

**Bronx International High School**

**BRONX INTERNATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL**

**High School 403**

**1110 Boston Road**

**Bronx**

**NY, 10456**

**Principal: Norma A. Vega**

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**Reviewer: Brian Oppenheim  
Cambridge Education**

# **Bronx International High School**

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## Part 1: The School Context

### Information about the school

Bronx International High School opened in 2001 as the first New Century High School in New York. It is modeled on the International High School at LaGuardia Community College and focuses on providing recent immigrant students with an intensive language development curriculum. The school has 315 students on roll in grades 9 through 12. Eighty percent of the students are English Language Learners. Two thirds of the students are from Hispanic backgrounds, a quarter are black and just over five per cent are Asian.

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## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- From limited English proficiency, students make progress with their writing and speaking skills.
- Attendance is above the City benchmark without LTA.
- Students relate well to each other and their teachers and as a result feel comfortable asking for assistance from adults and from their peers
- There is collaboration at all levels around teaching and learning, and student development.
- The bi-annual narrative contained in students' report cards is detailed and provides students and parents with a clear understanding about the next steps in learning.
- The school's guiding principles underpin the way it goes about its work. As a result there is clear direction and purpose to which all are committed.
- There is a strong culture that includes all students who feel a real sense of belonging.
- The school has invested its resources in teachers and students: small class sizes and time for teachers to meet as teams and disciplines promotes students' learning. This reflects positively on the leadership.
- The school has the capacity to improve because leadership is distributed among staff and there is good professional development.

### What the school needs to improve

- Identify the sources of data available and use the data to identify detailed information about students' performance and progress, individually and in groups.
- Map the curriculum and align this to the continuing work on scope and sequence that is looking at what students should know and be able to do by graduation
- Continue to work with teachers to ensure consistency in relation to lesson planning and routines to optimize the use of time.
- Make assessment an integral part of the work on developing the curriculum.
- Continue to work on language development, particularly comprehension, across the content area.
- Review the current curriculum against the curriculum map and scope and sequence.

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## Part 3: Main Findings

### Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school overall. Some aspects of the school are still undeveloped but the good relationships at all levels, clear direction given by the principal and senior staff, strong culture and successful collaboration mean that it is on the way to becoming well developed.

**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 is undeveloped overall.**

For the first few years of the school's existence the main focus was on establishing a positive culture and ensuring that the school is organized in a way that maximizes students' learning. Now that the school is firmly established it has a much stronger emphasis on gathering data and using this to help identify patterns in students' achievements and progress. For example, the assistant principal has spent a great deal of time collecting assessment data. This has proved to be a longer process than predicted because the school's own assessment system and information has had to be converted into data that meets external requirements, for example, credits. The school understands that it needs to do more to monitor students' performance, and analyze and use the data collected, in a more systematic way. It, too, judges that this aspect of its work is undeveloped.

However, while the collection, analysis and use of data are undeveloped, teachers have a great deal of information about students' performance and progress. For example, all students are assessed when they enter the school in order to help teachers group them into classes, particular in relation to their English literacy. As a result, teachers know which students are in need of support for their learning.

Overall, there is clear evidence that the school does collect data and information about students' performance and the progress they make over time. Course pass rates are collected each quarter, for example, so that teachers can see how well the Junior Institute (9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Grade) and the Senior Institute (11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Grade) are doing. In addition, performance in Regents examinations and samples of students' work are used to monitor performance and progress. However, while the sources of data could be expanded, for example by comparing classes or looking at trends over time, it is the use to which they are put in making day-to-day decisions that presents the most challenge to the school.

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**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 with some areas which are undeveloped, but there are some aspects that are well developed.**

The school is not in a position right now to use the data to set demanding and measurable targets for improvement. However, while the available data is not used in a systematic way, teachers have a clear understanding of students' performance and the school has used this, together with a review of the team structure, to enable the school to identify school-wide goals. A good example of this was the need to identify particular skills that students should achieve by the end of each Institute. The summer professional development program identified these skills and the data produced by the school is being used to see if these skills have been met.

Clearly, the data is being used retrospectively rather than to identify the next steps for each students. Nevertheless, that the school is now collecting data to monitor whether it is meeting its school-wide goals is clear evidence of the importance it attaches to using information more systematically. By its own admission it is not there yet but it is clearly working to improve its practice.

The school is good at giving attention to those who most need support to improve. A good example is the focus on the achievements of African boys, which the school has identified as a particular focus. One of the ways the school addresses issues such as this is through its team structure, which emphasizes collaborative working. For example the team structure results in constant conversations about students and it is here that interventions are often discussed. The case studies, carried out as part of the review, are evidence of these interventions. The first case study, for example, illustrates the way the school identified the need of support for literacy: specifically, decoding, reading, sentence construction and word recognition intervention strategies. Here, a teacher worked with the student each day setting clear goals and building up word recognition and sentence structure skills. A very good relationship with the parents was also significant and as a result of the interventions, the student graduated.

**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 proficient with some areas that are well developed.**

All the school's documentation shows that it sets high expectations and that it is working to align its curriculum with these intentions. The identification of particular skills that students should master by the end of the Junior and Senior Institutes is an example of this. So, too, is the focus on teamwork and collaboration, which provide helpful opportunities for teachers to discuss issues, develop curriculum and revise programs. One impact of this way of working is that relationships at all levels are good. This, in turn, means that students are generally keen to learn, engaged with their work and motivated. Most importantly, they make progress with their learning, especially in the area of literacy, which is the central theme of the school's mission. Here, students progress well with their

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writing and speaking skills but there remains work to be done on their comprehension skills.

One of the strengths of teaching is the student report card. These are completed bi-annually and the narrative contained in them is detailed, giving students and their parents, a clear understanding about the next steps in learning. This is particularly good practice and shows clearly how the school is working to accelerate each student's learning. However, there are some areas of teaching that could be improved. In particular the school needs to develop greater consistency in relation to both lesson planning and classroom routines. In the first area, not all teachers set clear learning objectives and this can mean that students are not clear about what they need to learn by the end of the lesson or unit. In the second area, inconsistencies in routines between classes means that time is not always used as well as it might: for example, during the electives the lack of structure meant that students' use of time was not optimized.

Overall, the use of resources is well developed. The school's staffing decisions are driven by its objective to have small classes and to provide opportunities for staff teams to meet regularly and frequently. This is effective: small classes enable teachers to have a good understanding of each student's progress while the opportunities to meet ensure that there is shared knowledge of students' achievements in different content areas.

There are some good opportunities for youth development, for example the trip to China. These opportunities, and the good relationships at all levels, help to create a strong culture in which all students feel a sense of belonging.

**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.**

**Overall this area of the school's work is proficient with areas that are well developed.**

All teachers share the school's mission and principles: the hiring policy is designed to ensure that new appointees are committed to the school's principles and understand the importance of the mission statement. As a result, the school's guiding principles are clear to all staff, underpin its work and provide clear direction and purpose to which all are committed.

The way the school is structured has a strong impact on the development of staff and the capacity of the school to improve. This is because the structure is based around a clear understanding of team and role, and the advantages this brings in terms of collaboration. Here, collaboration works at many levels: for example, team meetings are built into the schedule and these are used routinely to look at students' work and thus address their needs across the content areas. The structure also aids professional development. For example, one professional development session focused on the calibration of teachers' grading. Collaboration between teachers and leaders contributes directly to students' learning and provides good opportunities for team work in relation to peer-to-peer observation and the development of common goals.

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Significantly, the current team structure has developed as a result of the school's willingness and ability to evaluate how well its systems are working and to make adjustments where necessary. This shows that leadership is not complacent and that it has the capacity for improvement.

**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 overall with some areas that are undeveloped and some that are well developed.**

One of the undeveloped areas is that of the use of diagnostic assessment to judge whether the school is reaching its stated goals. As noted above, the school recognizes that this needs to be improved by making sure that assessment is built into teaching and learning. Another area where the school has identified the need for improvement is in its scope and sequence plans and the need to understand what students "look like" when they graduate. Here, the principles of backward planning is significant: by identifying the skills and understanding they expect students to have achieved at graduation, teachers can plan the program that leads up to these expectations.

However, while these areas are undeveloped, they also show some of the well-developed areas of the school. This is because they illustrate how the school is adjusting its plans and its systems to better meet the learning needs of students. That it has identified, for example, the need to map its curriculum and make assessment an integral part of this work is clear evidence of the school's ability to evaluate its practice and make the necessary improvements. What is missing is the use of data to support its work in evaluating and adjusting its plans, although the school is addressing this issue appropriately by collecting a range of data.

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## Part 4: Evaluation Criteria Grade Summary

<b>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.</b>	o	✓	+
<p>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:</p> <p>(1) currently performing, and                      (2) progressing over time,                      on English Language Arts, mathematics, and other important academic subjects.</p> <p>Criteria for measuring student progress are “objective” when they are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• standards-based,</li> <li>• consistent across students,</li> <li>• capable of revealing progress or a lack of it over time and ways to close the gap between current and expected practice,</li> </ul> <p>and when they allow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the performance of different students to be compared, and</li> <li>• learning activity to be broken down into component parts so strengths and weaknesses on each sub-activity may be identified.</li> </ul>	<b>X</b>		
<p>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.</p> <p>{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.}</p>	<b>X</b>		
<p>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.</p>	<b>X</b>		

<b>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.</b>	o	✓	+
<p>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.</p>	<b>X</b>		
<p>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.</p>		<b>X</b>	
<p>2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.</p>			<b>X</b>
<p>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.</p>		<b>X</b>	
<p>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</p>		<b>X</b>	

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

<b>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.</b>	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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<b>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.</b>	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.	<b>X</b>		
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.		<b>X</b>	
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.		<b>X</b>	
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.		<b>X</b>	