

Quality Review Report 2009-2010

Bronx High School for Law and Community Service

High School 439

**500 East Fordham Road
Bronx
NY 10458**

Principal: Gail Joyner-White

Dates of review: January 5-6, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Jill Herman

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Bronx High School for Law and Community Service is a high school with 449 students from 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 38% Black, 58% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 21% special education students. Boys account for 41% of the students enrolled and girls account for 59%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 81%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Bronx High School for Law and Community Service is one of six small schools located on the Theodore Roosevelt campus in the Bronx. The school community has been engaged in changing the culture and beliefs of the former large school. To that end, graduation rates are climbing. In 2009, 56% of the grade 12 cohort graduated, which is an improvement of 13% from the previous year. Suspension rates have decreased dramatically. The message of being in classes and being a learner is now taken seriously. Attendance rates are improving. Students, families and faculty exhibit respect for each other. The principal knows each student by name and students feel comfortable approaching adults for academic or emotional support.

Based on review of data, a wide range of courses are offered to meet the varying needs of students. Outside agencies provide support as counselors and mentors. In 2006, Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) was brought into school and approximately 20% of students participate. Data is reviewed by school leaders and faculty to determine goals for school. Goals are focused and resources largely support classroom instruction and opportunities for students. Faculty is exceptionally collegial and meets within the school day in a variety of teacher teams. They also meet informally, value their time with each other, and view each other as supportive.

Although the school community reviews many data sources, no interim benchmarks are currently identified to ascertain if they are on the right path. As a result, it is difficult to adjust either a system or a practice in a way that would allow for changes or to easily enable the placing of interventions. Data is not used for classroom differentiation. Ninth grade students are utilizing the ramp-up to literacy program and are programmed in 90 minute blocks. Professional development activities, observations, and teacher teams' activities are not complementary. Teachers are working hard on many things and their efforts do not necessarily get the support needed and follow up regarding classroom practices. It is commendable that the school community has identified goals and begun to organize by cohort; however, there is not a dedicated small group of teachers that teach the same students. This makes conversations and interventions difficult. In addition, cohort data is not disaggregated to identify trends and patterns, nor are focused, measurable, short term goals determined for all year groups.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Leaders make informed and effective curricular and organizational decisions to support improvements in learning.
 - Given the wide academic range of in-coming students, there are varied course offerings. Ramp-Up to Literacy (a double block English class) was instituted for 9th graders and some 10th graders. Advanced placement courses in art history, English, environmental science, Spanish, Spanish literature, physics and calculus are offered. Many grade 11 and 12 students take statistics.
 - There is music and arts program with additional electives such as creative writing, community service, art and technology, and forensics open to all students. After school programs for academic support were created as a result of the principal eliminating an Assistant Principal position in order to place more resources into student offerings and support.
- The school generates and analyzes a good range of data on a regular basis that enables students' progress to be effectively tracked on both school wide and classroom level to better understand and support student learning.
 - All incoming grade 9 students are given a standardized reading test. Ramp-up classes use a different test. Periodic assessments are given three times a year and Acuity is administered prior to students taking English Language Arts Regents. All Regents scores are reviewed.
 - An attendance committee reviews cohort attendance weekly. All students receive progress reports every three weeks and report cards four times a year, thereby providing opportunities for interventions.
- Faculty uses collaborative, data informed processes to inform planning and goal setting with the intention of leveraging change in classroom practice.
 - The school community developed its current focus on lack of credit accumulation for grade 9 students based on data. Administration meets with teachers quarterly to review scholarship reports.
 - Departments met over the summer to develop curriculum maps. Teachers volunteered to teach the two block Ramp-up English Language Arts classes. Teachers in departments review State assessments, paying close attention to which students have not yet passed. English Language Learners' progress is examined and monitored as a sub-group.
- Many teachers are engaged in structured professional collaboration that supports the common instructional focus of the school. In weekly meetings, teachers examine students' assessments to adjust classroom focus and improve learning outcomes.

- Teacher teams meet regularly to review scholarship reports, discuss strategies and share promising practices that have been successful in their classrooms.
- The schedule reflects common planning time for one period daily in which teacher teams are expected to meet. Learning walks are conducted and teachers also visit each other's classrooms on an informal basis.
- School leaders and faculty have clear, transparent systems in place for school to evaluate itself, review and modify practice with a targeted focus on improving student learning.
 - The school community as a whole reviews various data three times a year and reflects on their findings. This has led to putting Ramp-Up in place this school year and developing grade teams that focus on a cohort, resulting in the increase of teacher accountability for a group of students.
 - The school has identified the need to look more closely at student work next semester. School makes ongoing adjustments, based on feedback from faculty, observation and student data, and the administration will support grade 10 and 11 teams more closely in the coming semester.
- The school is a safe place where students are engaged in learning and they value the level of support they receive for personal and academic development.
 - Students and families value the relationships they have with both their teachers and the principal. One student, currently in grade 11, related that he was a big problem in grade 9 but no one gave up on him. He stated that he comes daily now, participates in community service opportunities and has an 85% academic average. Another student reported that she thought she was a poor math student in middle school. However, as a 9th grader, her math teacher spent extra time with her and she now feels competent in the subject. Parents feel that their children are safe and are being prepared for college. They are appreciative that they receive phone calls from faculty informing them of their child's progress as well as written reports.
 - Advisory is provided twice a month for grade 9 students. A program called U-Matter has been in the school for several years. Cohorts of students stay in the same group for four years. This provides a strong bond amongst the students and their mentor.

What the school needs to improve

- Promote consistency in differentiated instruction based on data so that teaching reflects purposeful groupings, tasks accommodate different learning styles and questioning extends thinking to maximize student learning, engagement and thinking.
 - In the greater majority of classes all students are doing the same activity with the same resources and materials. Although students are sometimes seated in a group formation, a clear purpose for grouping is not identified. Most questions asked are factual recall or responded to by reading from textbook. Many assignments are given orally in two or three step

directions. The accelerated classes are smaller with more open-ended questioning techniques utilized by teacher.

- Although students in classes do or attempt to do assignments, there is little or no checking for understanding. One ESL student stated that her favorite class is ESL because she can do the work. In another class, a student said she was very confused.
- Establish a clear and coherent approach to grading policies that provides students and families with feedback from rubrics closely aligned to state standards, allowing students to understand and articulate their strengths and next steps as well as reflect on their learning.
 - The majority of student papers have checks, corrections, and numerical grades. Students are not always able to articulate why they received the grade they have been given, except to say they needed to study more or work harder. Portfolios are not uniform or focused on what needs to be learned or what has been learned, nor do they show growth over time that would allow a student to reflect.
 - Parents are able to state how their child is doing in school, but are not able to articulate what they were doing or what the next step would be for their child.
- Narrow focus of teacher teams with inquiry work and professional development linked to teacher practice that results in adjustments to curriculum, instruction and assessments, to improve learning outcomes.
 - The faculty is engaged in many initiatives and attends a variety of meetings which do not provide coherence to staff. Teachers meet as departments, some as grade teams, and other committees. The 9th grade team meets twice a week and has set goals as a team. Not all teachers can attend all meetings, as they teach multiple grades. Observations and learning walks have other objectives different from the work that teams are engaged in.
 - The professional learning opportunities are related to several school goals, and linkage is not provided for teachers to make connections or receive support in their practice that would impact in their classrooms.
- Develop systems that measure progress towards interim goals and benchmarks so that progress can be measured, readjustments made, and success evaluated.
 - The school has created an attendance team of an Assistant principal, social worker, guidance counselors and aides. Attendance by cohort is reviewed weekly. The procedure is student by student with a report from a committee member. Although attendance in November was lower this year than last, this has not been questioned and therefore no changes have been put in place. Teachers are not directly involved in attendance, although students might receive calls from teachers, guidance counselors and social workers questioning students' absences.
 - The 9th grade teacher team is focused on raising standards for its current 9th graders. The result is that more 9th graders are failing the first semester. Creating and examining interim classroom assessments that

lead to looking more closely at sub-skills and identifying interim benchmarks that could facilitate approaches leading to a higher success rate are not yet undertaken. The English department's goal is to improve English Language Arts Regents' pass rates. It was decided to give the exam to all 10th graders this January with no identified skill set of what a student would need to know and be able to do in order to pass with a 65 or above. As a result, classroom teachers could not readily identify students who could pass, or what others might need to be able to pass.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

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|---|---|---|---|---|
| School name: Bronx High School for Law and Community Service | △ | ▶ | ✓ | + |
| 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 |