



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

West Bronx Academy for the Future

Middle - High School 243

**500 East Fordham Road
Bronx
NY 10558**

Principal: Wilper Morales

Dates of review: December 6 - 7, 2007

Lead Reviewer: Mike Smith

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

West Bronx Academy for the Future is a middle school-high school with 555 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 36% Black, 59.9% Hispanic, 1.6% White and 2.5% Asian and other students. The student body includes 16% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 50% and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 83%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 82.5% eligibility.

The school shares a large building with five other schools. This is the first year since it opened four years ago that it has had a full complement of students in each grade.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and assistant principals are clearly committed to school improvement and to finding ways of ensuring that teachers and students continue to thrive.
- Technology is used effectively by teachers to motivate, engage and support students' learning.
- There is a positive culture of respect and trust between students and adults which supports their personal and academic progress.
- Clear procedures and expectations help students to feel comfortable and secure so they can make the best of their learning experiences.
- The administration has an accurate knowledge of the quality of learning and instruction gained through frequent classroom observations.
- Teachers ensure that instruction effectively motivates all students to learn in a positive, safe and inclusive environment.
- The curriculum is relevant to students' needs and provides a good range of learning opportunities to promote their personal and academic progress
- The work of the parent-coordinator is very effective in supporting parents and in helping them support their children's progress.
- There are high expectations of students' personal and academic progress, which supports a positive image of themselves as learners.
- Teachers make it clear to students what they need to do to make continued progress.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that "follow through" strategies are quickly implemented once they have been agreed as priority areas for school and student improvement.
- Develop professional development opportunities for staff in the use of data, ensuring shared practice and for staff to become more involved in planning their training.
- Increase the rigor and consistency of teacher assessment in order to match work in the classroom more closely to the different needs of all students.
- Develop the use of periodic assessments and other student data to monitor student progress and measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions, for individuals and different groups.
- Express all interim and final goals in measurable terms in order to know when to celebrate success and when to modify plans.
- Continue to strive for improved attendance and punctuality.

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 school is an effectively led and managed community that provides a very supportive and positive learning environment for all its students. One student said, “Teachers encourage you to do your best and they care that you do well.” Parents and students are very supportive of, and loyal to the school and value the emphasis placed on trust and respect in the school community. Parents particularly appreciate the fact that the school gives their children a sense of worth and has high ambitions for them. Students feel happy and secure in the school, but a number of students have a poor attendance record and this hinders their achievement. The principal has a clear vision of how to take the school forward and is very well supported by able assistant principals and a hard working and committed cabinet. Together they consider strategic decisions that will help the school to reach the agreed goals and improve student outcomes. They are aware that there is a need to implement agreed strategies more promptly. The school is also aware of the need to ensure interim and final goals are expressed in measurable terms so success can be celebrated, or plans can be modified if goals are not met.

There are no “quick fixes” to address the issues raised in the previous Quality Review, but the school is diligently working on them and realizes the importance of establishing consistent approaches to assessment and planning. The gathering of student progress data, its analysis and consistent use in planning to meet and challenge their needs is still developing. Staff are willing to embrace school improvement and they are committed to improving the learning opportunities and achievement of all students. There is an undoubted collaborative culture with a united drive to support and achieve the school’s aims and goals. As a result, the school promotes the learning of all its students well. As one teacher commented, “We care about our students and want them to succeed.”

The principal and administration place suitable emphasis on providing in-house training and development to improve teacher instruction and student progress. Students value the effective use of technology to support their learning. They also appreciate the practical and relevant nature of their lessons. Although planning focuses on promoting student interest and achievement, the use of assessment data to inform planning and instruction to track students’ progress is not yet consistently embedded in all practice. The administration is making great efforts to reach and work with those parents who are not so involved in their children’s learning. The inquiry team is established and members are determining exactly how to measure ongoing progress needed to successfully illustrate overall improvements.

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 uses a range of tests and assessments to monitor the progress of individual students. There is regular monitoring of progress in reading, writing and math and teachers know their students' progress and needs well. This is particularly effective in the case of English language learners and those students with special educational needs who are supported back into general class lessons when they have made suitable progress. The administration is supporting the training needs of teachers to enhance their understanding of the use of data to track students' progress and inform their planning. Centralized training has also been accessed by some staff, in the use and implementation of assessment software, but has yet to be shared and established in practice. Teachers are being encouraged to use the range of data on past performance to promote the progress of individual students and to inform their discussions on instructional strategies.

Some teachers are using technology effectively to support the management and analysis of their data. They are enthusiastic about its possibilities in terms of meeting and challenging students' individual needs. There is now sufficient accurate data to compare the performance and progress of different groups within the school and identify trends over time, although a full analysis has not yet been made. Some differences in the performance of boys and girls have been noted and the administration is beginning to investigate these further.

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.

Teachers know their students very well and consider their strengths and weaknesses when planning their instruction. Students are given clear guidance and support and their progress is assessed and recorded carefully. The needs of lower and higher achieving students are being identified by many teachers and suitable support and challenges are implemented into their instruction. There is still some inconsistency between teachers in the integration of assessment information into planning and informing differentiated instruction. The very best practice is not yet being shared most effectively, limiting opportunities for some students.

Improvement goals, based firmly on assessment data are carefully discussed within the cabinet and shared with the whole school community. This collaborative approach ensures that individual students' needs are well known and intervention strategies are effectively targeted at students in greatest need of improvement. School data shows special education students and English language learners make good progress.

The school sets high expectations for its students. Parents are increasingly aware of these expectations and of whole school goals, through a range of strategies, including electronic mail and the school web site. The administration values parent support highly and there are a range of opportunities that parents can access to get a better understanding of their children's learning. The work of the parent-coordinator is particularly effective in supporting parents and in helping them support their children's progress. One parent commented, "There is a good sense of community, the school cares for our children and we work together for their best interests. The school makes them believe in themselves." Parents are well informed about their children's progress and are contacted at an early stage if problems arise. Students know what their teachers expect of them, both academically and socially. As a result, they are able to identify their own areas for improvement. They are very positive about the school and the efforts it makes to ensure their success.

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 well developed.

The school has developed an appealing curriculum that is relevant to students' needs and interests. It includes appropriate rigor in terms of reading, writing and math and a blend of technology and the arts to encourage and stimulate learning. Time is used flexibly with after-school and Saturday programs supporting students' learning well. Instruction uses technology very effectively to support learning and practical experiences are often integrated to further engage students' interests. One student remarked, "I like practical lessons and in math you get to use your skills to solve problems".

High expectations are made of teachers to ensure their instruction is engaging and motivating to students, particularly for those higher achieving students. This shows improvement since the last review. There are many examples of effective instruction, which are not yet shared effectively across the school. There is some inconsistency in matching instruction to students' differing learning needs through differentiation. Students are very enthusiastic about their learning, although the poor and erratic attendance of a number of students is a big concern as their progress and achievement is consequently inhibited.

Instruction is well organized to allow opportunities for professional discussions between teachers and the administration. Teachers are clear about what is expected of them and they are held accountable for the quality of their instruction through classroom observations. Teachers share their professional expertise, supporting and learning from each other and their planning increasingly promotes good learning. The atmosphere of trust and respect extends to all areas of school life and results in a positive learning culture that promotes students' confidence and encourages them to try their best. Resources are managed well and lead to, for example, effective joint use of the swimming pool, refectory and auditorium.

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.

The principal and administration carry out a regular program of class observations, giving supportive feedback that helps teachers to improve their practice and develop their skills. Professional development is aligned to the school goals and to the needs of the students, based upon observation and data analysis. The school is aware that it needs to encourage more teachers to become involved in the planning and structure of professional development activities throughout the school year.

The induction and support program for newly appointed staff is primarily informal with mentors supporting their general needs and helping them to improve their skills. Teachers are encouraged to discuss professional issues with each other and they meet regularly to review, revise and develop their plans. Formal meetings are effective at generating a range of good ideas emanating from good student knowledge, subject expertise and available data. To increase the impact of its work, the school is aware it needs to be more efficient in promptly implementing the agreed strategies and most importantly, ensuring they are consistently followed through by all staff.

The school makes effective use of youth development and support services as well as allegiances with colleges and universities. The principal and assistant principals, ably supported by the cabinet ensure that the school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis and parents confirm that the school is an orderly place. Students confirm that behavioral expectations are very clear, as are the consequences for any inappropriate behavior. Students and parents confirm that the school manages and deals with any incidents very effectively. Parents and students highly value the safe and secure environment that the school provides.

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 proficient.

The principal has established a clear direction for the school, based on high expectations and supported by a committed administration that puts the needs of students first. The school has a range of clearly identified goals, which have emanated from the review of data and information gathered. Although they often represent ambition and challenge, they are still mainly measurable through percentage increases each year rather than being linked to students' specific skills, knowledge and understanding. Interim and measurable goals are being discussed, but plans do not yet clearly illustrate how the progress towards the achievement of long-term objectives are to be tracked to allow for success to be celebrated and strategies to be revised if necessary. The cabinet is making better use of data in planning for further improvement and they review and analyze available data and information on students' progress effectively before considering any modifications needed to the curriculum or instruction..

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME:	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?			X		
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?			X		
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