



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Bard High School Early College

High School 696

**525 High Street
New York
NY 10002**

Principal: Raymond Peterson

Dates of review: May 8 – 9, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Sue Alton

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Bard High School Early College is a high school with 540 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 22% Black, 17% Hispanic, 31% White, 15% Asian and 15% other students. Boys account for 28% of the students enrolled and girls account for 72%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 94.5%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

Bard High Early College is in partnership with Bard College, which offers students the opportunity to begin college studies after 10th grade. Students are admitted to the school through a screening process. The early college course provides an academic curriculum, with less focus on sport than other high schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is very well respected by the whole school community who value his knowledge and approachability.
- The school has high expectations of all students, which are well communicated.
- The school's personalized approach ensures teachers have a good understanding of individual student performance and progress.
- Parents appreciate the good range of information they receive on their child's progress and opportunities to contribute information about their child.
- All staff work well as a collaborative team and continually reflect on their practice in order to improve.
- The school runs smoothly, relationships are very good and students feel safe.
- Students are highly motivated, enjoy school and hold their teachers in high esteem.
- There is a strong ethos of trust and respect which supports learning well.
- The college partnership provides a unique opportunity for students to achieve Regents examinations and prepare for an Associate Arts degree.

What the school needs to improve

- Coordinate the activities of committees to create a whole school strategic plan with measurable interim and long-term goals.
- Develop a systematic and rigorous system of self-evaluation using data to identify successes and areas for development to inform future planning.
- Ensure that data is used more effectively to plan differentiated instruction to support the learning needs of all students.
- Coordinate the range of data in the school, so that it is more accessible and ensure all teachers understand how data can be used to raise achievement.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made some progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The principal of Bard Community High School is very well respected by the whole school community. One parent said, "He's truly inspirational and lives, breathes and embodies the spirit of what's been built here!" The school has high expectations for all students although data is not used consistently to plan differentiated instruction to support the learning needs of all students. Parents speak highly of the school. One parent said, "The sky's the limit, no matter where you start from, growth will happen and time and energy will be devoted to you".

The school ethos is based on mutual trust and respect, which supports learning well. The school focuses on students as individuals and teachers know their students well. The strong partnership with Bard College means that many students leave with an associate arts qualification. Staff work very well as a team and students admire their teachers. One student observed, "They're ecstatic about teaching. It is very easy to become inspired by them. They're amazing role models of what you can do with your learning!" Students are articulate, highly motivated and enjoy the opportunities in lessons to debate and discuss to deepen their understanding. They have been selected on their ability and understand that to achieve the grades in a reduced time requires commitment. Communication with parents is good and parents and students value the range of information they receive as well as opportunities to contribute to the process.

There is no cohesive strategic plan or rigorous evaluation process, with interim goals to co-ordinate and monitor the work of committees as they plan and develop strategies for improvement. Since the last review, the achievement committee has been reconvened as the inquiry team. It functions well. The focus is those students on academic probation in grades 9 and 10, who have been assigned a trained mentor from the college years. Another project of the inquiry team is to develop a numerical rubric to support the consistent writing of narratives in grade 9. The chemistry department has agreed a rubric, but development in other subjects is slow. Other action since the last review includes some training on assessment and data use, but not all staff are confident in its use or understanding of how it can be analyzed and used to raise achievement.

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 the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school focuses on its knowledge of individual students. Teachers know their students well and there are well-established processes for tracking individual progress, including detailed narratives for all students four times yearly. Students are effectively involved in this process, completing their own narrative to support a discussion of progress with

teachers. Assignments are carefully planned and students are given clear guidance of expectations in most subjects. The assessment of these assignments contributes to the tracking of individuals and some understanding of progress across classes, grades, and subjects. Administration and cabinet discuss narratives regularly with teachers to inform their overview of individual student progress, classes, grades, and subjects. They compare teachers within departments and consider grade distributions to ensure students are assessed against similar criteria.

The school has begun to consider the performance of different groups, for example the progress of boys, including analyzing their progress in Regents. Although no formal analysis of the achievement of different ethnic groups has been undertaken, the school is focusing informally on raising the aspirations of Hispanic girls to expand their college horizons. This includes outreach programs and targeted discussions with parents. Over the last year, the school has begun to identify groups of higher attaining students, which they are teaching in separate classes. The evaluation of the success of this project will be based on the Regents examinations. The school has not considered how it could set interim goals to measure progress and success of the project before the year end. Data use is developing, but is not embedded in practice to inform planning. It is restricted by the lack of manageable data systems and processes and by the resistance of many staff to use quantitative data. Although some training on data use has taken place, it has not sufficiently influenced understanding and practice. The school has realized that some data is inaccurate and has spent time addressing this. Data is not used systematically to identify issues or areas for improvement for students.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student’s next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student’s learning.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

Staff work collaboratively to set end of year goals for improvement for subjects, grades and individual students. Progress towards individual student goals is recorded at frequent intervals through teacher assessment, narratives, report cards, and teacher and student dialogue. There is a lack of rigorous processes for goal setting including planned timescales for reaching goals and structured monitoring and evaluation processes to ensure the process supports student learning. Students in need of improvement receive a range of interventions outside the classroom, including “skills labs” which they find very supportive. The success of interventions is evaluated through narratives and feedback from teachers. Data is beginning to be used as part of this process. However, when these interventions make only marginal improvements, the school does not consider changes to instruction within class, through differentiation.

The inquiry team is developing numerical rubrics to support assessment and consistency in narratives across classes, grades, and subjects. This work began last year and progress has been slow. A chemistry rubric is in place and other departments are considering rubrics, but no timescales have been agreed for completion of the project. Grades 9 and 10 continue to be a focus for the inquiry team. To reduce the number of students on academic probation, trained college mentors are working with targeted students. Data shows that this is successful in reducing the numbers of students for whom there is concern, although there are still some students who do not progress onto the college program. High expectations are shared with all members of the community. Students know their end of year goals and the expectations for continual improvement in assignments, but interim goals are not always explicit. Parents and students value the range of information provided on achievement, particularly the regular narratives. Parents are frequently encouraged to share information about their children and appreciate these

opportunities to be involved in their child's school. One parent said, "How could I be so lucky to find this place for my child?"

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The curriculum is designed to enable students to move in four years from 9th grade through the first years of college, to earn a high school diploma and an associate of arts degree. It does not systematically generate data. The school uses teacher assessment and narratives for this purpose. The curriculum is broad and includes theatre and three languages. Additional courses are considered at student request. The approach supports most students effectively in "learning how to learn" through developing specific skills and competencies which they can apply to any subject. There is a good range of opportunities outside the school day, often initiated by the students, as well as targeted intervention and support.

As a small school, everyone knows students well and this information, and some use of data, is used to inform discussions and to hold teachers accountable. Performance in grades, subjects and classes is similarly monitored. Administration and cabinet maintain an overview of narratives and discuss individual issues with teachers and students. As yet, there is no system to analyze narratives to identify common issues and themes, which means that issues and trends are not easily identified. The school's approach to differentiation is through interventions outside class. Administration observe that teachers' use of data to plan systematically for the differing needs of students, is not widespread and have not considered this in the debate over the number of students leaving in grades 9 and 10. The understanding of differentiated instruction is inconsistent. Administration and cabinet are reluctant to consider its widespread use because of concerns that this approach could affect their high expectations and conflict with the college approach to learning.

Attendance is better partly because of improvements in the accuracy of recording information. The selection process on entry is successful in recruiting students who are motivated to learn and want to attend. When students are absent, appropriate procedures are in place. The ethos is one of mutual respect and trust, which supports learning very well. One student said, "The faculty are experts in their field and to have these resources available to us is wonderful".

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Administration and cabinet regularly review the quality of instruction. They know the strengths and weakness of teachers, through observations and walk throughs and student narratives. This information is used to provide an appropriate program for improvement, including professional development and peer observations. A range of professional development has taken place, but training on the use of data has not led to systematic improvement in its use to raise achievement. Teachers meet frequently, formally and informally, in teams to plan and share effective practice. Lectures by staff provide good opportunities for teachers to share their expertise. Satisfactory processes exist to support

the induction of new teachers and those who are new to the school, although teachers observe that the current system requires them to be proactive in taking up the support. The school is responding to requests to formalize the program. Counselors effectively support students and this work is carefully coordinated to ensure students who most need help are targeted, whilst maintaining individual support for all students.

The school runs smoothly through the principal's effective approach to distributed leadership. Each member of staff understands their responsibilities and their part in decision-making. Staff take these responsibilities very seriously. They constantly review the work of the school and what can be done to further improve it. The school has a range of very good partnerships, which support learning very effectively. The most significant of these is that with Bard College. Students speak enthusiastically of the opportunities this partnership presents, "We find our options earlier, so we're better prepared to make choices at university. This course puts us a couple of steps ahead of others."

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school's work is underdeveloped with proficient features.

The school does not have an overall strategic plan for improving student achievement. The principal's personal goals present a plan for three goals and progress towards these is checked regularly. Staff know the many broader aims of the school, which they elect. They meet on committees to consider action towards achieving these. Administration and cabinet are represented on each committee as non-voting members and share information at cabinet meetings, but there is no formalized strategic overview. These committees do not formally record their plans or interim and long-term goals. Although the school evaluates its progress, it lacks a rigorous system of self-evaluation, using data, to identify success, trends and areas for development. As a result, the school is not in a strong position to track progress towards long-term aims and goals or to inform future whole school planning.

Plans to improve teacher outcomes are related to students' long term goals, teachers' periodic assessments and narratives. Interim goals are not set consistently. Discussion of student achievement takes place on a daily basis at cabinet meetings as well as sharing information from committee meetings.

The school is beginning to collect data more systematically, to support evaluation and planning processes, but analysis of this is in the early stages of development. There has been some resistance to the use of statistical data and a preference for the narrative. However, as a result of discussion and training, some staff are beginning to realize that the deeper analysis of narratives as well as numerical data could provide a range of meaningful information. The whole school community shares the vision to provide an effective college based education for students who are motivated and ready to take on college work at a younger age, to achieve well and "learn to learn".

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Bard Community High School	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
Quality Score			X		

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

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide ...	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?			X		
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?	N/A*				
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?	N/A*				
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?			X		
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?			X		
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?			X		
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?		X			
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X		

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty ...	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set rigorous, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?			X		
2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?			X		
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?			X		
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?				X	
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?				X	
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X		

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school ...	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?			X		
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?			X		
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?			X		
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?		X			
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?			X		
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?				X	
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness?			X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X		

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

To what extent does the school ...	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?			X		
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?			X		
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?				X	
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?			X		
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?			X		
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning, and effectively address discipline related incidents?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X		

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

To what extent do ...	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?		X			
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?		X			
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?			X		
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?			X		
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?		X			
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?		X			
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?			X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 5		X			

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped

N/A* These sub-criteria are not applicable as there are 0% students in these categories.