

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2008-2009**

**Bronx Regional High School**

**High School 480**

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

**Principal: Colin Thomas**

**Dates of review: May 13 - 14, 2009**

**Lead Reviewer: Michael L. Schurek**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Bronx Regional High School is a high school with 351 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 44% Black, 54% Hispanic and 2% White students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 43% of the students enrolled and girls account for 57%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 70.6%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 79% eligibility.

This transfer school accepts students who have experienced difficulties in previous high schools. As a result, enrolled students are above age for their respective grade levels, usually falling between the ages of 16 and 21 years.

The school shares its building with two other alternative educational facilities. The Learning for Young Families through Education daycare center provides care for young children of students in the school and the General Education Diploma Plus program assists students in obtaining their general education diplomas.

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This school is proficient.**

The principal has established and communicated a clear vision for the school, and the community shares his high expectations for students. He is proud of the fact that no student has been turned away, regardless of any personal challenges they need to overcome in order to succeed. Many students attend who would otherwise drop out of school. Incoming students are enrolled in a family group for their first semester. This experience establishes relationships, which build trust between the students and the adults and creates a supportive culture for learning. It enables students to transition into their new environment and ultimately helps them to understand themselves better. The school has effective partnerships, which provide in-house medical, dental and social services to students and their young children.

The school is making sound progress regarding prior Quality Review recommendations. Scheduled collaborative team meetings have become weekly events. These meetings are helping teachers to share best practices, examine student work collaboratively, build curriculum maps, and to expand differentiation in the classroom. They now collect and analyze subject-specific data, develop rubrics and have begun the process of developing individual student short-term goals in their respective subjects.

While all of these practices are in the developmental stage and the school has yet to establish a consistent approach across all classes and subjects, they indicate a positive direction. Differentiated instruction is evident in some classrooms. Only some teachers use rubrics to develop clear expectations for their students and provide feedback regarding next steps needed to improve the quality of their work. Only a few subject teachers have developed individual skill specific goals for their students. The school has not yet established interim checkpoints in all areas. Schools leaders are just beginning the process of establishing differentiated professional development plans for their teachers and expect to have them in place next year.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Teachers work collaboratively and effectively to share ideas and good practice to improve student learning.
- The school's systems and partnerships support students and their families in continual learning and promote students' personal growth and development.
- The school is a calm and well-ordered community, which is providing the students with a respectful and supportive learning environment.
- The administration, faculty, students and parents share high expectations for improving student achievement.
- The principal is a strategic thinker and planner who has shared his vision for raising achievement with the whole community and is an excellent role model for the scholars and staff.
- Students benefit from an increasingly broad curriculum, including art and opportunities to use technology to support learning supported by careful management of the school budget.

### What the school needs to improve

- Extend differentiation into more classrooms and ensure that feedback to students on their work consistently gives detailed reasons why they were successful and clear next steps for improvement based on specific rubrics.
- Develop, with teachers, differentiated goals and plans for their professional growth and the improved achievement of their students that reflect and support the attainment of school-wide goals.
- Establish consistency in setting subject-specific, short-term student goals so that they are fully aware of their learning needs and next steps.
- Include measurable outcomes and interim benchmarks in all goals across the school to monitor progress and make timely adjustments to the curriculum during the year.

## 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 proficient.**

All students entering this school have the same goal of accumulating enough credits to graduate from high school within a very strict timeline. The school accepts all students who want to attend and uses their transcript and the Test of Adult Basic Education locator to identify a credit accumulation plan. The administrative team keeps a close eye on high school credits earned and Regents passed for each student. Parents enter into a partnership with the school at enrollment agreeing to communicate regularly regarding their child's progress. The principal and his support staff call families to conference with them during the day, at night or on weekends, whatever it takes. This practice directly contributes to the current positive Progress Report data, which indicates that the school's graduation rate is above average for schools in its cohort.

The administrators and faculty utilize all Department of Education systems to gather data to allow them to have a clear and current picture of students' performance in English and math for classes, subgroups and individuals. The school has earned extra credit on its Progress Report for exemplary proficiency gains for its English language learners. The staff have begun the process of designing curriculum maps in each subject area, which lists skills and assessments for each unit topic. This new practice has expanded the school's ability to capture individual student strengths and areas of need into some science and foreign language subjects. The teachers meet weekly in their professional learning communities. They are currently designing curriculum maps in additional areas with the goal of covering all core subjects by next year.

The school has designed a 7-7-7 evaluation report, which provides feedback to the students regarding progress in their respective subject classes. These feedback forms provide an opportunity for students to conference regularly with their teachers regarding their progress. While these forms are very useful in helping students to stay on track to gain credits, they are not yet communicating short-term goals and next learning steps.

**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 administration has involved faculty more actively this year in developing school goals by organizing collaborative professional learning communities. These groups have begun the process of developing detailed curriculum maps, which contain specific skills for each unit of study and assessment tools to measure student learning. The current 7-7-7 reports contain individual student goals for attendance, homework, test/quizzes, projects/papers and class participation. These reports currently lack subject-specific, short-term learning goals. However, teachers of English, math and foreign language have started to adapt the 7-7-7 form to include short-term goals and

plan to share this recent development with colleagues so that it becomes common practice for the entire school. Although the timeframes for the reports allow for frequent updates, teachers have the flexibility to set new goals whenever necessary.

The principal works with his assistants, support personnel and faculty to evaluate the previous Comprehensive Educational Plan. Curriculum departments discuss areas of concern and use data to derive goals for the next plan. The group then shares this information and uses it to design the new plan. The school keeps parents informed about school improvement through the school's website, school bulletins and mailings inviting them to attend informational meetings.

School leaders meet with each professional community every month to ensure that all students are making progress and achieving goals. Teachers conduct individual conferences with students at least once every three weeks to discuss their accomplishments and needs. Student attendance is more problematic at this school as compared to others because the students are older and frequently face more complex adult issues. The principal and his team of assistant principals, guidance counselors, and social workers check attendance on a daily basis and contact parents when necessary. Staff sometimes makes home visits and students report receiving wake-up calls if needed. The guidance counselors and social workers also make phone calls regularly to the parents of any student who is falling off-track to graduate.

Teachers and administrators communicate high expectations by celebrating student success publicly at achievement ceremonies. Hallway displays of student work reflect the rigorous quality of the curriculum. Standards of behavior and respect are extremely high and practiced by all members of the community.

**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 proficient.**

The curriculum provides a foundation upon which students can develop the strategies and skills necessary to accumulate credits and pass Regents exams to ultimately earn their diplomas. Students remain on-track to graduate through the school's use of flexible scheduling. Subject classes contain students from multiple grades and on-line credit recovery programs supplement credits earned in the classrooms. School leaders and faculty are working together to design classroom practices which will challenge and meet the needs of all students in all subjects areas. Rigorous and challenging activities are present in many classes and the school realizes that this practice must spread to all subjects.

Students are exposed to the arts through the medium of clay. Opportunities for self-expression abound in this environment. Term projects are currently on display, which feature student-created masks animated through technology. Sport activities include individualized fitness programs in the school's well-equipped exercise spa. The many championship banners on display in the gymnasium bespeak the success of the school basketball team. The school has used this year's budget to purchase Yamaha electric pianos, which students learn to play in small groups. Smart boards are available for use in numerous classrooms and the administration has provided all teachers with a laptop. Technology is a school focus and each year the school is utilizing the budget effectively in this regard.

Many students entering the school find it hard to trust adults because of experiences in their previous high schools. The caring and supportive environment that exists at this school enables students to overcome their fears and frustrations. As one student put it, "They give us hope to make it." Teachers routinely customize assignments for students and are willing to review material them, utilizing various strategies and learning styles over and over until mastery is achieved. One student remarked, "In my old school if you failed, it was your problem. Here, the teachers go out of their way to help you."

The administration introduced the concept of curriculum mapping this year and programmed collaborative sessions for each learning community team. Teachers support each other in these teams by sharing best practices, seeking out more experienced staff for ideas and arranging classroom visits for observation. These teams also examine student work as it relates to their respective curriculums. This practice has enabled teachers to understand the importance of differentiating instruction for groups and individuals. As a result, teachers are beginning to develop class data binders, which have the potential to enable teachers to differentiate instruction in all subject classes. In addition to the ARIS data, the English and math teachers have recently begun to develop informal pre-tests, which they plan to administer before each unit of study. These teachers aim to use these assessments to differentiate some lessons in both of these subject areas. Differentiated activities are occurring at times in other subject areas; however, at this time, the school has not yet established assessment systems in all subject areas to inform differentiated lesson planning.

**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 proficient.**

The school's professional development plan aligns with school goals. Teachers use the experience of their professional learning communities to enhance their skills and practices. They are supported by the on-site United Federation of Teachers resource center. Its teacher developer is an integral part of professional development and is sought out by teachers for demonstrations and ideas. Teachers frequently attend outside professional development conferences at the school's expense. They are also encouraged to visit colleagues' classrooms to observe best practices and improve teaching skills. The assistant principals conduct formal observations and share the results with the principal. The principal conducts frequent classroom visits and is well aware of staff strengths and weaknesses. The school has not yet developed differentiated and individualized professional development plans for teachers, but these are planned for the next school year.

The school's inquiry team is building on last year's work, analyzing the achievement and progress of 16 students in the lowest-performing third who failed the last integrated algebra Regents. Through the process of inquiry, team members have deduced that the target group has a weakness in using critical thinking strategies in order to develop the skills necessary to pass the Regents. The team has shared these findings with the faculty. This has led to a school-wide movement to improve critical thinking skills in all subject areas. The entire school now uses the inquiry process in their small learning communities to examine student work, assess outcomes and improve learning. As a result of this work, the teachers have collectively decided to use Cornell note-taking strategies in all subject areas to establish consistency and continuity for the students

and themselves. It has also allowed them to come to the realization that differentiation is required to meet student needs.

The school meets many of the emotional and social needs of its students through its many unique partnerships. Students can drop off their children at the LYFE childcare center for quality childcare, enabling them to attend classes and continue their studies. Montefiore Hospital staffs an on-site medical and dental clinic, which students and their children can access. Social worker interns from Columbia University and Hunter College provide social support for the students and their children. In addition, the Hunter College interns run family groups for newly enrolled students to help them transition into their new environment. Students are able to access these services with minimal disruption to learning.

**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 proficient.**

The school has established satisfactory systems to monitor and evaluate school goals, which are measurable and have clearly defined interim checkpoints. School leaders seek an average gain of 2.5 credits per student for each 44-day time period and carefully track credit accumulation. Teachers identify students in need of intervention by analyzing class results every 22 days. Guidance counselors are the case managers for student progress and are responsible for initiating the revision of action plans when necessary to accelerate outcomes. The school places careful attention on these benchmarks and makes adjustments accordingly.

However, the school does not sufficiently monitor and revise goals in the content area. This means that the school's approach to curriculum planning is not sufficiently rigorous. Teachers of English, math and foreign language can demonstrate how they assess and set goals in order to accelerate student learning. However, the establishment of interim markers of student learning that identify their progress toward end-of-year goals have not yet been established, and is not taking place in all core subjects. Although the school monitors progress towards goals every 22 days, the lack of measurable benchmarks, at specified times in the school year, does not enable the school to evaluate with any level of accuracy the extent to which they are on track to achieve their goals or to determine how to rectify the situation if they are not.

The administration regularly uses observations and data to evaluate organizational practices. They have scheduled structured professional collaborations this year to improve teaching practices and to help teachers expand their abilities to differentiate instruction. The Comprehensive Education Plan is aligned with school goals and the principal's performance review. The school's self-evaluation is descriptive and outlines the key features in place for this school year, but is not sufficiently evaluative.

The school is united and clear in its vision to help young people who have faltered in other environments. As one parent put it, "There's a magic to this school. Other schools talk at children, this school talks to them." The entire school community appreciates the principal's professional demeanor, especially his ability to listen to others in a truly collaborative spirit. He has total support in his quest to design an environment that can bring both students and staff to new heights.

# School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

<b>School name: Bronx Regional High School</b>	△	➤	✓	+
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>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.</b>				
<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?			<b>X</b>	
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?			<b>X</b>	
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?		<b>X</b>		
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?			<b>X</b>	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>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.</b>				
<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?		<b>X</b>		
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			<b>X</b>	

## 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, DYQ, 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.**

<i>To what extent do ...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			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.**

<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			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.**

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

**Quality Review Scoring Key**

Δ	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed
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