

Quality Review Report

2009-2010

Bard High School Early College

High School 696

**525 East Houston Street
New York
NY 10002**

Principal: Ray Peterson

Dates of review: February 25 and March 1, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Jill Herman

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Bard High School Early College is a high school with 582 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 17% Black, 1% Native American, 17% Hispanic, 47% White, and 13% Asian students. The student body includes 0% English language learners and 0% special education students. Boys account for 34% of the students enrolled and girls account for 66%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 94.8%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

Bard High School Early College is an environment that is purposefully organized to accelerate student learning. It creates opportunities for leadership. Instructional and organizational coherence is visible from the administrators to: teachers, students, classrooms and report cards. All articulate the goals of the school. The curriculum is aligned and classrooms reflect this consistency. Students are not only able to reflect on their own learning, they are able to articulate what the theory of learning is at their school. The school year begins with a week long "Writing and Thinking" workshop in which students are inter-aged in small groups with a faculty member. The school's belief is that students learn by using language and writing coupled with the inquiry approach. Good writing is emphasized in all assessments. The school has adopted an approach that concentrates on teaching key cognitive strategies such as inquisitiveness, analytic skills, reasoning, problem solving, and interpretation. Students gain an awareness of current level of mastery with the ability to reflect on learning and next steps. The faculty is organized so that adults democratically participate both in their content areas and school wide issues. A committee surveys members to develop professional needs for the coming school year. Committees approve courses, and professional learning communities reflect on their practices examining and refining to advance their own development. Students form study groups and exhibit interest and support in each other's success. Collaboration is evident in all aspects of the school which promotes and supports professional development and adult learning.

The school community has structures in place to reflect collaboratively and individually on practices and procedures. School leaders and faculty are constantly striving to meet their goals for accelerating learning for all the students and frequently revisit what is working and what is not. Building on the previous Quality Review, the school community has concentrated on looking at different data sources as well as subgroups. This work is still evolving and being refined as they sharpen and narrow questions and tools utilized. They are just beginning to drill down and examine the impact of sub skills such as annotating, fluency, time management and how they can support incoming students in a more targeted manner both within classes and after school. They keep track of students' progress and offer much support that encourages student coming forth for assistance. There is a strong belief system that students must take responsibility for their own learning upon entering school. Families speak highly of the school and consider narrative reports accurately describe their children. Efforts are made to include families in school wide events, but by the school's own admission, participation is not what they would like it to be.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Curricular decisions provide rigorous and challenging experiences, including the arts, that purposefully and intentionally embed rigorous habits and higher order skills that accelerate learning with results that surpass State standards.
 - Students complete high school at the end of grade 10. This includes passing Regents examinations. Student and teacher products exemplify the school's key standards of academic rigor, college readiness as well as within specific goals for content areas.
 - All curricula are designed with college readiness standards including skills and dispositions. Assessment rubrics are aligned to these. There is a focus on writing and thinking along with the promotion of language as well as self-monitoring processes. Small classes allow for differentiation and closely examining where students are and supporting their thinking and writing.
- Teaching practices reflect a coherent set of beliefs resulting in high level of student engagement and thinking that are evident in students' discussions and work products.
 - All content area teachers plan as a team. They develop curricula consistent with school's beliefs about learning. They design common assessments as seen in grades nine and ten. The majority of faculty teaches both high school and college courses lending further strength to the coherence of beliefs and practices.
 - Due to the organization of classrooms that are facilitated in seminar style followed by grouping, high levels of engagement are evident. Students respond well to open ended questions such as in a class reading of *Isaiah Berlin* where they discussed his theory on Machiavelli's view on Christians and pagans. They used text to explore valuing the personal soul over social success and articulated their understanding, their confusion; grappling with different points of view.
- Teams of teachers work effectively to share promising practices, develop tools that analyze data with the intent of adjusting instructional decisions that improve student learning.
 - A vast majority of teachers are organized in Professional Learning Communities by content areas. They develop focus questions and review their student work together such as when grade 9 English teachers surveyed their classes with the question: How did our work and your learning during the fall semester prepare you for the final exam? They analyzed strategies that supported students in writing a clear thesis with evidence and analysis as well as revision practices. They considered that they had not asked the right question and decided that the issue needed to be about what helped improve writing, not performance on the final exam.
 - Teachers are constantly and consistently reviewing student work to ensure students are college ready by end of grade 10. Teachers in English and History for grades 9 and 10 have started coordinating literature selections

with historical constructs based on the belief that by making literary and historical connections students' writing would be strengthened and thus able to demonstrate deeper connections and perspectives.

- The school provides effective individualized professional development and support for teachers to learn successful teaching methods by encouraging them to self-evaluate and revise instructional approaches.
 - Teachers meet in various groups including school wide inquiry teams and make departmental inter-visitations. Observation of instruction by administration is frequent and feedback is immediate. Administration and peers support new teachers. The school is proactive in planning and currently students are evaluating courses and instruction and teachers will identify the impact they have on learning.
 - Suggestions for curriculum and assessment changes are reviewed, modified and agreed upon by groups. Structures are good as seen in the Evaluation Committee; a new group formed this year that is charged with designing and implementing peer review process and mentoring of new teachers.
- School leaders and faculty have structures in place that focus on building alignment and coherence between content, teaching and assessment.
 - Committees review and have impact on curriculum, instruction, and use of resources. As a result of their evaluative work, the science team changed the sequence of science courses, as well as revamping labs, based on what is required for students to successfully complete work.
 - Content area teams use common language, common rubrics and grade each other's student work. Teacher teams review curriculum and assignments to ensure it is aligned to the school's policies. This gives clarity to expectations for students as well as self-monitoring and quality control for faculty.
- Individual and groups of students identified with particular needs are able to benefit from targeted, caring support, customized to their needs.
 - All students who have below 2.0 GPA are assigned to a college mentor for 90 minutes per week. They meet with a guidance counselor once a week. All faculty members have office hours where they offer individual or small group assistance and the Library Learning Center provides individual help in writing and math. Students, with the support of a teacher, can benefit from an independent course tailored to their interest.
 - Students from grades 9 through 12 can clearly articulate what they know and the areas they need to improve. They explained their essays with several drafts, extensive teacher feedback, peer editing and process papers asking what was learned that could be brought to the next assignment.
- The school shares a depth of relevant information with parents and students that encourages academic achievement by being explicit and detailed regarding students' strengths and next steps.
 - Students and families receive four report cards a year that describe the course and actual work required as well as individualized comments relating to participation, homework, assignments and expectations. Next steps are

worded so that they are specific and can engage families in supporting their children.

- Parents are called if there are concerns, academic or social. They are familiar with ARIS and receive training from the school. Families meet with teachers to review and may schedule additional conferences to devise and monitor plans.

What the school needs to improve

- Establish a systemic approach to gathering and analyzing data at whole school, grade and individual student level to examine patterns of all relevant subgroups in order to take timely action.
 - Grade teachers meet to talk about individual students who are struggling, but much of their discussion is subjective as to why a student is not successful. This is dissimilar to ways in which they look at curriculum and other student work. Agreed data based protocols that are descriptive and which strengthen assessment of student progress are not in place and this reduces a deeper understanding from which to target appropriate assistance.
 - The staff has identified a sub-group based on Regents scores and credit accumulation but identifying additional sources by drilling down and revealing other pertinent data points to uncover places of leverage to improve student outcomes more rapidly is only just beginning or not yet undertaken.
- Set goals and action plans informed by needs assessments by analyzing student outcomes in relation to existing instructional and organizational practices.
 - School goals are informed by a data driven needs assessment but student outcomes are not analyzed along side of existing instructional and organizational practices to better inform school level decisions.
 - The school creates action plans with the purpose of accelerating learning but targeting on specific subgroups or skills, to strengthen plans and yield more thoughtfully designed actions, is not accomplished.
- Extend and promote the level of parent engagement and communication so that families can collaborate with school to support student learning.
 - The Learning Environment Survey, from teacher perspective, reveals that teachers talk with students quite frequently, but less so with families unless there is a problem. The school's belief is that students must take responsibility for their own learning. Clarification explaining and discussing this with families to build relations and support families assisting in this move towards independence is not fully in place.
 - The school has parental support. However, there is a small turnout to school-wide events. Broadening types of invitations, providing flexibility of time, group size, with attention to needs of families with the aim of increasing the base of representation at events is under-developed.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: Bard High School Early College	△	▷	✓	+
Overall QR Score				X
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	△	▷	✓	+
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?				X
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?				X
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?				X
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1				X
Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	▷	✓	+
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?				X
2.2 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the team and classroom level?				X
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance trends?			X	
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				X

Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X				
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?				X			
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?				X			
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X				
Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?				X			
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?				X			
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?				X			
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals 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 progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?				X			
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X				
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?				X			
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?				X			
Overall score for Quality Statement 5				X			
Quality Review Scoring Key							
△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed