



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Bronx Lab School

High School 265

**800 East Gun Hill Road
Bronx
NY 10467**

Principal: Marc Sternberg

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Lead Reviewer: George Wallace

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Bronx Lab School is a high school with 420 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 40% Black, 57% Hispanic, 2% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 15.5% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 87.5%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 77% eligibility.

This year sees the first cohort of students graduate from the school, which was established in September 2004. The school occupies parts of the third and fourth floors of the Evander Childs campus.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has an extremely clear vision for its future development and a total commitment to continuous improvement.
- The school is exceptionally well led and provides students with a highly positive atmosphere for learning within a safe, nurturing and respectful environment.
- The school is highly effective in its extensive use of a wide range of up to date, relevant student data to guide decisions and modify practice.
- Teachers work very well with their students, including those in greatest need of improvement, to produce specific relevant and achievable learning goals.
- Parents are delighted and proud of their school and are extremely pleased with the range and frequency of information they receive.
- There is an extremely broad curriculum incorporating the most up-to-date technology and strong arts, personal development and leadership programs.
- Teachers know their students' personal and academic learning needs very well, such that lessons are well planned and differentiated.
- The school budget is extremely well managed and consequently human and physical resources are of a high quality enabling the school to perform well.
- The school youth development and guidance program is excellent, especially the particularly thorough college awareness and readiness service.
- Support for new teachers and the professional development program are comprehensive, drawing strongly on the expertise within the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Sharpen the goal setting process so that goals at all levels are easily measurable, time related and contain evaluation points.
- Broaden the range of evaluative feedback about the level of satisfaction students and parents have for the school.
- Ensure that the school community is clear about the core school improvement goals.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

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

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

This is the fourth year of the school's existence and first graduating cohort, where nearly 100% of students have graduated. The school works tirelessly in the interests of its students, providing them with an extremely broad range of programs and activities that includes many rural and international residential activities. Students and parents are rightly proud of their school although the canvassing and evaluating of their views is not commonplace. Students feel privileged at being able to take part in a wide range of activities that promotes assertiveness, leadership and character building as well as aiding academic success. The school succeeds in raising students' aspirations and proof of this is the exemplary college-ready and applications program. Preparation for college is excellent and provides students with a wealth of information including an extensive program of visits. The school is also amazingly successful in ensuring students receive scholarships, with the current seniors securing over one and a quarter million dollars in scholarship funding.

Teachers know they are accountable for the quality of teaching. They use data extensively to aid their planning and differentiate learning to meet students' needs. Data analysis and tracking of student performance and progress is excellent. The school's success is based upon the commissioning of a bespoke data and information handling system. The school management structure is strong and operates through a series of well-defined teams and standing meetings with the principal. Communication is very effective throughout the school. The principal knows his staff and students extremely well and the school runs very smoothly. School development to promote student success is at the heart of the work of all in the school. The core management team knows these goals well, but other staff members are not so well versed in the development proposals. The goals, while clear, do not have sufficiently sharp measurable objectives at both interim and final points in the school's plan. The budget is managed extremely well allowing for imaginative scheduling that provides a wide, interesting and motivating curriculum. The inquiry team is successfully promoting writing skills. The school has been successful in all recommendations made in the last quality review.

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 well developed.

The school collects and uses a wide range of highly relevant student performance data. To sharpen data analysis, a comprehensive bespoke data handling system was

introduced and now used very effectively to track and support students' learning. Therefore the performance, progress and effort of all students are known very well. Teachers are familiar with data and know how to interpret and use information to support students' learning. Although this year is the first cohort of students to graduate – currently 92%, with a projected rate of 98% by the end of June and 100% by January 2009 – the principal and staff maintain a tight grip on their understanding of student performance in all classes, subjects and grades. It is through such close management of data that teaching matches students' needs and highly appropriate additional support is available from students' earliest days in school. Item analysis is strong and used effectively by teachers in their planning. Pattern and trends are well understood and used by senior leaders with staff. The school has an increasing proportion of special education students who work successfully in a variety of specialist and general classes. Their strengths and weaknesses are very well known and teaching, as well as intervention programs, are introduced and modified according to needs. Hence their performance is well understood. English language learners are very well supported and their needs well known.

Senior leaders are particularly effective at using data handling systems. The school interrogates data on the basis of categories such as ethnicity, gender, low performing students, personal and social vulnerability categories, as well as, for example, achievement themes such as competence in persuasive writing and Regents credit gaps. Good use is made of comparative data with other local schools and more generally against other small schools in New York City. Training for all staff on the different data systems is effective. New teachers “hit the ground running” as a consequence of the principal always reinforcing the importance of data use.

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 well developed.

The school has a well-defined and efficient organizational structure. Built into this framework is a variety of staff teams, ensuring that collaboration is widespread and purposeful throughout the school. Meetings between teachers, and students and teachers are commonplace to set and, at a later stage, evaluate, medium and long term goals. Equally strong is the way in which the school identifies specific student groups that become an area of focus to raise performance. For example, the Hallway Project identifies students who exhibit behavioral infractions. Outcomes from recent school work show positive modifications to students' behavior and stronger attention to academic success. There are other focus groups such as that of the inquiry team, and also a District 75 student group. The school has effective monitoring procedures and uses its data systems very well to identify and track all students, not least those in greatest need of improvement.

Collaboration and teamwork are strong. However, while teachers know what improvements have been made, they are unsure about specific whole school goals. This is bizarre in view of the high frequency of good quality professional development, an efficient school organizational structure and highly positive attitude towards meeting students' needs. However, this does not prevent staff from having high expectations of students' learning. The school values all students and works tirelessly to engage with them, and support them in the pursuit of high standards of achievement. However, feedback from parents and student via the Learning Environment Survey or other mechanisms is not sufficiently built into the school's evaluation procedures. Parents are

hugely supportive of the school. They are very pleased with the quantity and quality of information they receive which includes information about goals. Teachers are in frequent contact with parents and respond to information they receive.

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.

Students learning opportunities go far beyond the mandatory curriculum. Students are carefully placed in groups for their advisory lessons and they remain in these groups for the duration of their schooling. There is an excellent range of other programs that includes a wide range of electives, conflict resolution, integrated health education and math courses. All students take the pre-calculus course and many students attend courses that provide them with college credits. Furthermore there is an excellent range of high quality extra curricula activities that includes residential studies to promote character building and leadership adventure programs. Residential summer programs in the mountains and other rural locations provide college-style approaches to learning, while the school selects other groups of students to attend one of several foreign trips, most recently to China and Ecuador.

Teaching is engaging. Teachers know they are accountable for students’ learning. Lessons are interesting, well planned and provide students with plenty of “hands on” activities to extend and consolidate their learning. Situated on the top floor of a shared building, the school is safe and provides students with a pleasant environment in which to learn. Some classroom displays are excellent. Teachers use data very well to aid their planning of lessons. Student activities are differentiated and teachers use many styles and resources for teaching to ensure that challenges match the needs of students. The principal has taken the lead in providing a staffing structure that ensures students are college-ready. He is also highly adept at raising additional funds for the school, enhancing the budget to support an imaginative schedule that provides students with a wealth of well-supported enrichment opportunities. Students work together well and consequently there is a high level of trust, respect and engagement between staff and students to support students’ personal and academic development. Very good systems are in place to raise attendance, but efforts to track down and encourage the school’s eleven long term absentees is keeping attendance figures to just below 90%.

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.

The principal and senior leaders, including coaches, frequently observe lessons. Observations are thorough and provide teachers with good, well-focused feedback that ensures development. Coaches have a thematic responsibility, for example for differentiated instruction, assessment for learning or classroom management. The professional development program is very well organized and based on the school’s philosophy of continuous improvement. Faculty meetings are weekly, as are grade and subject meetings. The professional development program arises directly from the school’s improvement priorities and specific staff needs, most of which can be satisfied from within

the school, such is the quality of expertise. Staff growth is also fostered through inter-visitations. Outcomes of such activities are discussed with coaches, who will often model lessons. The procedures for inducting new staff are very strong and the activities central to embedding the philosophy of the school into the hearts and minds of new teachers. Therefore, as a minimum, several days of induction and training occur prior to the start of the new school year, and coaches mentor new teachers throughout their first year.

The emphasis placed on supporting students, raising their self-esteem and aspirations is extremely high. Attention to students' personal and social development, as well as academic achievement and preparation for college, is immense, thorough and highly successful. The advice and preparation for choosing and applying to colleges are exemplary, such that all graduating students are going to college, many with full scholarships. The school runs extremely smoothly. All staff members are acutely aware of their responsibilities and how these fit into the organizational structure of the school. The highly positive ethos of the school encourages positive learning habits. However, some students who are less than positive are tracked and the school has programs that have successfully changed their habits. The principal and colleagues are very successful at ensuring the school is enriched through a wide variety of partners. These partnerships provide sponsorship in many ways, including personnel, resources and finance.

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 well developed.

The school has a well-written improvement plan. The priorities for development are clear and relevant. Goal setting procedures are well developed and exist at grade, class, subject, student and teacher levels. Student goals are updated and discussed at the end of each quarter. However, generally, few plans have interim goals. The school recognizes the need to sharpen the goal setting process incorporating evaluation points to enable clearer judgments to be made about progress towards goals. Plan's for improving the achievements of students through a wide range of experiences are good. The school has precise and clearly understood policies, for example, in best instructional practices, discipline and positive behavior, and purpose and practice of advisories. Coaches are effective in their role at developing teachers. They also support teachers well, enabling them to use periodic assessments well, especially in judging the effectiveness of plans and interventions. Teachers have good procedures for tracking students' performance. The school's bespoke data management system is used extremely well by senior leaders. Since the school has awards that go well beyond the basic Regents requirements, the monitoring of progress is important to ensure that students are successful in their applications to college. The tracking system is used in a formal, formative way eight times a year. It also ensures that reports are triggered and sent to students' advisors for exceptional performance or tardy behaviors, the latter allowing for modifications to be made to improve student outcomes. Evaluation procedures are strong and continue to develop. Reflection at different times during the year allows for accurate improvement planning. The school has an extremely clear vision for its future development and has the capacity in staff and systems to effect change.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Bronx Lab 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