

Quality Review Report

2008-2009

South Bronx Preparatory: A College Board School

Middle-High School 221

**360 East 145th Street
Bronx
NY 10454**

Principal: Ellen Flanagan

Dates of review: April 27 - 28, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Lori Bennett

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

South Bronx Preparatory is a middle-high school with 567 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 34% Black, 64% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 20% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 89%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 72% eligibility.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

The goal of South Bronx Preparatory School, working in collaboration with its major partner, the College Board, is to ensure that every one of its students goes to college in a four-year academic program. The expectation for students entering the sixth grade is about academic readiness in preparation for high school or college.

Excellent staff and student relationships, linked to strong systems for guidance and support, create an environment where high standards of teaching can take place. The administrative structure of the school ensures that goals are set, monitored, and reviewed for the school, classes, and grades. Good data systems are in place to provide teachers with detailed information to inform their instruction. Even though the school has made good progress in establishing school-wide differentiation, it is striving for the highest levels to match the specific needs of each student in every class. Effective professional development programs provide new and experienced teachers with opportunities to develop their skills. Buddy teachers provide intensive support for teachers across all grades and subject areas creating a culture of mutual collaboration.

Identification of the poor performance in middle school math is resulting in new and innovative approaches to monitoring and challenging teaching in that area. The school is exploring its work in vertical planning to ensure consistency and progression across all grades. Students within the subgroups of the school fair very well and their performance is a result of a strong understanding of their specific and collective needs. Staff and students have excellent relationships and that is evident in overall student learning.

The parents are supportive of the school and value the education their children are receiving in preparation for them to go to college and the world of work. The school is promoting further opportunities to encourage parental involvement, particularly through its on-line communication systems. The advisory program is a cornerstone of the school's culture and reinforces the school's high expectations for all students. Advisors set challenging goals with students and parents receive regular information about their children's progress.

The school manages its resources efficiently and as a result, provides students with a flexible curriculum and an extensive choice of subjects. This greatly increases their chances for academic success. Students receive excellent personal and academic guidance to ensure their attendance is good and to keep them on track toward graduation.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is a highly effective leader committed to creating a supportive environment where all students are successful.
- The school conveys its high expectations to students, staff, and families and there are excellent advances in its development of meaningful systems for analyzing data and assessing the progress of all students.
- Budget, staffing and scheduling decisions underpin school improvement plans very effectively.
- The administrative team and staff work collaboratively to make sense of data and determine appropriate learning goals for students to make academic progress and achieve mastery.
- Goal setting, self-evaluation, and reflection by both students and teachers enable them to take greater responsibility for their own improvement.
- The emphasis on collaboration and mutual support contribute to a strong and effective professional development program.
- The broad curriculum is engaging for students and this greatly enhances their learning both within and outside of the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to deepen the consistency of the differentiation of instruction and classroom activities in order to match students' individual learning needs.
- Explore more innovative and creative opportunities to encourage parental involvement.
- Deepen the work of vertical planning to provide consistency of practice across all grade levels within the school.

Part 3: Main Findings

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

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The school uses a range of assessment tools very effectively to gather data about students' performance and progress. This data supports decisions in relation to scheduling, staffing support and intervention, curriculum and instruction. Acuity data, New York State performance indicators, and predictive assessments are the major data foci to inform instruction. The school has used data well to identify patterns of achievement across subjects, grades, gender, and ethnic groups. It places strategic emphasis on subgroups such as English language learners, males in special education, bottom third students, and often overlooked important subgroups such as teenage mothers-to-be and overage grade 9 students. This results in the school staff having a good understanding of the performance of different groups of students, and highlights the need to focus action on improvement. The instructional cabinet also identifies patterns of achievement across teachers and takes action where there are weaknesses.

The school communicates very high expectations to students in relation to their conduct, academic performance, and attendance. Systems for promoting good attendance are very rigorous and staff work effectively to ensure that students attend school regularly. The principal and attendance committee members each have three students assigned to them who have had long-term attendance issues to focus on in a targeted way. Students check in regularly with an advisor, receive positive reinforcements and staff maintain on-going communication with parents. As a result, the school has seen significant improvement in the attendance of these students this school year, as well as marked improvement in the overall attendance school-wide.

The school has increased communication with parents regarding periodic assessment data. It has introduced ARIS data systems to a core group of parents and placed Gradebook Wizard on-line, thereby providing access to multiple sources of information to monitor student progress and help parents have a stronger involvement in the day-to-day accomplishment of students.

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 principal sets clear goals for the school resulting from a collaborative process that includes input from teachers, students, and parents. ROAD, an acronym for readiness, opportunity, assessment and development, is the data-informed and collaborative process the school uses to establish the goals outlined in the Comprehensive Educational Plan. The school's three-year strategic plan represents a visionary

approach to school change and the action plans on which movement to stage, phase, and manage the school development process. This approach is resulting in positive outcomes in terms of academic progress across the entire school. For example, a major goal for the school is the focus on improving student achievement in middle school math. Middle school math teachers are working to develop, enhance, and implement a standards-based approach to mathematical concepts, resulting in increased student engagement and achievement. Individual and collaborative planning of lessons is scaffolded and differentiated, addressing the needs of all students. In addition, administration meets monthly with teachers to check on the progress towards their goals against interim benchmarks established in their strategic plan.

Goal setting is firmly established and derived from the analysis of data. Advisors meet with students to outline action plans based on this information. The school formalizes the setting of differentiated learning goals in both the advisory and pathways, where students set actionable goals across core subject classes depending upon immediate needs. However, the school is investigating the most effective way to standardize the practice from class to class. It has responded by instituting a pilot technological goal setting mechanism with a selected group of middle school math students, where staff enter goals into a database during the goal interview, and provide copies to students and parents. School-wide, students are very involved in setting their own goals, well able to articulate their goals, strategies for reaching them and clear on their preferred learning styles. The school sets measurable goals for each cohort of students, firmly focused on improving attendance, behavior, and student performance.

The school works closely with parents and strongly encourages them to participate in their children's education. An extremely involved parent coordinator is working to ensure that parents receive training to access, utilize the anticipated data management system, and have on-line access to the school's website. The principal is providing a newly designed parent room outfitted with computer banks, allowing parents the opportunity to access technology on a regular basis.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students' learning goals.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The core curriculum is broad and engaging and follows New York State and City mandates. Core classes, including science and social studies, effectively use the workshop model with flexible instructional groupings and differentiated learning activities. The arts receive emphasis in the curriculum and provide a focus for student engagement. Advanced placement art, a Regents bearing course and a structured physical education program are integral components and round out enriched opportunities for students, serving as great motivators for achievement in support of the academic program.

The administrative team has made good budgetary, staffing, and scheduling decisions based carefully on student data and goals. Based on teacher feedback, they made decisions to restructure the schedule to include both forty-five and seventy-minute periods allowing time to balance content lecture and extended time for project based learning. Teachers value the flexibility that the schedules provide. The team placed the middle and high school on one schedule this year to create a sense of one school community. In addition to community building, the singular schedule also allows the school to enact its thirty-seven and a half minutes of instruction for all AP, level 1 and

level 2 students. It provides this contractual time for all its constituents under the course called Pathways. A Pathway group meets two to three times per week in small homogeneous groups to promote collaboration, investigation, reflection, and independent thinkers. In addition, student surveys comment about the effectiveness of the program.

With a lens towards college readiness in mind, the school made curricular programming decisions to meet the needs of individual students and sub-groups. It implemented Junior Achievement and Knowledge for College Day, a college preparation program in the middle school. Additionally, individual programming for high school students migrated across all grades, allowing more course selections for students to meet their learning needs more precisely. For instance, a student can enroll in conceptual chemistry, conceptual physics or a Regent based course enabling all students an opportunity to meet their learning goals. Scholarship reports and semester credit accrual indicate successful implementation. The school has also collaborated with City University of New York, Lehman College, to prepare students for college algebra. If students pass a benchmark exam, they have an offer of a seat in the college's freshman calculus course. This college readiness approach supports the school plan to offer a rigorous four-year math and science program in the high school.

The school holds teachers accountable for providing engaging, challenging lessons in a supportive nurturing environment and this was readily evident in classrooms observed. Leaders are working to ensure every lesson is consistently differentiated and meets the needs of every student in the class. The work to address the performance in math in the middle school has raised awareness of the importance of vertical planning to ensure continuity and progression across grades. The school's detailed survey identifying the students' different learning styles is resulting in an innovative change to instruction and one that students appreciate. Teachers are willing and available to assist students during non-teaching time in order to provide extra help or enrichment activities to raise student achievement. They frequently utilize interactive whiteboard technology, digital projectors, and laptops to engage and motivate students and adequate technology is evident in each classroom, although mainly for teacher use. Students express a desire to have more technology available to allow for investigation that is more independent.

Relationships between staff and students are excellent. Students interviewed consider the advisory arrangements in place to have created a supportive place for them within the school. Students keep the same advisor throughout their school career, which creates strong links between students and advisor and strengthens home school relationships.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The principal has built a strong and broadly based instructional leadership team to support student achievement. The principal and three assistant principals have real credibility as teachers and specialists focused on instruction. They have developed a professional growth plan for staff based on the continuum of the *California Standards for the Teaching Profession* that has created a culture of inquiry and reflection among all members of the school community. The administration monitors instruction frequently and uses the information on a continuous basis to direct the focus of professional development activities. Lead teachers' model professional development still further utilizing a pyramid approach to promote and share best practices. Nine teachers'

leaders, trained in assessment for learning strategies, turn key and model throughout the year in “critical friends” groups’ professional development sessions to create better conditions of learning. There is consistency of practice across all classrooms. Creative scheduling has allowed team teachers to buddy and visit each other’s classrooms to share best practices, review lessons, and support each other’s professional growth. New teachers have a carefully chosen mentor and direct support from the principal, both that work closely with them to respond to their specific needs.

The school receives professional development, monetary and student support services from a number of sources including the College Board, Practice Area Network, and the National School Reform Faculty. These organizations are central to the school’s mission of raising student aspirations and trying to ensure that all students leave the school to attend a four-year college. Each institution provides tools that enable teachers to reflect and revise practice to increase student achievement. The inquiry team, firmly established in the school, focuses its work across content areas, grade levels, and addresses a variety of subgroups of students from special education to advanced placement. The team focus is teacher pedagogy, alongside student learning, and it has created a thoughtful, collaborative process to the goal of student learning in concert with building teacher capacity and leadership.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

The principal effectively communicates a clear philosophy for the school and its approach to educating and nurturing its students. Budget, staffing and scheduling decisions underpin school improvement plans very effectively. Fully supported by all members of the school community, the principal has created a strong vision for the future of the school. She and her team have created a school in which administrative support and structures allow students to be educated in a calm and supportive environment. Consequently, it is possible for them to work toward their individual and school goals.

The comprehensive meeting structure ensures procedures are in place to allow staff to share and interpret data, discuss student progress and review strategies that promote individual and whole class learning across the school. Strategic planning, evident in the schools three-year plan, is solidly in place and the administrative team makes decisions after thorough examination of all available data. Measurable and regular review of targets and timeframes, in all core curriculum areas are included in the Comprehensive Educational Plan and the principal’s annual goals and objectives.

The school has built its structures and systems on a culture of reflection, revision, and data driven results to enable continual evaluation of teaching and learning at every level. Its detailed and accurate self-evaluation is a strong foundation for future planning. The school is continually striving to ensure the highest level of consistency in the differentiation of instruction so it can match the precise learning needs of each student. The alignment of all accountability measures has provided a framework for better monitoring and revision of student progress and teachers’ learning. The school treats its students well and carefully plans the next steps each student needs to make good progress. It sets interim goals for students through the advisor and Pathways systems and formally reviews progress at timely intervals throughout the year.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: South Bronx Preparatory School	△	➤	✓	+
Overall QR Score				X
Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?				X
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?				X
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?				X
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?				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 student’s learning.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?				X
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?				X
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?				X
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				X

DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DYO, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.

To what extent do ...	△	➤	✓	+
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?				X
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?			X	
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?				X
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent do school leaders...	△	➤	✓	+
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?				X
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?				X
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?				X
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4				X

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and 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 ...	△	➤	✓	+
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?				X
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?			X	
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?				X
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 5				X

Quality Review Scoring Key							
△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed