



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Bronx Regional High School

High School 480

**1010 Reverend James A. Polite Avenue
Bronx
NY 10459**

Principal: Colin Thomas

Dates of review: April 8 - 9, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Corinne Brown

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Bronx Regional High School is a high school with 340 students from grade 10 through grade 12. The school population comprises 45% Black and 55% Hispanic students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys account for 44% of the students enrolled and girls account for 56%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 75.7%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 75% eligibility.

Bronx Regional High School is a transfer school, with students who are above age for their grade level. The school currently admits all students who apply, regardless of their academic history. Student groupings are according to their needs within subject areas, rather than by grade level.

The school shares its building with two other alternative education facilities. The principal of the Bronx Regional High School is the overall manager for the whole site. The Learning for Young Families through Education (LYFE) daycare center in the building cares for the young children of 20 students who are following school programs. Students have access to medical care and education through the on-site medical center out of the Montefiore Hospital, with a full-time doctor, nurse, social worker and part-time dentist.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The community respects the principal for his strong leadership, clear boundaries and positive determination to facilitate student progress.
- The school makes good use of a suitable range of data to maintain overview of the progress of each of its students at frequent intervals.
- The school's high expectations are explicit and staff support students well so they now experience success.
- Through treating them as adults, staff respect, care for students, and help them to develop holistically.
- Attendance is high priority so the school explores creative ways to increase and maintain this.
- Teachers are accessible to students and plan lessons that interest them so they build the required credits and passes.
- The school is efficient, flexible and creative in its use of scheduling and resources that support student improvement.
- Effective guidance services and strong partnerships support students' emotional, social and academic needs.
- Teacher professional growth is encouraged and well supported.
- The administration has a clear sense of direction for the school, reflected in relevant plans that are measurable and based on students' needs.

What the school needs to improve

- Include quantifiable interim checkpoints in all goals to measure progress toward the goal systematically.
- Strengthen intake procedures to ensure that all entrants fully support the schools goals and mission.
- Synthesize recording of ongoing assessments so that all staff routinely and efficiently access student progress data at a single point.
- Within the first semester, devise a clear learning path with the student that includes interim checkpoints so they know what to do to succeed.
- Extend differentiated instruction so that all lessons offer suitable challenge with varied tasks and questioning that develops higher order thinking skills.

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.

Bronx Regional High School offers a small school caring culture knowing individual students personally and is able to turnaround their lives. Many students have experienced varied failures in their prior education and challenging social circumstances before joining the school. As the principal says, "Come Monday, everyone gets a fresh start." The principal sets the clear tone regarding high expectations of academic effort, regular attendance and positive interpersonal relationships. The school comprehensively supports students' social, emotional and academic development. It overcomes perceived barriers to learning. The school has excellent partnerships, with in-house medical and social facilities, for students and their young children. Many students attend school that would otherwise dropout. Not all students who enroll honor the school's mission and open enrollment policy by maintaining commitment to their studies.

The principal's strong leadership drives the school in its use of data, technology and creative ways to secure and consolidate student learning. The school continually monitors student progress toward graduation and regularly updates transcripts. Teachers readily support students within their individual program requirements. They record ongoing assessments in several ways, so comprehensive current progress on all students is not available at a single point. Teachers plan lessons that interest students, although not all lessons offer sufficient varied challenge. The school has a major focus on student attendance and so seeks new ways to consolidate and increase participation to good effect. The school has clear goals and long-term plans based on students' needs. Individual students do not have a personalized action plan toward achieving their goal of graduation. Although the school frequently monitors progress toward all goals, there are no interim checkpoints to quantify progress toward goals.

The school has made progress in the light of the previous Quality Review recommendations but many developments are ongoing. Curriculum mapping to increase cross-curricular collaboration continues. The school is trialing software to enhance the analysis of trends and patterns. The evaluation of the impact of interventions is explicit. The school continues to explore ways to gain solid information from students on their personal barriers to learning and to involve them in defining clear plans for the future. The inquiry team shares its research findings with all staff. They have booklets on critical thinking and note taking, which is the team focus. Students within the target group have not passed math Regents, and fall within three groups from the school's entry assessment. The small team collaborates well and it has devised a five-phase plan for the action research project. The focus, initially in math, is applicable in all subjects and fits suitably within the school's goals to improve student outcomes.

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.

For this school's student population the end goal of graduation within a defined timescale drives all assessment and utilization of data. The school carefully assesses students' needs on entry through a realistic lens on their transcript and by use of the Test of Adult Basic Education locator (TABE). In this way, the school defines a baseline for the individual and the incremental credit accumulation required. It honors previous credits and develops an understanding of students' skills deficiencies through an initial semester within a family group. This acclimatization period builds trust, establishes relationships and allows students to reflect and share concerns so that the school can address them.

The school works at the individual student level as students transfer into the school throughout the year. It looks at data by class and groupings and is mindful of gender and ethnicity. Special education students and English language learners received targeted support particular to their identified needs and make good progress. The school makes efficient use of city databases to rigorously monitor attendance and chart progress. Students and parents receive four report cards per semester. Teachers break down the six-week cycle further so that students receive weekly feedback on their progress in individual classes. The school gathers and uses a wide variety of information well. Teachers use several systems to record ongoing assessment. Consequently, streamlined access on all students' progress across all subjects is not efficient, managed and available at a single point. All teachers have a laptop and the administration promotes the use of technology within the classroom and for data analysis. Training and support is available, but not all staff members are yet confident in the utilization of technology to analyze data.

The school is making comparisons over time. There has been a marked increase over the last five years in the number of students graduating with Regents diploma passes. The school is building its own two-year performance evaluation database to facilitate data analysis and observations of trends and patterns while a student is at the school. The principal networks with other principals of similar schools to share information and best practice. Teachers are encouraged to make meaningful visits.

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 overarching goal of the school is to meet students where they are and to help them build toward successful graduation and responsible adulthood. The Comprehensive Education Plan and principal's performance review align with this mission. Monthly faculty conferences revisit these goals and the recommendations of the previous Quality Review. The school is now reflective and all constituents take ownership of their own growth. The school establishes clear, rigorous expectations for students and parents

during the initial intake interview with their guidance counselor and the family group classes. Students receive individual programs based on their needs. Contracts do not define a learning path with interim checkpoints so they clearly understand exactly what they need to do to succeed.

The school carefully maintains ongoing communication with parents on students' progress through regular reports, meetings and calls. It updates transcripts four times a year and students receive attendance data monthly. Regular oversight by administration, teachers and guidance counselors means that they put timely interventions in place to support students whose promotion is in doubt, or who have attendance or social issues. Many students choose to come to the school because of recommendations from family or friends. The school has an open enrolment policy, but a small core of students does not take advantage of the positive supportive structure that enables students to experience success. The intake procedure does not currently identify students who are not truly committed to make that change in their lives.

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.

The school addresses students' needs through flexible scheduling, with modifications to the master plan possible twice a year. Teachers supplement the mandated curriculum for credit accumulation and Regents passes with their own assessments. The school curriculum encompasses exposure to the arts and sports within and outside the school day. The basketball team enjoys success. Students are engaged in creative animation of clay masks with inbuilt literacy and research components. Teachers are fully accountable for the progress of students within their classes and give individual support freely at lunchtimes and other opportunities. Students are interested in lessons and work cooperatively. Teachers base lessons on students' needs, but not all lessons offer suitable challenge to all students with varied tasks, including homework, and questioning that helps develop higher order thinking skills.

The administration supports students' needs well through flexible scheduling, considered allocation of resources and utilization of staff strengths. The school's focus on the use of technology throughout the school, which motivates students, exemplifies this. Similarly, students explore kinesthetic and therapeutic self-expression through skilled instruction in the well-equipped clay room. Staff members respect students and model suitable interactions for the learning environment. One student commented, "They teach you as adults instead of as kids." Students are mistrustful when they enter the school because of previous school experiences. They learn to trust adults again and so develop holistically. They appreciate that the school has no metal detectors, which means the school trusts in their sense of responsibility. Staff make positive connections with students through the Adopt-a Student program that assists young adults to keep on track.

The school meets the challenge of maintaining attendance in its student population through thoughtful ways to strengthen participation. Student attendance is rigorously monitored and on the agenda of every meeting. The school calls home daily regarding absence and tardiness. Home visits now occur early in the morning, which shows promising results.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The principal understands staff strengths well through frequent classroom visits. He devolves leadership to the two assistant principals. This builds capacity with clearly defined goals and responsibilities. Student needs and State test requirements inform the school professional development plan. The school is fortunate to have The United Federation of Teachers resource center within the building. Its teacher developer is an integral member of the school staff and teaches classes. The teachers' resource center, external courses and visitations support teacher professional growth well. Teachers flexibly adapt to the demands of block scheduling, in the light of student needs. There are increasing numbers of students graduating and achieving Regents diplomas. Mentors and consultants ably induct new teachers. The small number of staff and demands of the schedule limit opportunities for subject team meetings. Teachers are mapping the curriculum online within an agreed structure. This facilitates cross-curricular links and reinforces student skills. This work shows promise, with comprehensive input from some content area teachers.

The school is mindful of varied factors that influence learning. It addresses students' social and emotional needs through effective partnerships, in addition to guidance and other support services. The LYFE center provides good quality childcare for students' children, so they continue their studies. The Montefiore Hospital on-site clinic and Hunter College social workers ensure that students' can access medical and social support for themselves and their children with minimal disruption to learning. The school has clear expectations, structures and guidelines so generally runs smoothly

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 school has a clear sense of purpose to serve students and give them, in the words of one parent, "A whole new beginning." The school's goals directly relate to this mission and are realistic and measurable. There are no interim quantifiable checkpoints in goals across the school to assess progress toward the goal. However, the school monitors goals regularly. Teachers analyze class results frequently, identify students in need of interventions and then monitor the impact on student performance and progress. The needs of the individual student guide refinement of plans. Student programs alter because of assessments and credit accumulation, which can be mid-cycle.

Guidance counselors suitably monitor the students' overall progress and make recommendations to revise plans. The administration maintains an overview of whole school systems and structures to make strategic decisions and to make plans for the future. The school has gradually reduced guidance counselors' caseloads over the last three years to enable them to have contact that is more effective with individuals. It changes the master program at times during the year in the light of changed numbers of students requiring particular courses. The school uses the information from each year or plan to make suitable arrangements for the future. It is planning for anticipated staff

turnover due to retirement. Future changes to the Regents math tests inform decision-making and planning. The community respects the principal for his strong leadership, clear boundaries and expectations, tempered with genuine care for individuals. One student said, "He's a good man. He has patience with people. He's very professional and talks to people." The administration has a clear picture of the future development of the school as a technology-driven environment in which students and staff can grow.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| SCHOOL NAME: Bronx Regional 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 | | |

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|---|--|
| ◇ | Outstanding |
| + | Well Developed |
| ✓ | Proficient |
| ➤ | Underdeveloped with Proficient Features |
| Δ | Underdeveloped |