



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**Bronx School of Law and Finance**

**High School 284**

**99 Terrace View Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10463**

**Principal: Evan Schwartz**

**Dates of review: December 10 - 11, 2007**

**Lead Reviewer: Colin Henderson**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Bronx School of Law and Finance is a high school with 420 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 40% Black, 58% Hispanic and 2% Asian or other students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys account for 42% of the students enrolled and girls account for 58%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 -2007 was 87%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 85% eligibility.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Students make good progress because of the good teaching and very effective individualized support.
- The outstanding advisory program is a key factor in helping students to succeed.
- The very effective partnership between the principal and the assistant principal focuses consistently on improving the school.
- The school has high expectations of students' academic and personal development to which they respond enthusiastically.
- There are excellent procedures for gathering and analyzing a wide range of data and using it for timely interceptions to improve students' learning.
- The school runs smoothly because of effective procedures and the professional approach of staff and students.
- Staff are encouraged to work together closely to improve student outcomes and help the school achieve its vision.
- A well planned curriculum enables knowledge, understanding and skills learned in one area to be applied and consolidated in another.
- Very good links with outside entities extend students' learning and improves their understanding of different career paths.
- Effective communication between staff, students and parents helps them know how well students are performing and what they need to improve.

### What the school needs to improve

- Extend the use of action plans to show how progress towards measurable long term goals will be evaluated in the short and medium terms.
- Develop further the use of action research programs to identify deficiencies in students' learning and provide support for them.
- Increase the use of interactive technology to enhance student engagement in their learning.

## 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.**

Students make good progress because of good teaching, the professional approach of students and staff and the excellent advisory program. Very good communication between all members of the school community, together with effective procedures, ensure that the school provides a safe, inclusive learning environment that is valued by students and their parents. Teachers act as advisors to students within their class as they move from 9th through to 12th grade. They teach an advisory program that successfully promotes students' personal development. They get to know them and their parents very well, as one parent commented, "They go beyond the call of duty to look after my child." The program is particularly successful at supporting students to improve their work. Staff share detailed data on students' performance within grade team meetings. The progress of each individual is reviewed at least once every two weeks. Where students have not made the expected progress or scored low on a test, additional support is immediately organized, or a retest set up. Each student is given every opportunity to succeed and most do.

The very effective partnership between the principal and his assistant provides a clear direction to the work of the school, to reflect their vision and extend the legal and financial aspects of its program. Very good links with major law and finance organizations and local colleges provide opportunities for students to experience the world of work and consider applying to college. The principal has established a strong team of staff who are constantly seeking to improve their instructional skills and enhance student learning. They plan in detail to integrate subjects and help students to extend their core skills. Many use innovative approaches to capture students' interest, including the use of interactive technology, although this is not consistently developed. The administration makes very good use of data to set challenging goals for each student to achieve and makes teachers accountable by frequently checking if their students are on track to achieve them. They are beginning to use action research programs to scrutinize data closely to identify which specific skills are deficient and how to improve them. The school plans each year to improve students' overall performance, although it does not use data to develop specific action plans with clear, measurable long term and interim goals.

The inquiry team has used English language arts data to identify a group of students from different grades. It has given an initial assessment and is ready to analyze the data to check the starting point.

The school has made good progress since the last review particularly on tracking data to provide timely support, improving the Math B program and on integrating the curriculum.

## **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 gathers a wealth of data on students' performance and progress. It is continuously updated to be aware of each student's current progress. This includes very good procedures in which the student's adviser meets with grade teachers to note and act upon any changes in progress. Detailed academic and personal development data is gathered by the data manager to maintain a comprehensive computer based program showing the performance of each student, group of students, class, subject and grade. A transcript is produced to show the progress of each student over time. Staff use this to quickly identify students who are not performing up to their predicted level or those who are performing at consistently high levels. As a result, students are encouraged to receive further tutoring or take on advanced placement classes.

The performance and progress of special education students are also continually monitored. Data is collected from the collaborative team teaching classes, the self-contained classes and the resource room. Advisers work with the coordinator for individual education plans to check that students are making equally good progress and to monitor their progress towards the targets in their individual plans. The cabinet, working closely with grade and subject staff, analyzes the extensive detail gathered on each student by the data manager. They know where and when students receive a support program and evaluate the progress of each student year on year from when they start in grade 9. It helps the administration to check the progress of different groups of students, including the English language learners, although an understanding of the performance of different ethnic groups is not yet tracked closely enough. As the school increases the graduation data on its students, it is beginning to compare its performance with similar schools.

**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 assistant principal meets with each individual class teacher at the start of the year to agree goals and objectives for their students. The administration and grade teams use the detailed information provided on each student to check constantly on progress towards these goals, especially at the end of each periodic assessment, and to plan for further improvement by the next period. Good communication between staff ensures that advisers are kept fully informed about the progress of their students in every content area, through weekly meetings that highlight any under performance. The strong relationship between advisers and the students in their care enables them to encourage students who have deficiencies in their learning to attend the extensive additional tutoring or re-testing programs that are offered three times a week by content teachers. Students are constantly encouraged to try to succeed, including higher performers who have their learning accelerated by advanced placement courses. Staff are particularly

effective at following up the progress of students identified as needing further support to check that they have improved and are back on track.

The school has high expectations of its students and consistently conveys them to students and their parents. They involve them effectively in a working partnership with a strong focus on improving learning. Parents are kept very well informed about their children's progress, their achievement goals and what they need to do to improve. The communication between home and school is very good with many parents receiving regular telephone calls from their child's adviser, including when their child has failed three classes or gained credits. Parents greatly value this two way communication between themselves and the school that helps them to support their child's learning.

**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 benefit from a well planned curriculum that meets their learning needs and helps them to make good progress. It provides good opportunities for students in grades 9 and 10 to improve their key core curriculum skills before applying these skills to major in specific law and financial programs. Good planning enables skills and knowledge learned in one area of the curriculum to be applied in another. A good example of this is the focus on improving literacy in such subjects as science. The school is increasing its enrichment activities, including advanced placement courses in such areas as Latin, to accelerate students' learning. A broad range of opportunities is offered to students, for example in sports, through links with other schools in the campus. Staff plan a good range of interesting activities, although students' involvement in using interactive technology is not sufficiently developed. The strong advisory program has a clear theme for each year, including procedures to help students prepare for college. This enhances students' academic and personal development.

Teachers, working closely with advisers, are held accountable for the progress of all their students. They make very effective use of the long teaching sessions to cover topics in detail. They plan challenging activities that meet students' different learning needs and create an interesting and safe learning environment that encourages all students to participate. Some teachers make good use of smart boards to grasp students' interest, although this is not developed consistently across the school. The school works hard at promoting a professional attitude in staff and students. This creates mutual respect between students and teachers and between parents and the school. Parents cooperate well as the school rigorously follows up any unexpected student absence or lateness. As a result, attendance has improved since the last review.

**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 assistant principal has responsibility for monitoring and improving the quality of instruction. Along with the principal and the coaches, she constantly observes instruction and provides detailed feedback to teachers. Follow-up observations, discussions with students, checks on their work and an analysis of data help the administration to rigorously evaluate instruction. The school has a cooperative approach that is particularly beneficial to staff new to the school. Teachers observe and share each others' good practice. These very effective procedures maintain good quality teaching. Professional development is linked closely to teachers' aspirations and school and student goals. Some have improved students' performance considerably, such as in math, and others, for example in the use of interactive technology, are in the early stages of development. Procedures that are well established and clearly understood enable the school to run very well. Students feel safe and get on well together. The school has strong links with outside entities that support considerably the personal and academic development of students and the professional development of staff. Internships with major law and financial organizations; and a very good range of trips such as to the Federal Reserve, encourage students to consider possible career paths. Links with the National Academy Foundation and Barnard College provide numerous opportunities for students and staff.

**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 a very clear vision that is shared effectively with his staff to enable the school to establish its law and finance identity. Weekly meetings of the cabinet enable key staff to check how this vision is being developed across the school and to monitor students' progress carefully. Good communication with grade and subject staff and advisors ensures that each individual student is on track to achieve the expected level in tests and examinations. These procedures enable the school cabinet and grade leaders to make strategic data-informed decisions to improve outcomes including providing more intervention and tutoring. As a result, students progress well.

Teachers are not expected to attain a specific measurable goal for students' performance in their class or grade by the end of the year. One commented that "Each student counts and numbers overall are not thrown at me." The school's improvement plans do contain goals for improving students' overall performance but do not identify specific measurable goals in different subjects or in other areas such as attendance levels. These goals provide a focus but do not reflect the precise data that the school has gathered specific to each grade. This data is not yet used consistently to establish action plans with measurable long-term goals to improve the performance of particular groups of students in each core area. Plans are not yet used with sufficient flexibility to ensure that grade teams remain on target throughout the year to attain the challenging goal by the end.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: The Bronx School of Law and Finance</b>	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
<b>Quality Score</b>				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.**

<b>To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .</b>	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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>				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.**

<b>To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .</b>	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set demanding, 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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>				X	

<b>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.</b>					
<b>To what extent does the school . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>►</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
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?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>				<b>X</b>	

<b>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.</b>					
<b>To what extent does the school . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>►</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
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?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>				<b>X</b>	

<b>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.</b>					
<b>To what extent do . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>►</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>				<b>X</b>	