



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Bronx Little School

Elementary School 691

**1300 Boynton Avenue
Bronx
NY 10472**

Principal: Janice Gordon

Dates of review: November 16 - 17, 2007

Lead Reviewer: John Collings

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Bronx Little School is an elementary school with 134 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 25% Black, 68% Hispanic, 1% White, 1% American Indian and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 17% English language learners and 0.8% 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 92.1%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 73% eligibility.

The school is housed in a building that also contains four high schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- In this small school, staff know their students very well and are able to motivate them and support their needs.
- The recently introduced student assessment folders are making a good contribution to monitoring student progress.
- Teachers are beginning to use data well to differentiate instruction and to monitor the progress and performance of all students.
- The broad and stimulating curriculum, which includes art, creates a good, motivating and challenging climate for learning.
- The school uses its budget very well to maintain a high adult to student ratio ensuring students are successfully supported and make good progress.
- Classroom observations encourage teachers in reflecting on their practice in a climate of mutual support and collaboration in which they strive to improve.
- Professional development is closely matched to the school goals, and as a result of classroom observations, is tailored to meet each teacher's needs.
- Students make good progress because the school has a very good climate for learning with high expectations of all.
- Students really enjoy school, consequently they are very well behaved, fully engaged in learning and their attendance is improving.
- There are good links with outside entities that significantly enhance the curriculum and support academic and personal growth of students.

What the school needs to improve

- Consolidate the school's goals so that they can be shared more effectively and the progress towards them systematically monitored.
- Refine assessment systems to enable the school to monitor students' progress towards their long-term and short-term targets more effectively.
- Continue to provide professional development to enable teachers to use data effectively to plan differentiated lessons based on students' prior progress.
- Improve the consistency of reporting students' performance and progress to them and their parents.
- Support teachers to make greater use of technology in their teaching and to involve students in using technology to research and present their work.

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 proficient.

This is a small school, where all students are well known by all members of staff. Students are very well supported both academically and personally in an environment of mutual trust both between students, and between students and teachers. In this caring and nurturing environment, students are motivated and make good progress because the school has a very good climate for learning with high expectations of all. Students really enjoy school, consequently they are very well behaved and fully engaged in learning, and their attendance is improving.

The school has recently introduced individual student binders for recording ongoing classroom assessments and examples of assessed and moderated work. However, these and other assessments are not being used sufficiently to help develop short-term targets in order to help teachers to monitor students' progress towards long-term goals. There is also some inconsistency across grades in the non-mandatory reporting of students' performance and progress to them, and their parents.

There is a good curriculum, which is broad, stimulating, motivating and challenging. It includes a strong emphasis on art with a dedicated art teacher, which ensures students are systematically taught knowledge, understanding and skills, and challenged appropriately. Music is supported very well through good links with outside entities such as the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. However, teachers are still developing the use of technology in their teaching and how to involve students in using technology to research and present their work.

The school uses its budget very well to provide good professional development, which is closely matched to the needs of the school, but it is also differentiated to meet teachers' needs. Teachers use data to monitor the performance of students and successfully differentiate instruction, thus students are consistently challenged and make very good progress. However, teachers are not consistently monitoring student progress against short-term targets or long-term goals. The budget is also used well to maintain a high adult to student ratio to ensure students are well supported enabling teachers to implement differentiated instruction effectively. These strategies are further enhanced through a climate of mutual support, collaboration and intervisitations to assist teachers in reflecting on their practice to strive to improve their instruction.

Since her appointment two years ago, the principal has largely implemented the initial goals for the school. The school has responded well to the significant changes in the way schools are being held accountable for the performance and progress of students. The school has recognized the need to consolidate its long and short-term goals so that they can be shared more effectively, and the progress towards them systematically monitored.

The inquiry team has met and identified the students requiring close monitoring, and is in the process of setting up suitable procedures for the focus of the inquiry.

There has been good progress since the last review. The school has challenged higher achieving students and they make good progress. Through strenuous efforts student

attendance has improved and lateness reduced but this continues to be an issue with some parents

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school uses results from mandatory tests to monitor students' overall performance. It also uses a range of tests built into the curriculum for reading and math to monitor students' progress over time. As a result the school has a sound understanding of class and individual student progress in reading and math. Although there are effective systems for monitoring performance in English, the school's systems for monitoring students' progress overall are less well developed. To address this, the school has introduced student assessment folders in which ongoing class based assessments and teacher moderated students' work are stored. This is enabling teachers and students to see how they are performing, particularly in English. The school is reviewing the effect of these and how they can be used to set students' long-term goals and short-term targets more effectively, and to monitor progress towards achieving these,

Due to the small size of this school, all children are very well known to all staff. As a result, the performance and progress of special education students and English language learners is effective and constantly updated. The principal regularly reviews the performance and progress of all students through grade conferences including comparison of ethnic minorities and gender. This has ensured students make very good progress overall when compared with past performance and other 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 proficient.

Expectations of student performance are largely based on "annual yearly progress", which the vast majority of students meet or exceed. The school also uses end of unit tests within the curriculum structure for predicting future performance. However, this information is not being used sufficiently for setting long-term goals or short-term targets and monitoring students' progress towards them. The current monitoring of performance and progress is more successful in reading and math because the curriculum for these subjects has clearer benchmarks. The school is reviewing the English language arts curriculum so it has similar benchmarks by which it can monitor student progress, particularly in writing, more accurately.

The school has identified that transient students, those spending only a short time in the school, generally do not make as good progress compared with those who remain in the school from pre-kindergarten to grade 5. These students are a particular focus for the school and are often in the greatest need of assistance.

Surveys, including the Learning Environment Survey, and daily contact with nearly all parents who bring their children to school have revealed that, although parents are very

happy with the school, future goals are not well articulated to the school community at large.

Parents are able to raise concerns promptly because the principal greets all parents at the start of the day and has an “open door” policy. Teachers also are available at the start and end of the day, which enables good communication with parents. A system of notes through the homework book also provides good opportunities for the exchange of information when direct communication is not possible.

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 curriculum provides effective data about the progress of students from, for example, Rigby, E-Class, and Every Day Math. There are less clear systems for monitoring English language arts. However, there is a broad and stimulating curriculum, which students find motivating and challenging in a climate of mutual trust and support. As a result attendance is improving. There is a specialist art teacher who ensures knowledge, understanding and artistic skills are taught systematically and students gain a secure knowledge of artists and techniques. Music is also well supported by good links with the New York Philharmonic orchestra, which brings musicians to perform with the students and provides a teaching fellow on a longer-term basis. However, teachers make limited use of technology in their teaching and do not involve students significantly in using technology to research or present their work.

Through good professional development teachers are increasingly differentiating their instruction to meet the needs of students based on their prior achievements. They are not yet, however, using students’ long-term goals and short-term targets sufficiently as a basis for differentiating work. . Nonetheless, they know their students very well and classes are small, which facilitates the motivation and support teachers are able to give to students

The school uses its budget well to maintain small classes and engage additional staff for English language learners and academic intervention services in English to improve performance. It also usefully directs its budget for ongoing consultants in English to support teachers in planning differentiated lessons so that students are increasingly taught according to their prior achievement.

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.

Professional development is closely matched to the needs of the school, and, because of classroom observations, differentiated to meet teachers’ needs. This is achieved in a climate of mutual support enabling teachers to reflect on their practice and improve their instruction. One-to-one grade conferences with the principal enable each individual student’s performance and consequent needs to be determined. These grade conferences are also used to identify any professional development teachers require to fulfill expectations, such as making increased use of data to plan differentiated lessons based on students’ prior achievement.

Opportunities for common planning time and intervisitations are limited due to the small number of staff. However, teachers new to the school or profession have more flexibility over time and are therefore able to make good use of opportunities.

In this small school staff know their students very well and as a result motivate them and give good support where necessary. There are other good support services to help students and parents, which include a guidance counselor and academic intervention services for literacy. The school also uses the campus-wide services of a psychologist and social services when necessary. There is good support after school where students have opportunities for additional tuition, time to complete homework or to take part in activities.

The school runs very effectively and there is a very good climate for learning with high expectations of all. As a result students make good progress. They really enjoy school and consequently they are very well behaved and fully engaged in learning.

There are excellent links with outside organizations that significantly enhance the curriculum and support the academic and personal growth of students. These include the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, art partnerships, interactive concerts, dance, including fitness and nutrition, and links to the Bronx zoo and botanical gardens.

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 just started her third year in the school. The goals she set when she arrived have largely been completed. This led to significant improvements and higher expectations and, as a result, students now make very good progress. However, the school is at a turning point and in the process of reviewing its goals to consolidate its successes, and continue its growth and development.

Although students make overall good progress the school acknowledges that goals based on past performance and annual yearly progress are not challenging enough. As a result, it is developing objectively measurable goals that are based not only on students' past performance but also on their progress. This is to enable the school to make predictions that are more accurate and create benchmarks against which to monitor students' progress towards challenging long-term goals and short-term targets.

New goals are being developed because, through good interrogation of data, the school has recognized that improving students' writing is the most significant factor that would improve students' overall performance and progress. To address this, the school inquiry team is reviewing teaching strategies. The results will be carefully monitored to ascertain whether approaches can be incorporated into common practice and developed into long-term goals for improvement. However, the school has not yet consolidated its vision for the future and the innovations it is undertaking into goals that can be easily shared across the whole school community, with progress towards them effectively monitored.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Bronx Little School	△	▶	✓	+	◇
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 . . .	△	▶	✓	+	◇
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 . . .	△	▶	✓	+	◇
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		
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?				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?				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		