

Quality Review Report 2009-2010

The Bronx Leadership Academy

**High School 525
1710 Webster Avenue
Bronx
NY 10457**

Principal: Kenneth Gaskins Jr.

Dates of review: February 25 and March 1, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Kim Outerbridge

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Bronx Leadership Academy is a high school with 641 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 44% Black, 54% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 8% English language learners and 20% special education students. Boys account for 43% of the students enrolled and girls account for 57%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 85%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The Bronx Leadership Academy is a small high school where the students and adults are eager to learn and grow. Led by an experienced and supportive administrative team in conjunction with a collegial staff, the school maintains a well-established culture and environment. This feature allows all members of the school community to take a vigorous part in school-wide decision making and planning.

At the school level, leaders collect and organize a wide range of data. School leaders and faculty efficiently analyze Regents examination results, scholarship and cohort reports, itemed skills within unit exams in addition to other teacher made assessments to identify key subgroups. As a result, there are differentiated supports scheduled for students in need of additional academic services. Some classroom teachers also make efforts to plan and deliver differentiated instruction in order to meet the needs of their students.

School wide goals provide the framework for teacher work. The school has organizational structures designed to encourage teacher collaboration as common planning occurs daily. The teams are building capacity using a set approach in order to identify trends, track student progress, and adjust department level instructional decisions and goals. However, protocols to provide effective feedback to teachers and students are still developing at the teacher team and individual teacher level. In addition, although goal setting occurs at the department level, it is unclear how all classroom teachers make differentiated instructional decisions in response to students who require additional supports.

Aligned to the State core curriculum, each department follows a pacing calendar with emphasis on key standards and performance indicators. Using school wide Regents examination outcomes, recurring indicators are included in combination with specific skill sets that show deficiencies.

Students are encouraged to participate in youth development activities in order that they are well rounded and able to reach their maximum potential. Internal and external partnerships support students academically as well as socially and emotionally therefore generating a well-balanced setting while meeting students' needs.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school maintains a safe and communicable environment that generates a culture where students and staff exhibit trusting relationships, as well as respect and accountability for all, which promotes academic success.
 - The principal's open door policy sets the tone for the school. Speaking directly with the principal, students feel they have a voice and can find solutions to any of their concerns. Students and staff are supportive of the school's goals and objectives to improve attendance rates, increase credit accumulation earnings, and student outcomes on the United States History Regents with an overarching school wide focus on writing. Students speak openly about taking responsibility for themselves, developing college readiness, and about knowing there are reliable systems in place to facilitate progress.
 - Teacher representatives concur with student responses. Communication is open between all constituents. Opportunities to focus on student centered teaching and learning facilitates the process of positive and productive interactions. As a result, the entire school community is moving the system toward student academic and social emotional success.
- School leaders and staff effectively collect and analyze a wide range of data with the purpose of identifying skill sets and key sub-groups in order to plan for credit recovery courses and Regents preparatory seminars.
 - ARI\$along with the Scheduling, Transcripts, Academic, and Reporting system affords the school multiple opportunities to identify student outcomes, cohort and class section results, and school-wide Regents reports. Each marking period, the school analyzes grades and identifies trends. This is specifically helpful in identifying students who have accelerated in addition to students who are not meeting requirements towards graduation. This has resulted in a credit recovery team structuring a differentiated program for all students, including special education students and English language learners.
 - Department teams use summative data as a vehicle to make initial instructional decisions. The analysis of unit exams and other interim assessments including item skills analysis provides the teams with instructional foci at the classroom level. The English department's administration of a mock Regents in November highlighted essay writing to be an area of weakness. This has led to small tutorials where students meet in small groups with teachers based on their area of need. As a result, 77% of the 148 students passed the January 2010 Regents examination.
- Data driven needs inform school wide department goal setting, and action planning, which supports efforts to design pacing charts and targeted plans of action that align to the State core curriculum.

- Administration formulates and aligns the Comprehensive Educational Plan, principal's performance review and department goals based on the current Progress Report data. They pay close attention to student outcomes with an eye toward credit accumulation and Regents scores. A close analysis of data revealed the need to support students in response to document based questions and in essay writing. Classroom displays reflect school-wide goals and students are on track to obtain a combined score of mastery by June 2010.
- The school uses data to identify subgroups of students including those in the bottom third, English language learners and "at-risk" special education students. Teachers plan differentiated lessons to meet group and individual needs. In a global history class, the teacher provides modified handouts for targeted subgroups. English language learners, special education students, and students in the lowest third engage in responding to modified prompts so that those who need additional cues are able to complete the task.
- Teacher teams analyze data to identify trends and patterns and set goals with the purpose of influencing changes in teacher practices.
 - The data specialist's item skills analysis from prior Regents supports her work with the history team around identified indicators with which students are struggling. Subsequently the team facilitator presents a strategy for assisting students with document-based questions and members work together to devise a plan to teach this skill explicitly.
 - On-going analysis of data supports team members' focus on developing reference tools for students around organization and methods for solutions when presented with information in history classes. Team members review student work to monitor trends in their performance because of the use of these protocols.
- Teachers' use of an inquiry approach allows for the analysis of assessment data, student work, and teacher practices and opportunities for teachers to develop and practice leadership.
 - The special education team concentrates on the school-wide focus of writing. Derived from the school's needs assessment, this team discusses teaching strategies to implement at the classroom level with students within this subgroup. Looking at student samples, teachers identify and make instructional decisions based on conversations during the team meeting. The team leader facilitates the session as participants present sentence combining as a strategy to improve student-writing abilities further. Teachers come to a consensus, then devise a suitable hand-out to guide and support students in their work.
 - The math team uses a colleague's videoed lesson to guide conversation around questioning techniques and teaching strategies. Team members engage in constructive dialogue and feedback discussing teaching strategies that support students' learning.
- Parents and students are committed to the school's mission and vision because the school consistently communicates and reinforces its high expectations.

- An online program, keeps parents, and students regularly informed around student progress and overall grades. It provides detailed and individual class assignments, quiz and test log data. In this way, students and parents have access to quantitative measures for all classes.
- Additional communication includes interim progress results, report cards, email exchanges, and phone calls. Providing families with weekly updates increases the opportunities for parents and students to understand clearly how to meet behavioral and academic expectations. Students refer to the student-teacher contract and the code of conduct as their first introduction to school wide and department goals. Parents access student grades and are able to interact with teachers by email.

What the school needs to improve

- Measure the effectiveness of all teacher team meetings and the overall effect that the changes in teacher practices have on student outcomes in order to substantiate strategies that work.
 - The English language arts team used students' results on a mock Regents to devise a protocol to help students master the required tasks. The use of differentiated small group instruction effectively shifted student outcomes. However, the school does not yet replicate this model of intervention across all content areas to support student improvement and higher Regents pass rates.
- Structure systems for teams of teachers to measure their progress towards interim goals and verify the effectiveness of the strategies implemented during the cycle of collaborative inquiry.
 - Teacher teams appear to be in the second cycle of collaborative inquiry. However, currently, there is a lack of corroboration when posed with questions to substantiate student progress. In addition, teachers have not developed full ownership, as they are vague in response to the impact of the last cycle.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of classroom practices including differentiated instructional methods and teachers' feedback to students to ensure they meet students' learning needs.
 - Although teacher planning reflects differentiation, some teachers are more skilled at putting this into practice at the classroom level than others. The school recognizes its next step centers on "how to" execute differentiated lessons with deliberate and explicit strategies.
- Align differentiated goals to data informed decision making in order to further develop teacher team and individual teacher protocols so that all students are on the path to mastery.
 - Teams of teachers make every effort to follow the protocols of collaborative planning but there is a lack of deep investigations with focus on team practices and department results to ensure unfailing student results.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: The Bronx Leadership Academy	△	▷	✓	+
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