



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Bronx Guild High School

High School 452

**1980 Lafayette Avenue
Bronx
NY 10473**

Principal: Sam Decker

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Reviewer: Jean Mackie

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The school, which is eligible for Title 1 funding, is located in the Parkchester area of the Bronx. It has an enrollment of just under 300 students, covering grades 9 through 12. The school population is evenly divided between two ethnic groups, with 50% Black students and 50% Hispanic students. Nineteen percent are special education students, which includes a small number from District 75. English language learners comprise 5% of the population. The school has very few recent arrivals to the country. Those that have joined are from Guyana, Japan and Nigeria. The school's attendance rate, at 86.7% in 2005, was above that of both similar and City schools. The school opened in 2003 on the Stevenson campus, which it shares with five other schools. The principal took up his post formally in September 2006, having been mentored by the founding principal for the previous year. The staff includes a high proportion of teachers new to the profession.

The school is an empowerment school and has adopted the Big Picture Model of education which emphasizes individual learning in real world situations. Teachers, or crew leaders, have daily responsibility for a group, or crew, of approximately 15 students. The majority of students have two days per week of internships. They will remain with their crew leader until graduation.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is establishing a clear vision and direction for the school.
- There is a strong collaborative culture amongst the staff.
- Staff are committed to both the academic development and personal wellbeing of the students.
- The school has established an extensive range of internships for the students.
- Students value the support and guidance that they receive from the staff.
- The school is providing a well-focused program for seniors to maximize their graduation opportunities.
- There is a strong commitment to professional development within the school.
- Students are developing independent approaches to learning.
- The school runs smoothly on a daily basis.
- The school provides a safe and secure learning environment.

What the school needs to improve

- Establish clear systems to ensure that reliable and accurate data is gathered to provide ongoing understanding of student progress and performance.
- Establish clear subject rubrics to underpin the performance expectations.
- Establish greater consistency of expectations of what students can do, both across grades and as they move through the school.
- Ensure that data is used more regularly to inform instruction and to set medium and long term goals for students.
- Ensure that professional development is appropriately targeted and differentiated to meet the varied needs of the staff.
- Establish clear systems for regularly monitoring the implementation of school policies and the impact of development priorities on student outcomes.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is an undeveloped school.

Since its inception, the school has adopted an ambitious and exciting educational model to support the academic and personal development of its students. As numbers have increased so have the challenges in sustaining the individualized learning at the heart of the school's philosophy. This includes the need to ensure that students are consistently challenged to do their best and meet the graduation requirements for college entry. The new principal, along with the senior team, has already taken steps to provide a more structured framework to the work of the school. Data is being analyzed more systematically and, in particular, has been well used to inform an intensive support program for seniors. The school recognizes the need to rationalize assessment procedures and thus establish a more consistent level of expectation across the staff. Staff are eager to support each other in their work and the school provides regular opportunities for this to happen. Internships provide valuable real life experiences for the students, whose independent learning skills are developing as a result of the efforts of the school. The school is in a developmental stage and is beginning to take the necessary steps to secure further improvements in the achievement of the students in its care.

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 undeveloped.

The school recognizes the need to gather data about student progress and performance in a more systematic way in order to raise achievement. As a first step, the principal has undertaken a detailed analysis of Regents results for the juniors and seniors and also scrutinized the credits accumulated by all students across the grades. Data has been analyzed by subject and crews and shared with the whole staff so that everyone is aware of current performance and those students who are behind schedule for graduation. The performance of English language learners was identified as a particular area of concern.

The school has established performance expectations to support crew leaders in their evaluation of the students' individualized project work. These provide a helpful overview but do not give sufficient guidance to enable staff to make accurate and reliable assessments of the students' level of understanding and the progress that they have made. Rubrics which provide clear criteria for assessing the development of students' independent learning skills and aptitudes as they progress through the school are similarly not in place. As a result, although crew leaders support students in the development of their independent learning plans and their presentations of learning, there are variations in expectations, the assessment of progress and methods of recording progress. The school realizes that these are essential elements to successfully underpin its educational philosophy and secure improved outcomes for students. It is taking steps to tackle them.

Crew leaders are being more systematic about tracking credit accumulation and progress towards graduation. Visual displays in the classrooms provide regular feedback to students about what they have achieved and what they still need to do. Given the developmental stage that the school is in, procedures for systematically reviewing and tracking the relative progress of sub groups, such as boys and girls and the two ethnic groups, are in their infancy. The school recognizes the need to track trends and compare its performance with similar schools more regularly.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student’s next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student’s learning.

This area of the school’s work is undeveloped.

The principal is fully aware of the need to set clear goals that link to students’ academic success as well as personal development, in the context of individualized learning programs. To this end, clear expectations have been set about the minimum number of credits and Regents tests that students should gain each grade. As yet, given the comparatively recent analysis of current performance, the data is not being used to refine these goals at subject, class and grade level.

Crew leaders provide feedback to students about their independent learning plans with regard to timescales, level of challenge and area of focus. The lack of clear guidelines for this aspect of the students’ work leads, however, to a lack of consistency in the level of challenge of the goals that are agreed. This also applies to the level of expectations of knowledge, understanding and skills required for credit accumulation through the project work undertaken. The lack of data means that it is difficult for crew leaders to set appropriately challenging expectations as the students move from one grade to another. Nevertheless, there is a more structured approach to using the data to inform students about their progress towards graduation and, particularly for seniors, what they need to do to be successful. This has led to a strong drive to provide appropriate opportunities through both individual work and group activities, to gain the required credits and pass the Regents tests. Common goals and plans are now driving the work of the whole school community.

The philosophy and high expectations of the school are consistently conveyed to parents through publications and newsletters. They are regularly invited to contribute to their children’s learning, through parent/teacher meetings, but the school is disappointed with the comparatively low level of engagement of some parents. Regular phone calls and contact with parents is undertaken to try to improve their involvement.

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 undeveloped.

The school is committed to developing students’ responsibility for their learning through project work based in the real world, but recognizes the requirement to balance this with a curriculum that enables students to gain the credits and Regents passes that they require for graduation. This is work in progress at the moment but the school has taken positive

steps to establish literacy and mathematics blocks to enable these basic skills to be taught more systematically. The good range of internships provides valuable experiences for the students outside of the classroom.

Crew leaders are committed to their students but not all are fully aware of their accountability for the progress that they make. The school structure requires crew leaders to ensure that students experience all five graduating subjects, which is a challenge for them. At present, the individualized approach does enable students to receive one-to-one support with both project work and the specific subject knowledge and skills which require further development. The lack of well-defined subject specific rubrics at different grade levels, however, results in variations in expectations and input from the crew leaders, especially when they are working outside of their licensed area. The school recognizes the need to have more reliable data so that crew leaders can use it to strengthen differentiation by establishing a more effective balance between individual, group and whole crew instruction during the daily program.

The school has ensured that staff expertise covers the full range required for graduation. Changes have been made this year to improve continuity of experiences by putting students into same-grade crews. Data analysis has led to appropriate adjustments in the daily schedule to provide more time for English, particularly reading, and mathematics. Additional resources have been purchased to support this change.

When work is challenging and interesting, either during self study time or through direct instruction, students show real engagement in their learning. There are too many times at present, however, when students' efforts are not fully focused on their studies. Targets and timescales for completion of tasks are not always sufficiently clear or carefully monitored. Nevertheless, students value the support and guidance that they receive from the staff. They feel safe and secure and happy to approach adults when the need arises. Attendance, which has declined, is a high priority for the school. A number of steps, including letters, phone calls and home visits have been put in place to tackle this issue. The school is determined to pursue persistent absentees and latecomers.

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.

Appointments to the school have been strongly influenced by the commitment of applicants to the Big Picture model. Competence in data analysis has been less of a priority but there is a recognition that this is an important driver to secure improvements in achievement.

Professional development is appropriately identified through the analysis of data and needs identified through discussion with teachers. There has been a strong focus, for example, on supporting crew leaders in the teaching of literacy. Focused sessions have been provided by the literacy coach, leading to a whole school silent reading period and blocked curriculum time for in-depth instruction based around agreed skill areas. The regular professional development planning meetings provide a helpful forum for prioritizing support programs. The current focus on developing greater consistency in assessment practices through common rubrics is well-judged. The effectiveness of grade team meetings in providing further opportunities to strengthen practice and develop greater consistency, varies across the school. Staff are, however, enthusiastic about sharing their

ideas and appreciate the time allocated to do so. Class visits are undertaken by the principal but have not been used sufficiently to identify the individual needs of crew leaders or the impact of the professional development to date.

The principal has already taken steps to provide a clearer framework for the work of the school. His actions so far have earned the respect of the staff and parents and also indicate his capacity to effect further change. The school runs smoothly on a daily basis, with clear routines and procedures which are generally followed by all. The school's extensive partnerships with a wide range of businesses and public service organizations support the school's goals effectively through the internships that they provide.

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

This area of the school's work is undeveloped.

The overall long term goals of improved academic and personal outcomes for students underpin the actions identified in both the Comprehensive Education Plan and the principal's performance review. There is a shared commitment to these aims but, at present, the setting of medium and long term goals at a strategic level and systems to monitor progress towards them are not firmly established. The school has recognized the need for the leadership team to meet more regularly to facilitate this process. Performance data is being analyzed more systematically, however, so that students' progress can be tracked and variations in performance across subjects and grades can be identified. This has led, for example, to a stronger focus on developing basic literacy and numeracy skills and adjustments to the daily schedule.

Structures, such as the grade team and professional development meetings, facilitate the evaluation of instructional practice, but this is currently hampered by the lack of valid and reliable formative assessment data. This is particularly important given the emphasis placed on individualized learning. The school is aware of this challenge and is in the process of strengthening assessment procedures and endeavoring to dovetail in pertinent feedback from the students' internships. Crew leaders display the students' current credit accumulation data in the classes so that they can see what they have achieved and what is outstanding. Crew leaders use this as a useful basis for individual discussions about progress and what the students should be aiming for.

The students' individual learning plans underpinning the project work are variable in quality and goals are not always well focused on academics or personal qualities. The skills and abilities of crew leaders to help students set more meaningful medium and long term goals is variable at present.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Bronx Guild High School (HS 452)	∅	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
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		