



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Bronx Dance Academy

**Middle School 308
3617 Bainbridge Avenue
Bronx,
NY 10467**

Principal: Amy Jones

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Reviewer: Carol Foresta

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Bronx Dance Academy is a small middle school that has 275 students. Seventy-three percent of the students are Hispanic, 23% are Black, 4% are Asian or from other ethnic backgrounds. Boys make up only 12% of the student population which is unusual for most middle schools. The school has 100% Title 1 eligibility, which is above the average for similar schools and City schools. Nine percent of the population is comprised of special education students. Fifteen percent of the students are English language learners. These students come primarily from Spanish speaking countries. The students who attend this school travel from many areas in the Bronx. Attendance is 93% which is above average for similar and City schools.

This Bronx Dance Academy was a program for several years before it became a school four years ago. It is going through a period of change and has become much more stable in the last two years with the appointment of a new principal. The students benefit from partnerships with a range of organizations who promote dance. These partnerships provide opportunities for the students to participate in public performances and receive scholarships for dance programs outside of the school.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has high expectations of staff and students and sets the standard for hard work, reflection and perseverance.
- The principal is a highly visible presence in the school and consistently provides detailed oral and written feedback to teachers.
- The school relies on internal expertise to provide consistent professional development based on its goals and mission.
- The staff are energetic, reflective, hard working and value the collegial culture of the school.
- The school has been successful in establishing a wide range of purposes that impact directly on student enjoyment and achievement.
- All students have the opportunity to learn and perform dance as well as work in visual arts.
- Students are encouraged to work collaboratively and learn from each other.
- The school functions in an orderly way with students generally acting respectfully towards their teachers as well as their peers.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to pursue active parental involvement in their child's learning and in school improvement planning.
- Make effective use of the recently established systems for tracking student progress to compare performance and progress between classes, sub groups, grades and cohorts.
- Deepen the way teachers use assessments to differentiate and customize instruction for students at different levels in their classroom.
- Seek out opportunities to enable teachers to share good practice.
- Set clear expectations for students so that they can become more involved in their own learning.
- Ensure that students are set demanding tasks, particularly high achievers, and provide them with the opportunity to use their imagination and thinking skills.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

Over the last two years, since the arrival of the principal, the school has adopted new systems which have begun to take hold. Though the staff is largely new and inexperienced, the teachers fully support the administration's drive for improvement. There is a collegial atmosphere in the school. Professional development is given a high priority with administrators and coaches working with teachers to improve instruction. The cabinet is focused on the importance of using data to improve the curriculum and instruction. The school's actions have begun to impact on teaching and learning. However, the school recognizes that there is more to be done to secure sustained improvement. Insufficient attention has been paid to the analysis of data to consistently provide well matched work for English language learners, special education students and higher achievers. More can be done to enable teachers, especially those new to the profession to learn from others and for students and parents to become more active partners in the learning process.

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 gathers data from a range of sources, including State tests, formal and informal assessments. There are ongoing observations of teaching and a clear expectation that teachers will keep conference logs. A spreadsheet reflecting the progress of every student in the school has recently been created. This records the mandated services provided to each student, previous scores, at risk counseling, Princeton review scores, as well as Diagnostic Reading Assessments among other information. In addition, qualitative data is collected by teachers through conferencing. The teachers look carefully at student work which is collected in folders. Simulation exams are used in literacy and mathematics classes in order to identify curricular targets.

The school is building on its use of data to track the progress of its sub groups and has begun to do a class by class analysis of the work of English language learners in order to differentiate instruction for these students as well as special education students within classrooms. The school has not looked in detail at the performance and progress of students in relation to gender or ethnicity. Nor has it tracked the progress of its higher achieving students.

Systems are in place to measure performance and progress within the school to check on subjects, grades and groups but are too new to have influenced student outcomes. Comparison with similar schools is not in place as the school has yet to identify similar schools that match the disproportionate number of girls to boys.

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 leaders and cabinet are clearly focused on next steps, goals and plans. They are familiar with standards, benchmarks and exemplars of student work. This has become a major focus of content area meetings and professional development and is a priority for the school. Surveys from teachers are taken in the beginning and end of the school year to ensure that they are involved in school improvement planning. The school is working on customizing instruction for students who need extra support. Extended day instruction is also dedicated to working on those strands which have been revealed as weak areas for students.

Coaching has been focused on working with teachers to do analysis and planning both in big picture work and in specific individual student work. School teams are involved in drawing up plans. Strengths, areas of concern and actions are indicated. The teams reassess the growth of individual students every eight weeks.

The school has worked hard to reach out to parents, but there is still a way to go in involving them in their child’s learning. The school has added progress reports so that parents are aware of how their students are doing eight times a year. They are also informed through letters about attendance, and through celebrations of student work. Parents are invited to meetings with the academic and instructional support teams to discuss the progress of their children. Parent association meetings are held once a month, but are poorly attended. The school sends letters, bulletins and calendars out monthly. Parents are invited to curriculum night and parent conferences. It continues to be difficult to involve parents in understanding its goals or to appreciate the high expectations that the school is setting for their children. Students respond well to the school’s high expectations and are proud of seeing their name on the wall of honor.

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 with some well developed areas.

The school uses the mandated curriculum and supplements it with programs that enable it to meet the needs of specific groups. Break Away Mathematics instruction has been specifically chosen as the program to be used with students in general education classes who need extra support. The school continues to look for programs that are tailored to the needs of special education students. The school also uses the balanced literacy program and the workshop model of instruction. It customizes instruction based on the work done through conferencing with students. This is one of the ways the teachers differentiate learning. This approach is not consistent throughout the school but all teachers are beginning to use formative assessments to consider how to match work to students at different levels in the same class. Currently, the higher achieving students are not always engaged in their learning as the work does not often demand enough of them. It is clear that guided group work is seen as the goal and this is being supported effectively by the administration. Teachers are held accountable by administrators through their weekly observations.

The administration ensures that its use of the budget and its staffing and scheduling decisions relate closely to the information gathered, both formally and informally, to ensure that all resources are closely aligned to the school's goals. Personalized intervention plans are developed for students on level one. Because of these efforts the school managed to reduce the level ones by 50%. The administration is strategic about budgeting and has introduced Great Leap and Read 180 this year. The school plans carefully how to keep its dance program flourishing since it is the heart and soul of this school, while also meeting the academic needs of its students.

The school's mission is to provide enrichment through dance and other forms of participation. The school has a chorus, school dances, performances, and a news team which makes announcements at the beginning of each day. Sometimes students are invited to lunch with the principal. These activities along with the dance program and art program are set up to help engage students and provide incentives for attendance. Student attendance is monitored closely each day. The school has set an attendance target aligned with that of the region, which is 92% and almost met it last year.

The school has instituted a "SOL.DIERS" (service, order, leadership, discipline, integrity, effort and respect) program for students to support the neediest students socially and emotionally. This enables them to undertake responsibilities and to gain in self-esteem. There is a good degree of mutual respect between staff and students and they are clear who to turn to should they have any questions or concerns.

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 is respected by staff and this tone affects the way the students relate to their teachers. The administration has established clear routines that enable the building to function smoothly on a day-to-day basis.

The principal chooses staff who have leadership qualities, enjoy being with students and are reflective. Hiring teachers who are committed to continuous professional development is seen as a priority. The administration also considers how the new teachers will fit into the culture of the school. The administration has determined that professional development is the top priority because the staff team is recently established. There are a number of relatively inexperienced staff and most are new to school. The administration has instigated a number of useful structures to promote collaboration and to enable teachers to learn from each other, but there has not been enough opportunity for them to observe best practice within the school or in other buildings. Teachers are encouraged to plan collaboratively and this work is formalized through the use of common planning time and is supported by competent coaching.

The principal and assistant principal recognize the importance of encouraging a consistency across the school and they each dedicate two days per week to visiting classrooms. They document these informal visits and place their recommendations and commendations on sheets which they leave with the teacher. However, there is not a system in place for teachers to observe each other's classes. There is a focused effort on the part of the administration to move the school forward in its teaching practices. Efforts

to move the teaching away from the use of worksheets and towards group instruction and a more individualized approach to learning are underway. Enabling teachers to understand how assessment links to planning is another priority. There are lunch and learn meetings that the principal schedules with teachers to discuss qualitative and quantitative data.

The school has been successful in establishing a wide range of purposes that impact directly on student enjoyment and achievement. Youth services include the instructional service team and the academic intervention team. These two teams work to create bereavement and anger management groups. They also work to create positive incentives to engage students in school community. Students are honored for their contributions as good citizens and leaders on the 'Principal's Wall of Honor.' The students also benefit from partnerships with Martha Graham, Pentacle, Jennifer Muller and Alvin Ailey. These partnerships provide opportunities for the students to participate in public performances and receive scholarships for dance programs outside of the school. Since students come from all parts of the city to participate in these programs they are a vibrant part of the school and help keep attendance high and participation excellent.

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 monitors and reviews plans and goals that have been put into place for individual students every two months. Interim assessments are carried out each week leading to some fine tuning. Some assessments take a written form, while others are conducted informally through discussions that the administration has with teachers.

Assessment information is available to all teachers on a spreadsheet. This process was begun last year and is becoming more consistent and accessible to teachers. The use of this spreadsheet is new and has not yet impacted on instruction, but it has the potential to enable teachers to keep a close check on the progress of the students in their classes and for the administration to compare progress between classes, sub groups and grades.

The school also utilizes the 'Grow Report' to inform parents and students of their progress and to make adjustments to interventions for those students at risk, thus seeking to involve as many members of the school community as possible in the cycle of improvement. Many new systems are in place and a secure foundation has been built to ensure that systems for reviewing and revising each plan drive subsequent phases of goal setting and assessment.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Bronx Dance Academy (MS308)	∅	✓	+
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	