature.

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 provides a well-balanced curriculum aimed at improving on the standards that students achieve in their middle schools. The New York standards curriculum is adopted with some additional material. Staff collaborate effectively to plan and provide appropriate instruction based on students’ needs. Not all students are well-motivated learners and the expectations of the staff who teach them are variable. Students respond better to lessons which are engaging and presented in an interesting way.

While the school has well-developed systems for assessing students and gathering data, teachers do not fully use the data to plan activities appropriate to the needs of individual students. The use of formative assessment during lessons, to inform students about the next stage in their learning, is not well established or consistent. Differentiation of work generally remains an issue of which the principal and assistant principal are aware and they are planning professional development programs to help improve matters. The mathematics department is using the Princeton Review and a coach to help with differentiation.

The school is very concerned about the welfare of students and attendance is closely monitored. Families are promptly contacted in the event of absence. Staff know the students very well and this promotes mutual respect between staff and students. There is tardiness by the students particularly at the start of school and when they are moving to lessons at changeover times. This has not yet been effectively tackled.

Budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions are clearly driven by issues arising from the analysis of data, for example the extra reading class and new teachers hired for students in grade 9. Scheduling decisions are led by the guidance counselor and students make good use of her to support them in their choices and to help them to complete the necessary credits.

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 is still fairly young and inexperienced. Only one third of the staff have more than five years teaching experience. The principal takes the lead on appointments and there have been no terminations. Selection is from a pool of available staff and organized by regional human resources. Staff share a diverse cultural and ethnic heritage; this provides good role models for the students.

All new staff have a mentor, and a buddying system operates to support them in developing confidence and improving classroom practice. Professional development decisions are driven by a wide range of data, including students' progress. A mathematics coach helps teachers plan their lessons and supports classroom practice. This has a clear positive impact on academic standards.

Formal observations are undertaken by the principal as required. In addition, she frequently visits classrooms. This involves constructive feedback, which staff find helpful. The principal has a precise view of where the strengths and weaknesses lie on the staff and a clear strategy for improving instruction. This is linked to professional development opportunities. Peer lesson observations do not take place.

The principal's high expectations are shared by staff and students. She models high standards, provides strong leadership and is well respected by the staff and students. The principal values the contributions of all staff who work in the school. The school runs smoothly, as all routines are understood by staff and students. This is a well-developed feature.

Staff work effectively in teams to plan and evaluate their work. There are very good partnerships with outside bodies, such as the Montefiore Medical Centre, and these contribute to students' academic progress.

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 well developed.

The principal and faculty constantly strive to raise standards. They use data effectively to set interim goals that help them to achieve the vision of the school. Many decisions are reached collaboratively and always with the needs of the students in mind.

Staff have a thorough knowledge of student progress from their detailed assessments of their work. They engage in regular discussion about it, comparing student progress across classrooms. Teachers usually modify their instruction when data clearly indicates that revision is required, but comparisons between outcomes in different classes are not consistently used to develop new approaches.

The school's Comprehensive Education Plan is well supported by attention to detail and flexibility during implementation and monitoring. Plans are quickly modified, or revised, when new information comes to light and student schedules are being continually re-evaluated. This is a well-developed feature.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Bronx Academy of Health Careers (HS 290)	∅	✓	+
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