



# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**Bronx Academy High School**

**Transfer School 560**

**1440 Story Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10473**

**Principal: Jose Gneco**

**Dates of review: May 3 - 4, 2007**

**Reviewer: Jeffery Plumb**

# Content of the report

## **Part 1: The School Context**

Information about the school

## **Part 2: Overview**

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

## **Part 3: Main Findings**

Overall evaluation

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

## **Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Bronx Academy High School is a transfer school. It serves 398 students. Typically students have attended between two to four different high schools prior to being enrolled in this school. They enter under-credited and over age (16–21 years of age). The overarching aim is for all of them to overcome the challenges they had in their previous schools and to graduate with a high school diploma.

Fifty-five per cent of students are Hispanic, 43% Black and 2% are other ethnic groups. There are 28 English language learners. Ten per cent have been identified as special education students prior to entry. Attendance at 73% is typical of transfer schools. The school receives Title 1 funding for 90% of students, a figure above that which is usually found in this type of school.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal is respected and his leadership is effective.
- Good data is gathered on what gaps the students have in their education when they enter the school and it is used well to shape individual plans for them.
- There are creative and imaginative opportunities available to enable students to accrue credits speedily.
- Students who felt disconnected from the educational system begin to believe in themselves again, engage with learning and become determined to succeed.
- The quality of care, support and commitment to equipping students to become good citizens.
- The administration has high achievement expectations for students and effectively holds teachers accountable for their performance.
- The exciting and interesting hands on and relevant science and mathematics programs accelerate students' learning as they see these subjects to be relevant.
- The library and computer suite are well equipped.
- Special education students are serviced well.
- Students trust staff and find them to be very approachable and helpful with any problems they may have.

### What the school needs to improve

- Gather data about the performance of different ethnic groups and improve services for English second language learners and raise their achievement.
- Strengthen opportunities for the students' voice to be heard and ensure that communication channels between the elected student governance body and the rest of the student body are clear.
- Continue to work to increase parental involvement in the life of the school.
- Improve the small amount of inadequate instruction so that it matches the best practice.
- Continue to improve attendance.
- Work with the department of education to improve the accommodation and facilities for physical education.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a proficient school.**

In a short period of time the principal has brought two very different schools with different philosophies and staff structures together with a common vision and purpose. He has shown resilience in the management of change to benefit students. In this caring school students who have failed in a number of high schools before being admitted to this school begin to engage with learning again and rapidly make up credits. Administration use data effectively to plan goals for students, but not all teachers make consistent use of data about students' performance to sharply differentiate their instruction for them. Consequently, there is a small proportion of inadequate teaching, because it is not differentiated. In particular, insufficient use is made of data to plan for English language learners.

Administration works hard to engage parents, but recognizes more needs to be done in this area. Some areas of the school are exceptionally well resourced, such as the library and the computer suite. However, the accommodation and outside space for physical education are poor. Attendance is a very high priority and a significant number of students with very poor attendance rates in their previous schools attend much more regularly now, but as recognized by the school there is still work to be done. There is a trend of rising standards and more students' graduate every year. The principal understands the importance of using data to drive up performance and the capacity for further improvement is good.

### 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.**

On admission, and during students' orientation period, good data is gathered on what went wrong for them in their previous high schools and what gaps they have in their education. This data is used well to set goals and a personalized education plan for each student, to enable them to strive towards graduating with a high school diploma. Based on this robust baseline data, students are assigned to classes that meet their needs. Flexibility is a high priority and, hence, the school does not operate a traditional class or grade model.

Performance data on ethnic groups is not gathered. English language learners are assessed and provided with tailor made programs. However, the data held on these students is insufficiently robust. Their progress over time is not effectively monitored. Good data is gathered on the performance of special education students and it is used to service their gaps very effectively. These students achieve well, and quickly gain credits. As the students gain in self-esteem they take off as learners. Data about gender performance is not gathered, but the school knows that overall girls perform better than boys.

The school assiduously looks at how well it performs against similar schools. It also looks at how well it performs from year to year in the Regents tests. Overall, standards are rising. Analysis of performance across subjects is carried out to trigger where support is needed. Each subject has a supervisor who evaluates the performance of teachers across the classes where her or his lead subject is taught.

**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.**

There is a collaborative and consultative model for setting the school’s long-term goals. Effective data analysis based on student performance is used to inform these goals. The senior leadership team meets monthly to review these goals. Based on interim assessments, departments regularly revise goals set. This is good practice. There is robust course evaluation based on student progress and this shapes modifications to programs. The effectiveness of instruction is assessed daily in terms of student outcomes, but there is some inconsistency across the school.

Students about to age out are the identified priority students and goals and plans focus sharply on assisting them to accrue sufficient credits to graduate. The school analyzes data on this group of students in January to plan what they need by June. This determines the services they require. Another priority group is those students who fail in four classes. They are clustered and their parents are consulted over the realignment of their goals. There is a strong and shared belief amongst staff that every student has the potential to graduate and there is an improving trend in the number who graduate each year. Those aged over 21 who must leave to go elsewhere without graduating are still allowed to return to do examinations. Flexibility in setting of goals, in a wide range of permutations based on students needs, is a strong feature in this school.

High expectations are modeled by the principal and his fellow administrators during the orientation period when students enter the school. Once established though, in the school, it proves difficult to sustain the involvement and interest of all parents. However, their attendance at teacher led meetings is improving. Students on the school governance body are actively involved in reviewing courses offered. However, communication between this elected body and the other students is not sufficiently effective. In particular students who have recently arrived at this school are not clear about who represents them on the student governance body. The fundamental driving goal for the whole school community is that as many students as possible become responsible citizens and graduate from high school with a purposeful plan for the future.

**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.**

Data analysis of gaps students have in their education on entry is used to shape flexible curriculum packages tailored to their needs. This supports them in passing the Regents examinations they require to graduate. Mandated requirements are planned for and then

the electives offered are based on data about what motivates students in their learning. The principal has thorough systems in place for holding teachers accountable. There is a formalized structure of supervisory meetings. The majority of teachers plan and differentiate their instruction based on students needs, but this is not consistent across the whole school.

Scheduling is effectively based on student needs. Every student has a different and individual schedule tailored to bridge the gaps in their education. The school regularly has to review the number of English language classes it needs over against classes in other subjects, such as history. Budget is targeted on the Saturday program and after school program to support students in gaining the credits they need to accrue rapidly. Staffing decisions are made to accelerate student learning and to ensure that the programs are enjoyable, as evidenced by the funding of a drama teacher.

Instructional programs vary in quality. The vast majority engage students in learning, but not all. In some lessons the slow pace results in students' learning dropping off as they do not engage with the lesson. Students enjoy science which is hands-on and mathematics which they find challenging. However, the instruction in the English as a second language class lacks vitality and students are not sufficiently engaged with learning. Attendance is typical of transfer schools, but the school recognizes the importance of improving it further. Students and their parents consider that the school is very attentive in following up any absence. Students say, 'We feel comfortable in this school and we appreciate the opportunities we are given to gain credits fast.' They are positive about the extra classes for Regents preparation and they trust their teachers. They say, 'Our teachers have an ear for our troubles'.

**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 students, parents and staff. They see him as a principal who cares passionately about the students. All stakeholders in the school community consider that the school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. However, some teachers would appreciate greater clarity about the school's discipline policy.

All candidates who apply for a teaching job are required to teach a demonstration lesson. This provides administration with robust data about their suitability in working with the type of student profile within the school. Each prospective candidate is assessed with respect to his or her understanding of data, which is important in setting goals for the students. Professional development is linked to an assessment of students' needs conducted in June. Scrutiny of report cards is used effectively to target professional development for teachers most in need. The coaches support such teachers and model lessons for them. The priorities on the Comprehensive Education Plan are linked to the required development of skills amongst the staff. The principal and assistant principals' conduct both formal and informal lesson observations and give teachers good feedback to support them to improve their instruction.

Examination results are analyzed and revisions to programs are regularly made as a result. After every cycle each student's performance is reviewed and his or her goals are modified or changed. Due to the type of student profile data is often looked at on a daily basis by faculty and departments, but this is not consistent across the whole school. There

are a few teachers who are not as secure in handling data as the rest. Partnerships with outside bodies are used well to support students' development. The links with the Bronx Zoo and a Women's Arts Project improve students' enjoyment and accelerates their learning.

**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 Comprehensive Education Plan has stepped interim goals along the journey through the academic year to support administration in reaching its long term goals. Regular scrutiny of school reports is used to review and revise these goals. Changes to benefit students are made mid course as required. This is seen in the decision to replace Wilson with Ramp Up mid year, due to a staff change. This course has raised student achievement. Where variations are discovered from data analysis in performance within or across subjects and classes inter-visitations are planned to drive up standards.

Periodic assessments trigger immediate interventions to maximize support for students as required. Flexibility and agility in planning lie at the heart of this proficient school. However, the use of interim assessments to revise planning and re-align goals is not consistently or sufficiently robust for all students. A few teachers do not yet confidently use data to plan learning outcomes and raise achievement for the students they teach.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Bronx Academy High School (HS 560)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>		X	

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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"> <li>each student, classroom, grade level,</li> </ul>		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"> <li>ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students*</li> </ul>	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"> <li>all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>		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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>		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.

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>		X	

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>		X	
<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>		X	
<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>		X	