



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**Bronx High School for Law and Community
Service**

**High School 439
500 East Fordham Road
Bronx
NY 10458**

Principal: Gail Joyner-White

**Dates of review: March 6 - 7, 2008
Lead Reviewer: Jo Storrs**

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Bronx High School for Law and Community Service is a high school with 414 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 41% Black, 57% Hispanic, and 3% other students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 18% special education students. Boys account for 40% of the students enrolled and girls account for 60%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 79%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 83% eligibility. About 30% of the school's population are transient and some students live in sheltered accommodation.

The school shares a building, gymnasium, cafeteria, library and hallways with five other high schools. The campus provides a medical clinic, sports teams, a range of clubs and "LYFE" center (Living for the Young Family) that cares for the babies of students while they are in school.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal's vision and commitment to the students permeate the school.
- The principal and staff have a detailed knowledge of every student and plan nurturing programs that effectively meet their needs.
- Administration uses data effectively to set challenging instructional goals.
- High expectations are evident in each aspect of school life and enhance the students' learning and achievement.
- Students in greatest need of improvement receive valuable support from the school and a community-based organization.
- The collaborative and enthusiastic staff feel empowered to trial new methods and approaches to enhance learning for all students.
- Students benefit from a curriculum and interventions carefully aligned to their needs.
- Staff and students respect and trust one another and work in a well-maintained and industrious learning environment.
- Securely established procedures enable the school to operate smoothly and efficiently which is a significant achievement in a shared building.
- Detailed monitoring of all aspects of the school focuses on improvement and continuing effectiveness.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine the effective data management systems to make it easier to track student progress.
- Ensure all staff use data and a range of assessment tools more effectively to constantly differentiate instruction and to improve student achievement.
- Provide more opportunities for students to be involved in the arts and music.

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.

The principal's vision and commitment to the students are the key factors underpinning this school's improvement. She works harmoniously with assistant principals to interrogate data thoroughly to build a clear picture of each student and to set challenging instructional goals. The school has good data systems, but they are unwieldy so it is difficult to track student progress. In addition, not all teachers use data and assessment tools effectively to constantly differentiate instruction and to improve student achievement.

High expectations permeate the school. They are evident in presentations of students' achievements in hallways and the range of nurturing programs and interventions that effectively meet their needs. However there are too few opportunities for students to benefit from music and art. Those students with problems receive valuable support in school and from a community-based organization. Collaborative staff enthusiastically trial new methods and approaches to enhance learning for all students. They have very good relationships with students so the school functions smoothly and efficiently and provides a calm, well-maintained learning environment. This is a major achievement in a facility that is shared with five other schools. In spite of the school's best efforts, attendance rates are low and not all parents actively support their children's learning. Rigorous monitoring procedures, closely linked to planning and goal-setting, keep student achievement under constant review and ensure the school continues to improve.

The recommendations of the last review were taken seriously. Data is now used to inform goal setting, action planning, professional development and monitoring. These procedures are successfully raising student achievement. The school's inquiry team plays a significant role in using data to observe the focus group closely and to plan specific, engaging activities. It is proactive in improving the programs and achievements of these students.

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 principal leads data analysis. Administration has collected all available data from external and internal tests, attendance patterns and information from teachers to clearly understand the achievement and progress of each student. The school is small so administrators and staff quickly build an accurate picture of each student's attainment, progress and attitude. Subject data is scrutinized to revise the curriculum, cancel programs or plan new ones to help more students gain credits. Illustrations include the "AVID" (Advancement Via Individual Determination) program introduced to prepare

middle-ability students for college entry and new literacy courses to raise reading and writing skills in all subjects. This detailed information enables student, class, grade, subject and school performance to be compared annually and with other schools, showing an overall improvement. While data systems provide information effectively, they are bulky and not consistently summarized which makes it difficult to track student progress precisely.

The principal knows each student by name and is central in devising suitable programs for each student based on this data. She meets with small groups of students to hear their views and acts on their requests. For instance one group asked for more help in global history so the school brought in an expert to tutor the group. Information on entry into grade 9 and in-house test results are thoroughly analyzed to ensure programs and classes meet the school's aim for each student to gain enough credits to attend college. A school priority is to maintain small class sizes to maximize learning opportunities for all students. It also enables teachers and staff to systematically follow the progress of students with learning or language difficulties based on precise and thorough assessments and the impact of specific support they receive. This process also challenges and extends high achievers studying in advanced placement and honors classes. Administration and some teachers are skilled in using data, but not all use it confidently to raise students' achievement.

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.

Students, staff and parents know and support the principal's high expectation that, where possible, every student will graduate in four years. This vision drives school goals, linked to department, grade and individual goals established collaboratively by administration and staff. All goals are measurable against high benchmarks that force students to raise their sights. Students create their own goals in each subject to help them to manage their own learning and they regularly check their progress in conjunction with teachers. Formal meetings about individual students and subject-specific matters draw upon regular, important discussions between teachers and guidance staff. This information, combined with all other data, provides a clear picture of every student, enabling the principal and staff to set challenging goals and plan programs that effectively meets the students' needs. There is an excellent range of in-house support for students at risk including individual and small group tutoring, intensive reading and writing courses and credit retrieval. In addition, "Good Shepherd," a community-based organization, provides highly effective services for students at risk of dropping out. The focus on the individual is a unique feature of the school. It is instrumental in raising students' confidence and considerably enhances their learning and achievement.

The school's open-door policy encourages parents to provide or receive information regarding their children's education. Parents know they are welcome to come to the school with their concerns and that they will be treated sympathetically and supportively. Regular meetings, workshops and celebrations of students' achievements further strengthen links between school and home and help promote the school's goals. Parents value their relationship with the school. Due to a number of valid reasons, some parents find it difficult to maintain close contact with the school but are grateful to principal and staff for all they do to improve their children'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.

The school uses data successfully to plan nurturing programs and electives that meet the students’ specific needs. Consistent curriculum maps meet mandated requirements. They are enhanced by a range of useful software and published resources, trips and focused assessments that provide valuable data about each student’s progress and performance. Every student has physical education every day and access to tutoring and additional support during and after the school day. They benefit from a number of electives such as Italian and law, but there are not enough opportunities for all students to benefit from the arts or music. To extend students’ horizons, both the campus and school provide an interesting and varied range of clubs that students enjoy including community service, film club and Hip Hop dance. The collaborative and enthusiastic teachers recognize they are accountable for student progress and do all they can to help students succeed. They feel trusted and respected as professionals and empowered to trial new methods and approaches to enhance learning for all students. As a result, the school is a vibrant yet calm and industrious learning environment. This is a significant achievement in this shared campus.

The principal focuses resources and staffing on student achievement. Scheduling decisions make good use of time and facilities. It enables differentiation through small group work which is providing effective support for those students with specific learning needs. Instruction is not consistently differentiated for all students which impedes their progress. The good relationships between staff and students effectively promote students’ academic and personal development. Significant student mobility adversely affects attendance. Nearly a third of students are transient and some students live in sheltered accommodation. The principal and staff work very hard to improve attendance. They offer a range of motivating rewards to encourage students to attend regularly and not to cut classes. This has resulted in improved attendance.

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.

Students and staff are inspired by the principal’s dedication and determination to achieve high standards. Robust, consistently enforced procedures enable the school to operate smoothly and efficiently, which is a significant achievement in a building shared by other schools. The principal’s vision, ever-watchful eye and positive support underpin her excellent leadership. She has many successful strategies for improvement. Each teacher sets annual and short-term goals to meet school, student and personal needs in conjunction with leaders. These goals are reviewed during formal observations and informal walkthroughs by the principal and assistant principals and by on-going and end of year meetings with individual and small groups of teachers to evaluate all pertinent student progress data. Each teacher maintains a “log of assistance”, agreed with leaders. This drives comprehensive, multi-faceted professional development that is fittingly designed to meet whole school and individual teacher needs. In a school of this size, this successful strategy keeps the principal constantly updated about the quality of instruction and students’ progress, which inform her decisions about students’ schedules.

Teachers new to the profession and school are grateful for the effective support and help they receive from considerate mentors and colleagues. The school is highly collegial.

Teachers' professionalism enables inter-visitations and reflective discussions with leaders and other staff to feature as effective means of evaluating and sharpening planning and instruction. This is a considerable benefit to students' learning.

Substantial expert guidance from the small student support services team and outside entities working closely with teachers further enhances students' academic and personal development. As leaders and staff know students well, they quickly notice and work hard to resolve issues and concerns swiftly so students' progress is not impaired. As one student remarked, "The school never gives up on us." The school has built important partnerships with a number of law establishments such as Loeb and Loeb and the District Attorney's mentoring program, which provide invaluable opportunities for students to experience law-related activities.

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.

Close links between planning, goal setting and on-going monitoring procedures enable the school to measure its success and adjust programs when required. School goals are led by data and student achievements and are regularly evaluated using on-going and periodic assessments. The nurturing and caring principal has high expectations of her students. She is always available to students and staff and helps teachers to be effective and play their part in monitoring performance. The collaborative and enthusiastic teachers know they are accountable and find observations and discussions with administration help them to become more effective. Detailed knowledge of the students, gained through data analysis, scrutiny of their work and observation of their behavior and attitudes, ensures that programs are appropriate and effective. Many teachers use this and all other information they gain from staff and other teachers to measure the success of their instruction and to revise plans accordingly. However, not all teachers use a range of assessment tools fully to improve instruction.

Monitoring systems, developed by the school leaders, are detailed and wide-ranging. They involve analysis of all available data, class observation and conferences with staff and students. This valuable information allows leaders to determine whether all programs and activities in and out of school are appropriate and efficiently achieving their goals. All decisions and modifications to plans and goals are informed by data and made for the benefit of the students. These thorough monitoring procedures and the professional approach enable school leaders and staff to progress purposefully towards the achievement of its vision of "Teachers Educate, Students Graduate," which is fully supported by the whole school community.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Bronx High School for Law and Community Service	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