

Quality Review Report 2009-2010

Bard High School Early College II

High School 299

30-20 Thomson Avenue

Queens

NY 11101

Principal: Valerie Thomson

Dates of review: April 19 – 20, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Catherine M. Powis

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Bard High School Early College II is a high school with 451 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 21% Black, 25% Hispanic, 26% White, and 26% Asian students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 0.2% special education students. Boys account for 35% of the students enrolled and girls account for 65%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 97.1%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Bard High School Early College II opened its doors at its new site this past fall, and all stakeholders are proud to celebrate the first graduating class with 100% attaining an associate's degree and college acceptance. This unique school collaborates with its parent school at the Manhattan campus, with students entering grade 9 and completing an innovative high school program in two years, including all required New York State Regents exams. Students continue into the school's liberal arts college program for the next two years, graduating with a Regents high school diploma and 60 college credits. School leaders and carefully selected faculty join parents and students as stakeholders in this rigorous and challenging specialized program to accelerate the learning of these high-achieving students.

The collective intellectual acumen of the principal and faculty provides all students with challenging opportunities to achieve their learning goals by offering precise and actionable feedback that informs them of their progress and ways to get better. High expectations permeate the school and are most appreciated by parents who describe how their "...children are very challenged through the rich syllabi and small classes", and the personal attention from teachers. All this is supplemented by frequent and ongoing communication with families to share student progress and next learning steps for success. The principal supports this well by making very tactical organizational decisions in utilizing space, budget and staff time. Highly effective structures are in place where teachers regularly collaborate, evaluating and adjusting the curriculum, instruction and assessments that ensure rigorous coursework and reinforce high expectations. Nevertheless, school leaders have not yet developed processes for evaluating the effectiveness of the professional development afforded teachers to determine its impact on accelerating student learning, or making necessary adjustments to support specific needs of individual teachers. In addition, teacher teams are not yet fully successful in building teachers' instructional capacity. They do not engage in the inquiry approach to the extent that they proactively provide each other with meaningful feedback to improve their teaching practices and leverage student progress.

Although teachers work diligently to plan the curriculum and instructional goals, their teaching strategies and classroom routines do not actively engage all students consistently across all classrooms. Consequently, it is sometimes unclear whether learning has taken place. Assessments are widely used by school leaders as well as faculty to track student progress, yet they lack the frequency necessary to provide timely interventions. Also, there are missed opportunities to analyze written teacher feedback to provide benchmark progress points for student learning.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school provides a rigorous and engaging curriculum and specialized instruction that are highly effective in securing the academic progress of high achieving students.
 - The school models its comprehensive course syllabi on those used by its parent school. Teachers offer very challenging activities and assignments that are appropriately matched to the range of abilities in this high-achieving student population, ensuring substantial and rigorous student work products.
 - High school requirements are distilled intensively into the first two years, with specialized coursework, and are approved by the State Education Department. This prepares all students to pursue the early college program that is supported by authentic curriculum planning. For example, one teacher team has authored an anthology of primary documents to achieve student goals in college-level social studies.
- The principal's vision, commitment, and collaborative working style have created a culture of action planning, reflection and improvement that advances student achievement.
 - Staff construct and invest in clearly focused goals that mirror those of the parent school. To support these goals, they explicitly plan an academically rigorous program that intellectually engages a diverse group of high school students. In turn, students reach their full intellectual potential by completing several college-level courses.
 - Consistent and careful planning using assessment data has generated an early college program designed to enable students to transfer to four-year colleges and universities with up to two years of college credit. In the first graduating class this June all students have been accepted into colleges with two years of credit.
- Teachers are very good at assessing the progress of individual students so that feedback to students and their families provides them with more detailed reasons for their success and clear next steps toward achieving challenging learning goals.
 - A comprehensive system for written feedback to students is accomplished by detailed comments made on student work. In turn, students know what they do well and their next learning steps to do better. As one student expressed, "It is inspiring to see how passionate my teachers are. When my essay is returned I go straight to the end to look at my teacher's comments to get better."
 - The staff takes pride in developing a comprehensive narrative report that tracks progress throughout the year, and effectively communicates grades, attendance, course expectations, and teacher comments that assist in adjusting goals and next steps for students and their families.

- The principal's strategic leadership promotes organizational decisions that support school, teacher team and classroom level goals well, consistently improving student outcomes.
 - When the school relocated to its new site this past summer, the principal, at the faculty's request, allocated space that offers each department team opportunities to meet regularly. Both formally and informally, they discuss student progress and plans for future improvement. Furthermore, the principal creatively manages the budget, resulting in lower class size and an effective student advisory program that focuses on each student's requirements for success.
 - The highly collaborative way in which teachers and students work together has led to a redesign of the library space. It has become a hub for students to participate in a learning center where teachers regularly tutor small groups or individuals. They also have open access throughout the day to work and do research. This approach has improved student coursework outcomes.
- School leaders and faculty effectively communicate with students and families, resulting in all students being motivated to challenge themselves to reach higher levels of achievement.
 - Parents are fully supported by training in ARIS Parent Link and can keep up with their child's progress using the internet. A School Messenger system, coupled with ongoing conversations, create two-way communication that reaffirms expectations for student success that parents value. Frequent narrative progress reports further engage students and their families in ongoing discussions about next learning steps to improve student outcomes.
- School leaders and faculty have highly effective structures in place to regularly evaluate and adjust curricular and instructional practices in response to student learning needs.
 - Using periodic assessment results in each discipline, teacher teams evaluate and revise the curriculum. The results of these adjustments are regularly compared with results of similar analyses at the school's Manhattan campus. For example, progress in language acquisition on each site is compared to determine which model best prepares students to function in intermediate-level college language classes. As a result, students begin language acquisition requirements immediately, instead of studying an introductory language course.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop processes for evaluating the effectiveness of the school's plan for professional development and its impact on improving instructional practice.
 - The principal's leadership style supports collaborations across the school very well. However, school leaders and faculty have not yet developed concrete systems that evaluate the process and effectiveness of the structured professional collaborations in the school. As a result, this

collaborative work does not influence or align with the school's curricular, instructional and assessment decisions.

- School leaders visit classrooms frequently and provide both oral and written feedback to individual teachers. The school has not developed a systematic process for teachers to assess the effectiveness their professional development, particularly in respect of specific instructional programs, such as Writing and Thinking and Kid Talk.
- Ensure higher levels of active student engagement across all classrooms so that teaching strategies provide classroom support to all learners and continually improve students' cognitive capacity.
 - Although many students produce work that is reflective of a rigorous and precise curriculum and clear instructional goals, not all teachers plan lessons that thoroughly and actively engage all students in the classroom. In turn, some students passively participate by taking notes and reading required text. A few teachers do not check-in with these students for understanding at the end of lessons. Consequently, in some classes, teachers do not know what students have learned, how well they have learned it and if immediate intervention and clarification can benefit the progress of these students.
- Expand systems for monitoring and evaluating progress towards all interim and long-term goals so that adjustments can be made in a timely manner.
 - Very good systems are in place for benchmarking individual student progress, and these are manifested in tracking academic probation, analyzing assessment results and comparing grades and grade point averages. However, the valuable skills-based assessments are not administered frequently enough to accurately measure progress toward interim goals so that revisions can be made quickly enough to impact on student progress.
 - The school maintains content tutoring logs that track the support given to individual students who attend the learning center. Teachers provide excellent informative feedback to students on their work that pushes their thinking to higher levels. However, teacher teams lack the capacity to analyze these valuable, organic benchmarks that will further track the progress of the class and inform their next steps for goal-setting.
- Develop a plan to support and deepen collaborative inquiry work where teacher teams reflect on their practice and provide each other with meaningful feedback to improve pedagogy.
 - The school's core value of teamwork is exemplified by the way the faculty has embraced and participated in professional learning communities. Teachers are empowered by inquiry skills to adjust coursework and accompanying activities and assignments. However, teachers are not incisively analyzing the key elements of their teaching practice as a lens on how to improve strategies for continued student gains.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: Bard High School Early College II	△	▶	✓	+
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