



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Bronx Little School

Public School 691

**1300 Boynton Avenue
Bronx
NY 10472**

Principal: Janice Gordon

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Reviewer: Richard Woolf

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

PS 691 Bronx Little School is located in the Monroe Educational complex and was opened in 1999. It is a pre-kindergarten through grade 5 school and mainly serves the community of Soundview.

There are approximately 124 students enrolled in the school. The student population is made up of predominately Hispanic (67.7%), Black (24.2%) and other groups (8.1%). The balance between female and male is approximately the same at 50%. There is one class per grade. All students are in general education for the current year and a number of English language learners have extra support. The school is fully staffed, although new staff recruitment remains an issue. The school receives Title 1 funding.

The school's attendance average is approximately 94%. This is in line with similar schools but slightly above average for all City schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal demonstrates good leadership, with extensive knowledge and understanding of good quality learning.
- She is building a school culture which allows effective learning to take place.
- There are improvements in the use of data to drive instruction.
- Systems to monitor and review data are developing well.
- Staff are dedicated, hard-working and professional.
- All staff consistently try to improve the life opportunities of the students.
- Relationships with parents are developing well, and producing more positive partnerships in their children's education.
- The school portrays a welcoming 'family' atmosphere.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop awareness of the needs of higher-achieving students, and provide them with more challenge in their learning.
- Plan events to engage parents more fully in the life of the school, particularly directed to aspects of instruction and learning.
- Develop systems to diminish lateness and truancy and share these with parents to engage their support.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The principal, who is a graduate of the leadership academy, is in her second year in the position. She provides strong leadership which is valued by staff, parents and students. She is determined that the school will deliver an academic program which enhances the opportunities of each student. The improvements seen over the last fifteen months are appreciated and valued by the entire school community.

Through effective use of data the staff are being challenged to rethink their approach to differentiation and the expected norms of the past. This approach is fully endorsed by senior colleagues who are acting as the change agents alongside the principal. Due to the size of the school, budgetary issues do not allow for an assistant principal or a mathematics staff developer to be appointed. This has had an impact on the workload of the principal. However, data is starting to provide classroom teachers with the information they need to help them raise academic standards.

Parents are increasingly aware of the efforts being made by all the staff to raise their children's expectations and are now fully behind the aspirations of the principal to effect such changes.

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

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school is building on the work it undertook last academic year in the use of data. It uses all data as accorded by the State tests as a basis to plan teaching groups and identify students in need of extra support and guidance. However this year more detailed and guided work is being done to inform instruction and data collection. The data is used by the academic intervention team on a twice monthly basis to identify and highlight those students at risk of missing targets and making limited progress. Information for these meetings is collected following monthly meetings with each teacher and the principal. The impact of this is to effectively respond to student's needs more quickly.

Each member of staff has an assessment folder for recording their student's achievements, assessed every six to eight weeks. For those students displaying particular needs, a system of additional support has been established through the use of specialist teachers as well as outside school agencies. Data shows that some higher-performing students could do even better, but the school has not yet sufficiently addressed this issue in its planning at classroom, grade or whole-school level.

There was an increase in academic results during the last academic year, although they still fell short of both similar schools and other City schools. However the principal and her

staff believe that with an increased emphasis on the use of data, and as instruction becomes more focused, there will be an improvement in academic achievement. Although it considers the data on performance of relative groups in the school, such as gender and ethnicity, at present, the school is not analyzing this data to set goals and targets.

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 growing confidence amongst staff that the plans being put forward for the better use of data are having an effect on their instruction. A system of regular individual staff meetings with the principal to discuss elements of their work is a sound beginning to the process. This also acts as an early warning system for students who may be falling behind in their work or are experiencing difficulties from outside the school. By making effective use of the assessment folder, staff have up-to-date knowledge of the progress their students are making and can call upon specialist help when identified situations occur.

The school’s extended day program further enables students to benefit from smaller group work. This kind of focused attention helps students and teachers address areas that are in need of improvement as well as test preparation. Although these systems are beginning to be used well, they are not yet consistent practice in the school. The principal has more work to do to prepare all the staff to take ownership of the newly implemented systems. Some staff require additional support to fully embrace or understand the use of data and the impact it could have in raising standards.

The wealth of new data is impacting on instruction. In some meetings, the level of debate among teachers is high and challenging, well focused on how best to improve student understanding and development. One teacher commented, “We use data in our day-to-day conversations where in the past nothing was ever mentioned and that is down to the principal and the way she has changed things”. The work of the literacy coach, English language learner teachers, and art and technology teachers contributes to the school’s efforts in raising standards.

Parents are encouraged to be active partners in their child’s learning. However, due to the schools recent past this is a strong challenge for the principal and her staff. The current illness of the parent coordinator is impacting upon effective communication between the parents and school and has fallen upon the principal to maintain a level interest at a time when her efforts could be better placed.

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.

The school has a balanced curriculum with a clear focus on developing the basic skills of English language arts and mathematics as well as providing opportunities for art and music in particular. There is evidence of good teaching which engages the students as active learners. In art lessons students are encouraged to be active participants. The

standard of art work throughout the school is exemplary. The use of members of the New York Philharmonic coming into school to help students is appreciated, in particular by parents, as a means of engaging the students in the wider curriculum. The students are aware of the need to try hard and be successful. They have a great deal of respect for their teachers and principal.

The staff are very aware of the principals' goals and are now supportive of her school-wide plan. Data is being used more carefully to examine how well particular skills are being taught. Staff are appreciative of the time to discuss academic achievement and are now accepting the responsibility of being more accountable for their student's progress.

The principal has tried to be creative in allocating resources within the budget, ensuring the most is made of both human and material resources. However, budget constraints limit the progress she would like to achieve. Expenditure on increasing the supply and use of laptops is impacting upon instruction. There are future plans to improve the use of technology further.

Attendance is in line with similar schools and slightly above the City-wide average. However, there is an issue over lateness which impacts learning, as many reading activities take place in the first fifteen minutes of the day. Parents are aware of the role the principal is playing in seeking to set high standards and are increasingly supportive as they see her efforts impacting upon their children.

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's staff selection policy is very clear in that new staff have to demonstrate that they are knowledgeable and intrinsic learners themselves. She is building a team of like-minded individuals who appreciate and understand that their students can succeed in life by being given a positive and encouraging start. Teachers accept the principal's management style has changed over the year, from 'micro managing' to allowing them more professional freedom. This makes the staff feel trusted and valued. There are good opportunities for professional development both within the school and outside, by the use of external consultants in English language arts and mathematics. The data and professional development generated from this venture is impacting upon instruction and understanding of student need.

The principal sets high standards and demonstrates these to the whole school community on a daily basis. She is well respected for being approachable and is a constant presence around the school. She visits classrooms informally as well as conducting formal classroom observations. She has detailed knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of her staff. As a result, the academic intervention team staff are responding more quickly to the needs of the students and this is having a positive effect throughout the school. The school is well managed and organized, which encourages learning. The parents fully appreciate the principal's approach. Excellent links have been developed with outside community-based organizations and groups to assist in raising the standards of the students by widening the curriculum. One example of this is the relationship between the school and The New York Philharmonic.

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

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school is in a transitional period in which the staff, following the lead of the principal, are challenging practices from the past and becoming more adaptable regarding their use of data.

The use of the assessment folder is regarded as a working tool to demonstrate progress. Improvement is being made, with teachers being asked to diagnostically assess data against previous tests. Conversations regularly take place between the principal and staff to identify progress towards meeting targets. A greater emphasis is being placed upon diagnostic test results and comparisons between individual students within grades. This is undertaken to determine how best to improve aspects of what has been taught which are common across the whole grade and how best to tackle them, collectively or individually. The use of an external consultant has greatly aided in this monitoring process. There is evidence of a flexible approach to an identified need by the use of 'push in, pull out' arrangements for students who are feeling more challenged. This approach may be appropriate for those students who show higher level skills and need extra support to reach their full potential.

The principal uses the Comprehensive Education Plan as a basis for setting goals. At present, this is not a user-friendly document, and difficult to monitor and review because of its large size. This means that staff are not as involved as they might be in understanding their role in progress towards the whole-school goals.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Bronx Little School (PS 691)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score		X	

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • each student, classroom, grade level, 		X	
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ethnic groups, English Language Learners, special education students* 		X	
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all other categories of interest to the school* 		X	
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1		X	

* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.		X	
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject, and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area.		X	
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.		X	
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.		X	
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2		X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.		X	
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.		X	
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.			X
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.		X	
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3		X	
Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.		X	
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.		X	
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.		X	
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.		X	
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4		X	
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.		X	
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.		X	
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.		X	
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5		X	