



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Bronx Health Sciences High School

High School 249

**750 Baychester Avenue
Bronx
NY 10475**

Principal: Miriam Rivas

Dates of review: May 22 - 23, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Elena Papaliberios

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Bronx Health Sciences High School is a school with 336 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 45% Black, 46% Hispanic, 1% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys account for 31% of the students enrolled and girls account for 69%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 84.7%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 85% eligibility.

This school has a focus on health professions and therefore offers courses in health throughout the four years such as, anatomy and physiology, emergency care, animal science, marine science, and human sexuality. They will be graduating their first cohort of students this June. They are located inside a large high school and continue to have space issues. The lack of science labs is a major concern especially since this school's focus is in health and the sciences are an integral part of their program. The principal was the founding principal and she has retained a number of the original teachers.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is highly respected by her entire school community and knows every student individually.
- The induction process for new teachers, which is led by the principal and the assistant principal, is effective and maintained throughout the year.
- There is a strong focus on supporting students' social and emotional development.
- The principal has put structures in place to support a smooth running of the school which help to create an environment that is suitable for learning.
- The interdisciplinary BHS project is done effectively across the subject areas and highlights the health theme of the school.
- The principal and assistant principal are available and visible throughout the school and conduct daily informal visits of classrooms.
- Staff members and parents feel that there is a family environment in this school which allows them to work well together.
- The administration gathers and analyzes data that is school-wide and classroom based.
- There is a strong community service program supported by many external partnerships in which all students participate within and outside the school.
- Teachers reach out to parents frequently to communicate the accomplishments as well as the challenges their children are facing.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve teachers' understanding and use of data in planning for differentiated instruction and for re-teaching of topics.
- Create structures for staff to participate on the goal-setting process for the school as well as the planning.
- Train teachers to create action plans to address individual academic students' needs as well as whole class needs.
- Set up a collaborative process where there is input from the entire staff to review and revise progress towards goals and to create action plans based on data analysis.
- As a college preparatory school, enhance the college readiness program to include relevant course offerings.

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.

This school will be graduating its first cohort of students this June. The principal knows all her students well and is visible in the hallways and readily accessible to students and staff. Her mission is to have her students graduate and continue on to college. She takes pride in the fact that this is a college preparatory school and is working with Lehman College to provide college counseling to her students. Students are involved in either a community service activity or an internship with a focus on health careers. However, the school's college readiness program does not include sufficient course offerings to prepare students adequately. This school faces the challenges of being housed inside a large high school and continues to have space issues. Students have good relationships with their teachers and the school runs smoothly.

Data is collected primarily by the principal and shared at professional development sessions. The principal along with the assistant principal meet with new teachers on an ongoing basis to provide effective training and professional development. Administration is also available to all staff and frequently visit classrooms to monitor instruction. Teachers communicate with parents regularly to keep them informed of their child's progress. However, teachers need to strengthen the use of periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual students. Students need to be a part of their own data analyses and their own goal setting. The school's leaders could then use this data to drive the next stage of collaborative school-wide goal setting and improvement planning.

Since the last Quality Review, some progress has been made on the development of cross-curriculum planning via projects that are interdisciplinary. An area of need is the development of classroom assessments to inform planning focused on differentiation of instruction. Attendance has improved from 85% to 88% year-to-date. The entire staff are implementing the work of the inquiry team, focused on the use of notebooks, including note taking.

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 reviews data that is disaggregated by ethnic groups as well as by gender. This school has 69% female students who primarily are drawn to the school for the health careers program since many of them are interested in nursing. The school compares the performance of the different grade levels; since they do not yet have a graduating class, cohort data is not available. The senior class outperforms all the other grades and the weakest group is grade 10. Additional tutoring and support has been set up for these students in order to help them

succeed. This school compares its science data with similar schools and finds that it does better than most in that area. They know that since they are a health careers school, their science program is stronger than most. The school uses a wide range of available and school-generated data, including students' scholarship reports and ARIS to monitor student performance and progress. There is a strong focus on Regents passing rates and credit accumulation. The area of concern is social studies as the data shows that 48% of students still need to pass the U.S. History Regents.

A strong English as a second language teacher monitors the progress and provides push-in support for 27 English language learners. They are placed in English classes based on their New York State English as a second language assessment test results. Special education students are serviced through a collaborative team-teaching model and are held to the same standards as all students.

Teachers meet twice a month to have conversations about students and they focus on youth development issues. However, they do not focus adequately on the data and review of student work to guide instruction and to support students' learning.

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

The principal has used last year's Quality Review to prepare her principal's performance review and set three goals for the year: to use inquiry; to use the writing project to improve student performance; and to improve attendance. However, there are not sufficient opportunities given to include teachers in the goal-setting process for the school.

There is little evidence that individual student goals are set by teachers. Therefore, students are not involved in setting their goals and taking ownership of their own learning. However, teachers do spend lots of time meeting and talking about individual students and ensuring that they are on track to graduate. Much of their discussion at these case conferences is around discipline and interactions among students and staff. Social and emotional aspects are thoroughly addressed at these meetings with some focus on student work or academic interventions.

Clear expectations are shared continually through written and verbal communication. A parent handbook is distributed at the beginning of each year. Additionally, incoming freshmen and their parents attend three orientations to learn about the school. While expectations are clearly delineated, when students were asked if their teachers have high expectations of them, one responded, "they could be more challenging" and they all agreed. In contrast, the administration has set a high expectation for all students to graduate. The students identified this as one of the two goals for the school. Teachers reach out to parents on an ongoing basis to inform them about their children's success and their struggles and to get support and relevant information. They are required to log at least 10 phone calls a week. Report cards, which are handed-out during parent/teacher conferences and mailed for the other marking periods, provide additional information to parents. When students were asked what they like about the school many said, "Teachers call parents all the time, for good and bad." The school recognizes and is working hard at involving more parents in their child's education.

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.

Teachers are held accountable for good instruction. They effectively engage students in interdisciplinary, cross-curriculum work, culminating in projects displayed throughout the school. Each semester students complete two projects with health related components. Teachers’ comments focus on raising student achievement. However, daily classroom instruction is predominantly whole class presentations with no clear evidence of differentiation. In one grade 9 class students were reading a very challenging piece of literature, but the teacher was not aware of the reading level of her students. Teachers use Regents-level questions to prepare students for the exams. They also look at students’ results on the PSAT. However, they have not deconstructed the exams to determine what skills or topics need to be retaught to the class. Teachers also do not focus on students’ individual needs to improve their skills. Students talk about the need to have additional course offerings based on their interests. Specifically, they refer to the absence of advanced placement courses, the addition of which would strengthen the college readiness program.

Students and parents talk about having a “family atmosphere in the school” and an environment of mutual respect where staff and students work well together to improve student outcomes. Parents said that students do not see the administrators as such, but rather as people they love. “The assistant principal is a go getter, a mediator, the students don’t see her as an assistant principal, they love her; she is strict but with love” said a parent during our meeting. Parents speak very highly of the principal and feel that she is very open, welcoming, and know their children very well. “She knows them all by name and can tell you everything about them,” said one of the parents at our meeting.

The school uses its budget to support its goals. In response to last year’s recommendation to address student attendance, a full time attendance teacher was hired. This has resulted in an increase from 85% to 88% of students’ attending for this year.

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 well developed.

New teachers are introduced to the school, and expectations and a teachers’ handbook are shared at an August meeting. New teacher induction continues throughout the year with weekly meetings with the principal who also leads their professional development activities. She and the assistant principal model lessons, direct their intervisitations, and lead discussions on teaching and learning to enhance their skills.

All teachers share best practices effectively. They look at student work, focusing on the interdisciplinary projects required of all students, with an eye to careful review of the task, rubric and teachers’ response to the students’ work. All teachers are required to participate in intervisitations and then provide written feedback to their colleagues. Both the principal and the assistant principal conduct formal observations on a regular basis. Teachers indicate that the principal “is always in their classrooms either informally or formally.” The principal uses these observations to provide differentiated support to teachers to strengthen their learning. Off-site professional development opportunities are provided effectively to help teachers improve their

instructional practice. Coaches work ongoing with teachers in the classroom and provide a high level of training and support.

Students say, "The school has really no discipline problems, we hardly hear of any fights taking place." There are school aides on the floor monitoring constantly the hallways. The principal and assistant principal are very visible in the hallways to help the school run smoothly and engage students, parents and staff in conversations to encourage student learning. Hallway passes are closely monitored and students have very clear direction as to what behavior is expected of them. Parents feel that although the school is located within another big school, their school is very safe and they feel comfortable sending their children to this school.

The school has many effective partnerships. A strong partnership with Lehman College provides a staff member to serve as college advisor, and offers students tutoring for college entrance exams and opportunities to participate in college courses. Students perform community service at many partner organizations such as Health Community Center, Kings Harbor Nursing Home, Veterans' Hospital, and the Bronx Zoo. This allows them to connect what they learn in science and health classes to the real world of work. There is a strong focus on students' personal growth that is evident in the discussions that take place at teacher meetings.

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.

Teachers and administrators do not review data and interim assessments consistently. Therefore, there is limited monitoring of their instructional practices, and plans are not revised accordingly. For the most part, assessments are not used to determine individual student needs but rather whether a topic needs to be retaught. There are no individual goals set for students based on interim assessments. Therefore, there is no opportunity to create individual action plans that would help students reach their goals. It would help to have teachers bring specific student's work to share among teachers and to develop collaboratively action plans to meet the needs of each student. Only a small minority of teachers provides progress reports to students on a regular basis and the school does not have a system in place to facilitate the monitoring and communication of interim growth. Incoming grade 9 students are evaluated based on their incoming grade 8 scores. However, teachers do not know the reading levels of their students and have not given a baseline assessment to measure growth. PSAT data is available through the college advisor and is used well to support the SAT preparation class offered on Saturdays.

Teachers and administrators keep abreast of students' personal and social development and engage the entire school community in the commitment to support each student. This information is used to guide students as they prepare for their future. The principal's vision is to have all students graduate and succeed in college. She has strong convictions, is passionate about her work, and is unwavering in her commitment to prepare her students to succeed.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Bronx Health Sciences 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?			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