

The Bronx School of Inquiry and Investigation

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Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

This school is in its second year and caters to about 350 students in the 6th and 7th grades. Next year it will grow to its full complement of students which will be around 500 students in grades 6th through 8th. The school is one of four schools in a campus. The school serves an area with significant social and economic challenges. It has a high proportion of students eligible for a free lunch. Around 65% of the students are of Hispanic heritage, 32% are African American 1.6% are White and 1.6% are Asian.

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Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Since it opened the school has established a caring culture in which students and staff feel highly valued.
- Teachers have high expectations of how students should conduct themselves so that behavior is good.
- Students are motivated to learn and want to come to school so attendance rates are good.
- The principal has created a cohesive team of highly committed teachers who want the best for their students.
- The school has good systems for identifying and supporting students who need extra help through its intervention programs.
- Teaching is good because teachers make learning interesting through practical activities that engage the students and keep them motivated.
- The school provides a wide range of activities, including sport and arts, during and beyond the school day to encourage the students to learn and to participate in the life of the school.
- Teachers work well in collaboration with other agencies and organizations, including other schools, universities and outside consultants to help the students to learn.
- The principal has established good systems for the professional development of the teachers.
- The principal has a clear vision for the future of the school that he shares with staff and students.
- The principal and staff have a clear view of how well the school is doing and what it needs to do to continue improving.

What the school needs to improve

- The teachers should come to a common agreed understanding of the rubrics so that there is a consistency in their application across the school.
- The school should improve the use of portfolios for recording how well students are doing and use the information from them to plan learning activities that are aligned even more closely to each student's next learning steps.
- The school should develop comprehensive systems for collecting and analyzing data on how well students are doing from baseline on entry to the time they leave so that they can track the progress of each student in small steps and evaluate the school's impact on their learning.
- Data on how well students are doing should be used to set them realistic and aspirational targets and review their progress towards achieving them.
- The school should continue to explore ways of involving parents more closely in their children's learning.

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Part 3: Main Findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school that is developing well.

It has a caring culture in which all students, some of whom faces challenging circumstances in their personal lives, feel valued and respond well to the personal attention they receive.

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria.

Quality Statement 1: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor and facilitate the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is overall proficient.

The school collects a lot of information on how well students are doing in their schoolwork and tests. It uses this well to identify students who find learning hard and to provide good intervention programs to accelerate their progress. There are charts in the principal's office detailing the progress being made by every student in the school. Teachers collect samples of students work in their personal portfolios but the quality of these is not consistent and it is not clear how well the information is used to help plan new learning in a rigorous and systematic way for individuals and groups. The school needs to have a consistent and agreed understanding of the purpose of the portfolios and to review how best they can be used as a tool to record short term achievements of each student. They could usefully include evaluations by the student and teacher of the samples of work contained within them, followed by clear and measurable targets for improvement agreed between student and teacher.

Test data is analyzed thoroughly to show the improvements in test scores at each standard for general education, special education and English Language Learners students. This analysis could be further refined to show the progress of a range of groups of students according to gender, ethnicity, ability, levels of teacher support and intervention programs, attendance, poverty, level of behavior, incidents, etc to give a very sophisticated picture of how students are doing according to their individual context. Such in-depth analysis would also enable the school to track the effectiveness of various initiatives and interventions so that their impact could be evaluated against the gains in students' learning. The school could refine the way it compares how well its students are performing compared to those in schools with a similar profile and to analyze the possible reasons for any variation.

Quality Statement 2: 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.

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The school recognizes the need to continue to improve the academic results of the students because they are still too low. It has made a very good start; laying the foundations for improving results by raising the attendance levels of the students so that more of them are in class more often. It continues to set challenging goals for further improving attendance year to year. The school sets very measurable targets for improving the standards and lays these out in the Comprehensive Education Plan with clear proposals for how these will be achieved. This plan could be refined further by setting clear targets for specific groups and individuals as well as whole school ones and involving individual students and their parents in their individual target setting process.

The school has established very high expectations of students' behavior so that there are very few incidents of them behaving inappropriately around the school. Because the teachers expect high standards of behavior and mutual respect, the students respond positively and conduct themselves well in classes and hallways. The school should now have more demanding expectations of the way students present their work so that it is neater and tidier. This could include setting simple targets for improving writing and layout of work.

Staff members are dedicated to continuously improving the performance of the students. The school places a particularly strong emphasis on intervention programs for those students who find it hard to learn. This includes making effective use of outside expertise to support students who need extra help while also coaching teachers in how to best meet their specific learning needs. The school could usefully develop the ideas being generated from such support and apply them to other groups to accelerate the learning of all students.

Quality Statement 3: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school's work is well-developed.

The school reviews its curriculum in the light of identified student needs based on the analysis of data. Teachers are becoming increasingly more expert in the way they plan the curriculum for different ability levels within a class to try to accelerate students' learning. Rubrics are clearly displayed in classes but the staff should come to a common agreed understanding of them so that there is a consistency in their application across the school and agreement as to what work at different levels looks like. The school should continue to support the development of its teachers to ensure that they acquire an increasing knowledge and understanding of a wide range of teaching and learning styles and which are most useful with which students, subjects and situations.

The principal regularly checks the quality of teaching within classes to identify the strengths and areas for development of individuals and the staff as a whole. This leads to an effective professional development program linked directly to the needs of individuals and of the school. Teachers are committed to their own professional development and welcome the opportunity to reflect on how well they are doing. These procedures could be further developed by analyzing data carefully to check the impact of teaching on the results of the students thereby increasing the accountability of teachers for how well their students perform.

One of the strengths of the school is the way in which the staff knows their students and

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treats them with respect, acknowledging their individuality. This helps to ensure that students develop well as increasingly mature and confident young citizens. Students say that they feel very safe and comfortable in school and that there is always an adult to turn to if they are worried or concerned. Alongside this first rate pastoral care for their students, teachers work hard to make lessons interesting and students say that they enjoy the activities their teachers plan. This is a significant factor in raising attendance. Students want to be in school because they recognize it as a fun place to be.

Quality Statement 4: 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 overall well-developed.

The principal has created a cohesive staff team that shares common goals and aspirations for the school. Staff, students and parents show great affection for him and this has helped him to forge a cohesive team with a common vision for the future of the school.

Many of the teachers are new to the school and some are inexperienced and, although committed to the effective use of data, they do not have the experience of doing so that more senior teachers have. However, given that the school has teachers with proven expertise and experience in collecting and analyzing data and a well-developed system for professional development, it is well placed to help all staff improve their skills in this area.

The staff is reflective and far from complacent. For example, having made great strides in improving attendance they are committed to evaluating the effectiveness of the strategies that have brought about the improvements, and refining them further to continue the upward trend. Teachers work very well collaboratively to plan lessons and units of work and evaluate their effectiveness. For example, teachers were planning work together in literacy while another group planned an integrated unit of work to include a lot of practical investigations. They appreciate the benefits such collaborative planning brings as they share their different areas of expertise for the benefit of their students.

Quality Statement 5: 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 but with areas that require development.

The school has proficient strategic plans in place to secure improvement. These are based upon a comprehensive evaluation of how well the school is doing, making use of test results and other data. The plans include very clear measurable targets, methods to be used for achieving them and timescales. However, planning could be even sharper and more focused by improving the quality and sophistication of interim diagnostic testing. This could include a more detailed analysis of the progress of individuals, groups, and classes and evaluations of the reasons for the progress, or lack of progress, made. This will require staff to improve their competence and confidence in the use of data and is a longer-term goal that school should work on. It will also mean ensuring that all new staff

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members employed as the school grows are given the support they need to understand and appreciate the school's particular culture. The school should devise plans to ensure that its management systems and structures develop in line with its expansion so that it retains what works best and builds upon the firm foundations it has laid while enabling new staff to contribute their specific skills to its future development.

Other key observations

This is rapidly developing school that has only been open a relatively short time. In that time the principal has established a culture of mutual respect among staff and students. He is highly thought of by staff, students, parents and colleagues for his commitment to doing the best for those he works with and recognizing their successes. Strategies like project pride, teacher appreciation day and the daily pledge have helped to establish very quickly a positive culture within the school. Students and their parents speak highly of how well the school cares for individuals and how teachers go out of their way to make students feel safe, secure and comfortable so that they can concentrate on learning. Consequently, students come to school happily and are engaged in learning. They say their teachers make classes interesting and fun to be in by giving them practical learning activities that they enjoy.

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Part 4: Evaluation Criteria Grade Summary

Final Evaluation	0	✓	+
Overall Quality of the school		x	
Quality Statement 1: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor and facilitate the student's progress over time.	o	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data (e.g., diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments, students work products, standards-based portfolios, attendance, descriptive review, security data, etc.) and generates its own to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of how well each student, classroom, grade level, and other important categories of students and the school are: (1) currently performing, and (2) progressing over time, on English Language Arts, mathematics, and other important academic subjects. Criteria for measuring student progress are "objective" when they are <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • standards-based, • consistent across students, • capable of revealing progress or a lack of it over time and ways to close the gap between current and expected practice, and when they allow <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the performance of different students to be compared, and • learning activity to be broken down into component parts so strengths and weaknesses on each sub-activity may be identified. 		X	
1.2 The school makes effective use of the data to assess the performance and progress of students by racial and ethnic groups, English Language Learners and special education students, and all other categories of interest to the school. {This criterion and the next are partially aspirational as of now. City and State Report Cards and Division of Accountability and Assessment reports provide only some of the necessary data. The NYC DOE will soon provide schools with fuller access to better data.}		X	
1.3 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, racial and ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.		X	
Quality Statement 2: 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.	o	✓	+
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 it develops 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 warranting attention.		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. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. That information is central to setting reasonably 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

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Quality Statement 3: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	0	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with the school's high expectations and improvement plans and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals.			X
3.2 Decisions about the use of teacher and student time are based on the organization of the day and week needed to inform teachers about each student's performance and next learning steps, set goals and plans for improved student learning, and implement and continuously improve plans for reaching stated goals.		X	
3.3 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.4 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.5 Teachers are accountable for student outcomes. 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	
3.6 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
3.7 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.			X
3.8 Instructional programs actively engage students.			X
3.9 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X

Quality Statement 4: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	0	✓	+
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 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 Leaders, faculty, and staff share the same goals and frequently evaluate themselves, their interventions and each other's plans and interventions, including, when possible, by comparing outcomes across classrooms and schools. The school monitors its performance and tackles weaknesses. Even in areas where the school is successful, leadership is not complacent, but aims to improve further. The goal in all cases is to improve student and school performance and progress.			X
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results and revision of plans takes place in teams.			X
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear and are generally followed.			X

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Quality Statement 5: 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.	o	✓	+
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 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 interim 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 each successive phase of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve students' academic outcomes.		X	