

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

Bronx Academy High School

High School 560

1440 Story Avenue

Bronx

NY 10473

Principal: Patrice English-Young

Dates of review: June 1 - 2, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Sara Carvajal

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Bronx Academy High School is a transfer high school with 402 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 46% Black, 52% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 69.9%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 75% eligibility.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Bronx Academy High School is shifting from being a student's last chance at academic success to offering a fresh opportunity for endless possibilities. The principal navigates the school, building a positive, unified voice among its faculty to promote purposeful reflection of successes and barriers throughout the student body. As a result, administrators, teachers and other staff have engaged students in owning their individual data and utilizing it to set realistic goals that will empower them to achieve academic and personal success. Additionally, the school has explored and established several successful structures that communicate the data with parents so that they, too, may celebrate their children's accomplishments and learn more about their ongoing needs. However, the school continues to work diligently to develop an equally efficient way to communicate the progress of student learning goals with parents throughout the year so that they can provide the necessary support at home as well.

The school environment reflects that students are respectful of the adults and one another, regardless of their beliefs, biases and differences, allowing learning to take center stage for all. The school offers a great variety of opportunities for learning during regular and extended day programming. As a result, students are greatly empowered to take ownership of their individual credit accumulation and recovery. Moreover, students are enabled to seek out non-academic opportunities, such as discussion forums and poetry or theatre groups, to further their reflective thinking processes. However, the school does not yet have an expansive range of partnerships with community-based organizations that address the broad interests and needs of the students.

The school's evolving inquiry team drives the growing momentum of purposeful data use throughout the site. As a result of the team's work, teachers are now more inclined to collaborate to examine student work, plan together and visit each other's classrooms to share ideas. However, the school does not provide ample opportunities for embedded teacher collaboration that supports deepened professional development in the area of differentiated instruction. Similarly, the school does not yet demonstrate structures that ensure periodic check-in of teacher goals to support a tailored development of craft.

Lastly, the leadership has developed a great momentum for continued school improvement, and all school constituents have an opportunity to collaboratively build upon the current year's successes.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has effectively established an interim reporting structure that facilitates the ongoing efficient communication of academic and personal progress between teachers and families in order to raise the level of academic achievement.
- The school has launched a structure for systematic, collaborative goal setting that promotes enthusiasm and vocabulary development for students across subject areas.
- The school offers a wide range of support structures and choice during regular and extended day programming to facilitate students' ownership of credit accumulation and recovery so they are empowered to succeed.
- The principal and faculty work relentlessly as a united team to nurture a generally respectful and orderly environment so that students embrace the alternative site as a new opportunity for overcoming past barriers to educational success.
- The school's evolving inquiry team collaborates frequently to examine student work, plan together and visit each other's classrooms to share ideas and best practice, through a desire to continually improve student outcomes.
- The principal's consistently optimistic leadership is driving the focused vision for continually improving student achievement.

What the school needs to improve

- Systematize interim benchmark checkpoints for students and their families to take communication regarding student mastery of learning goals to the next level.
- Expand the range of partnerships with community-based organizations in order to provide students and their families with optimal differentiated support that enhances student academic and personal growth.
- Increase the frequency of opportunities for teacher collaboration to support deepened professional development that has an impact on the differentiation of instruction.
- Refine all goal-setting and individual professional growth plans across the school, so that they consistently detail measurable interim checkpoints with responsibilities for action and monitoring.

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.

The school leadership engages in effectively collecting and analyzing Regents and formative assessment data across English language arts, math, science and social studies at the end of each marking period. They systematically analyze the data by relevant subgroups, such as English language learners and special education students and by individual students, in order to identify trends of who has showed incremental gains or who has failed to make sufficient progress. As a result, the school has been able to precisely match students to academic intervention and credit recovery services to accelerate their success. Additionally, the school conducts ongoing analyses around student attendance, which is of great priority in a transfer school. This data serves to efficiently explore the base factors contributing to negative trends in truancy and, consequently, aligning guidance services to address the barriers which inhibit consistent attendance patterns for particular students.

Complementing the data work of the school's leadership team, the inquiry team also works diligently in modeling for the staff at large the great implication of relentless data use in planning for effective instruction. Using the results of last spring's English Regents results as the springboard indicator for their work, the team has successfully communicated to the rest of the staff that the students' limited vocabulary is the leading cause that underpins the students' low achievement on comprehension tests. In exploring this hypothesis further across content areas, such as math and science, teachers have uncovered a consistent pattern regarding the students' limitations with vocabulary. As a result, teachers throughout the site have placed vocabulary work at the forefront of the school's inquiry thrust, observing notable gains on various formative assessments as the year progresses. However, the team does not yet model a robust system for monitoring student data at clearly defined interim checkpoints throughout the year.

Several teachers have initiated a rippling momentum in utilizing electronic means, such as My GradeBook, to systematize a highly organized structure for tracking student progress on a variety of formative assessments, ranging from tests and quizzes to performance tasks. This system generates summary reports, comprised of simple language, that are then shared with students and their parents. In addition, teachers send home letters that include personalized comments regarding a particular student's strengths or areas for improvement.

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.

Throughout the school, one can easily identify the impact of the vocabulary-centered inquiry work through the systematic establishment of subject-specific goals that students have set for themselves around vocabulary development. As confirmed by teachers and students alike, they are not yet revisiting the goals according to a particular calendar system. Similarly, not all students are able to confidently articulate their specific goals without the written document in hand. However, it is clearly evident that the students acknowledge that their limitations with diversified content language continue to obstruct their academic successes. As such, students are focused on increasing their ownership of vocabulary and teachers continually engage them in developing familiarity of terminology and concepts through the consistent use of the Frayer model. Quizzes, tests, projects and other in-class activities serve to effectively measure vocabulary growth and students’ mastery of the goals.

On another level, behavioral goals also play a great role in the pulse of the school. Students collaborate with teachers and, at times, administrators and counselors to identify the deficiencies in their behavioral patterns that hinder breakthroughs in their academic progress. Although not prominently displayed throughout the site as are the vocabulary goals, students are well aware of the underlying emotional, economic and social factors that stymie their achievement, and they own the discreet plans set in place to overcome those barriers.

At this time, the school does not yet demonstrate that the measurable goals which have been established collaboratively between teachers and students are communicated with parents as effectively as achievement data is. In particular, it is solely select parents who receive intermittent communiqués regarding their children’s learning goals when teachers grow concerned over their lack of progress.

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.

With the steady support of the school’s achievement manager, the school has effectively redefined its curriculum maps for all core subject areas, including physical education and the arts. As a result, teachers have consistent standards-aligned structures available that support strategic pacing, instructional decision making in the flexible use of resources, and some scaffolding strategies for differentiation.

The majority of teachers infuse great passion into their lessons. Most notably, they often use SmartBoards and laptops, in lieu of textbooks, in a variety of contexts and ways to engage students with complex subject matter. Additionally, students note that the flexibility of teachers empowers them to stay beyond the standard class period, as needed, to complete challenging assignments.

Beyond the regular schedule, the aura of dedication and belief that the faculty invests in the student body shines even brighter through the plethora of additional support opportunities scheduled to ensure academic and personal success. For instance, the

school schedules a core team of teachers to provide ongoing academic intervention services in English language arts, math, social studies and science during the daily professional periods. Additionally, weekday after school tutoring sessions and Saturday sessions give students the opportunities to receive supplemental intense instruction in areas where they need improvement or in order to make up missing labs. A web-based credit recovery structure also enables students to independently accumulate missing credits in a quick, private fashion that students themselves pace. In short, students find that they “have options” and “teachers that push them to do well in spite of their past personal issues or current negative behavior patterns”.

The leadership and faculty collaborate effectively to support students beyond their basic academic needs. In particular, the school has worked diligently to develop its guidance team and programming so that students’ family dynamics and emotional concerns are addressed either through internal counseling or community-based agency links. After-school clubs, such as the Divas and Gents clubs, also work to address the students’ personal needs by uniting core groups of female and male adolescents with faculty advisors to identify and discuss issues and tensions around substance abuse, gender preference and gang affiliation that affect students throughout the site. In addition, the school has implemented and sustained several tiers of celebration that honor student milestones in attendance, academic achievement and consistent positive behavior. These include trips to Broadway shows, monthly assemblies, and lists of honor roll names prominently posted throughout the school’s corridors. As a result, the school community is shifting its view of the site to a much more positive light than in the past – a ground for cultivating college-bound students.

Despite its renaissance in curriculum restructuring and tailored student guidance opportunities, the school does not yet demonstrate that it provides the faculty with ample opportunity to deeply master strategies for the differentiation of instruction across all curriculum areas to address the needs of higher achieving students.

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 inquiry team, which consists of a cross-section of teachers and administrators from assorted departments, is the driving force for data-driven professional development at the site. In light of a range of summative and formative data that continually points to a vast vocabulary deficiency among students, the team decided to transform vocabulary development into a school-wide academic focus this year. Team members mapped out that the most efficient way to implement this focused work was to examine varied student work frequently, plan together to share effective ideas and, subsequently, visit each other’s classrooms to validate and critique best practices. As a result of its consistent toiling, the inquiry team celebrates that teachers outside of the core team have gained an interest in their work over the course of the year. Consequently, team members cite that most teachers are “getting better at using data sources to improve instruction”. Similarly, the administration recognizes that this year’s strides with inquiry work indicate that “the school is ready for an expansion of inquiry work, digging deeper with vocabulary work that is content-area specific”.

In addition to the data-driven momentum inspired by the inquiry team, other effective professional development venues contribute to customizing adult learning experiences

at the site. Newly implemented individual improvement plans afford teachers the opportunity to self-assess their expertise and identify areas where they seek to improve

their craft so that the school may align its offerings with the teachers' self-identified needs. Teachers declare that a great amount of sharing of effective practices occurs naturally during departmental, weekly team meetings, visits to other sites, and on their own time. However, several teachers agree that, at times, the professional development at the school feels disjointed due to its lack of structure and continuity in deepening their mastery of differentiation of instruction.

As self-esteem is an issue for most students, the school celebrates achievement and seeks the support of several local agencies to spark student validation. The YAFFA Poetry Project and the Women's Monologues Project are two dynamic examples of how the school has embraced arts-driven venues to engage students in positive self-reflection. At this time, however, the school does not provide students and their families with a broad range of differentiated support through partnerships with community-based organizations.

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.

Graduation from the school proposes a successful beginning as students evolve into self- and family-sustaining members of society. However, according to the principal's entrepreneurial vision for students, the long-term vision is to complement increased graduation rates with growing college admissions and completion. In the interim, the principal's optimistic vision for continued improvement at the site shines through the paradigm shift she has initiated.

In particular, the principal is relentlessly instilling the belief that this school, which is comprised of students immersed in extremely challenging circumstances, is "not a last chance, but instead an opportunity for a fresh start". The principal promotes this posture by pushing all school leaders to engage in continual high visibility in classrooms and by encouraging ongoing personal connections with individuals and groups of faculty members and students during daily interactions, as well as during formal school-wide activities. Additionally, the principal continually uses a wide range of data, including student achievement data, teacher observations and parental input, to drive large-scale organizational decisions. As a result, the school is steadily realigning its personnel assignments with changing student needs. Similarly, the school is expanding the accessibility of instructional resources, such as varied technology, to suit the varying learning styles and demands of students.

The accurate reflections revealed in the pre-review school self-evaluation demonstrate an adept ability to visualize continued school improvement. Using a wide range of data from assorted constituents, the school community worked well together to construct a critical view of the school's current resources and practices. Moreover, the team successfully identified general, yet sensible, next steps the school needs to take to drive the next stage of success. However, at this time, the school does not yet demonstrate a systematic approach to revisiting student goal-setting and individual professional growth plans for adults in order to monitor progress and drive improvement effectively.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: Bronx Academy High 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.							
<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				
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.							
<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				
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.							
<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				
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
Δ	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed