

# Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**The Bronx School of Science Inquiry and Investigation**

**Middle School X331  
40 West Tremont Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10453**

**Principal: Serapha Cruz**

**Dates of review: October 26 – 27, 2011**

**Lead Reviewer: Linda Trifon**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Bronx School of Science Inquiry and Investigation is a middle school with 372 students from 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 29% Black, 69% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 23% English language learners and 21% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 94%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- School leaders make informed and effective organizational decisions to support improvements in teaching and learning. (1.3)
  - The school's has structured multiple opportunities for teachers to meet and collaborate several times a week. The school's "Week A" schedule consists of department meetings, grade team meetings, special education meetings and mentor/mentee meetings. In the school's "Week B" schedule, department meetings are replaced with the teachers' self selected Professional Learning Community ("PLC") meetings, as well as collaborative and integrated teacher team meetings and the continuation of the mentor/mentee meetings. During these meetings teachers develop rubrics, analyze Common Core Learning Standards, discuss instructional strategies and techniques and design tasks that are more rigorous presenting appropriate challenges to students resulting in heightened engagement.
  - Teacher assignments are strategic and have been re-aligned to bolster the school's English as a Second Language curriculum and accelerate student progress in order to close the achievement gap. For example, the school's bilingual grade 6 teacher now supports language acquisition in all content areas. The school restructured its teaching schedule, moving from a five-day/45 minute period to one hour for each period, providing second language learners, additional instructional time. The social studies and English as a second language teacher receive additional time to meet and plan lessons and design tasks to meet the needs of English language learners. These organizational decisions promote accountability among the staff and according to formative assessments, students are making progress.
- The school uses a research-based rubric to evaluate teacher practice and provide differentiated professional development to strengthen pedagogy.(4.1)
  - The school supports teacher development. Instructional learning targets are agreed upon by school leaders and new teachers, and plans of support are put into place. Teacher peers support teachers' development. New teachers are paired up with teacher mentors who are released to visit their mentees in classrooms to observe instruction and provide support. Teachers needing additional support are paired up with "buddy" teachers. Brief summaries are written up by peer mentors and buddy teachers and are given to their mentees and administrators. Supports are then determined and/or revised. Common planning periods provide time for collaboration to examine student work and discuss next steps resulting in stronger and more effective instruction.
  - Administrators use a common rubric to determine the effectiveness of teacher practice focusing on nine components each year. School leaders prioritize domains and components within a domain. A monthly administrative calendar details domain-specific observations providing teachers with clear instructional expectations. Observations of new

teachers, tenured teachers and veteran teachers are domain specific and vary. For example, a teacher who has been teaching for two or more years might be evaluated specifically on Domain 2: Classroom Environment, while a more seasoned teacher might be evaluated on Domains 1: Planning and Preparation. Formal and informal feedback are provided on a consistent basis. During teachers' mid-year review, additional feedback is provided. In addition, and as part of the school's evaluation process, teachers sit in front of an administrative panel and defend their growth in practice and the impact their instruction has had on student outcomes resulting in school wide reflective professional practice.

- School leaders evaluate the effectiveness of structured collaboration to strengthen the school's capacity to meet the needs of all students. (5.4)
  - All teachers are engaged in structured collaborative teams. Department meetings, grade level meetings, mentor/mentee meetings, collaborative teacher team meetings and the school's inquiry-based professional learning communities drive the academic discourse of teachers. Agendas and protocols are used during the meetings providing a history of the team's discussions and instructional decision-making. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of these collaborative teams, school administrators attend the meetings, providing support, guidance and direction to ensure efficiency and effectiveness resulting in effectively meeting the needs of teachers and students.
  - On-going walkthroughs, learning walks, Instructional Rounds, mini-observations and other collaborative opportunities enable school leaders to use student assessment data to evaluate the effectiveness of new teacher hires and the school's building capacity efforts. Student learning targets are visible and integrated into lesson plans enabling school leaders to evaluate the appropriateness of the learning target and the level of rigor.
- Data analysis informs the school's goal setting and action planning to ensure student acceleration. (3.1)
  - Goal setting at the school is informed by data analysis of student work. "To develop students' intellectual skills is one of the school's goals," shared the principal. To that end, the school is developing units of studies and rigorous tasks that align with the Common Core Learning Standards for reading. The school's action plan includes on-going analysis of periodic assessments to determine student progress. The school's literacy program engages students in more cognitively demanding tasks resulting in students performing at higher levels as evidenced by the analysis of formative assessments and student work.
  - During the "State of the School Address" at the beginning of the year, and at faculty and parent/teacher meetings throughout the year, school leaders communicate the school's academic and behavioral goals. In order to generate a broad base of parental support and involvement, the school sends home, in a print-friendly way, monthly updates on the state of the school with suggestions on how families can support the school's goals. The school invites families into the school to be a "student for the day" to increase awareness of the instructional expectations for academic

rigor and success.” The principal shared, “A large number of parents and families attend resulting in families having a deeper understanding of the academic demands placed on their children and how they can continue to provide support at home ensuring continued success.”

- The school engages families in an open exchange of information regarding student progress resulting in heightened parent engagement. (2.4)
  - Student-led parent conferences provide opportunities for students and families to engage in ongoing discussions regarding student learning targets, progress made toward their targets and the school’s expectations. Students invite other teachers/adults to attend and showcase their portfolio of assignments. Students self-assess their performance resulting in greater student accountability as well as increased parent participation and engagement in support of their children’s academic growth.
  - “The principal and teachers are always in contact with us,” shared a parent. “Teachers call home to check up on the students,” stated another. The school’s online grading system enables parents to keep abreast of student progress. Progress reports are sent home quarterly. If a student performs below 70%, families receive a letter and phone call inviting the student to attend Saturday school. The principal shared, “Students who attend Saturday school know why they are there and what they have to do to improve. The culture of the building has shifted.” These initiatives have increased understanding of student progress and timeliness of information sharing.
- Distributed leadership structures are embedded enabling teachers to play an integral role fostering a professional learning community. (4.2)
  - All academic personnel are engaged in structured collaboration. In addition to being part of grade level and department teams, teachers self select to be part of their own professional learning community based on their professional needs. Student work is analyzed against the Common Core Learning Standards to determine the gaps and required cognitive demands. During grade level meetings teachers look at advisory lessons to determine what supports are still needed by individual students and groups of students. Action plans are then created resulting in teachers sharing responsibility for meeting the needs of students.
  - School leaders embrace distributed leadership. Teachers have emerged as leaders and serve as critical partners to one another resulting in collegial collaboration and a heightened sense of community. One teacher became a building principal while another is starting his own school next year. Teachers play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning. The principal shared, “Teachers identify issues and problem solve them, resulting in a change in culture, a decrease in negative student behavior and an increase in teacher retention.”

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Promote greater consistency in differentiating instruction based on formative assessment data so that all students are consistently challenged. (1.2)

- Across the school, there are some classrooms where student groupings and tasks reflect different learning needs and styles. For example, in one mathematics classroom, students worked individually and in partnerships solving problems. For those students who could tackle more challenging problems, real-world math problems were available to them. However, instruction is not strategically differentiated for students with special needs. Teaching strategies and questioning techniques do not push all students to use their critical thinking skills hampering the school's efforts to increase academic performance of diverse learners resulting in uneven levels of student participation.
- Enrich the curriculum to ensure that instruction and tasks cognitively challenge and engage all learners including students with disabilities consistently and accelerate student achievement. (1.1)
  - The school has begun to integrate the Common Core Learning Standards into its current curriculum maps. Teacher teams analyze the standards and current performance tasks making adjustments to ensure that tasks are more rigorous. Decisions have been made to strengthen the academic and instructional program across the grades and subject areas. However, instruction that emphasizes higher order thinking is not fully embedded across all classrooms and grades. In classrooms with students with disabilities and second language learners, academic tasks do not sufficiently challenge the students hindering student performance.
- Strengthen teachers' assessment practices to include the use of on-going checks for understanding to ensure that students are meeting desired learning outcomes. (2.2)
  - Teachers supplement summative data with classroom level assessment data. However, at this time, the strengths and needs of individual students and student subgroups is not clearly identified and monitored preventing teachers from effectively planning to meet students' needs. The lack of on-going checks for understanding prevents teachers from accurately determining or meeting the precise learning needs of all students, particularly students with disabilities and English language learners, thus hindering teachers' ability to effectively adjust instruction and accelerate student progress.
- Expand goal-setting structures to include differentiated and measurable interim and long-term instructional goals for relevant student subgroups so that precise instruction is planned and student performance is accelerated. (3.2)
  - In some classrooms, students set a goal for the day and measure themselves against progress for achieving that goal. However, the school does not yet use periodic and formative assessments to establish interim benchmarks and set differentiated instructional goals for student subgroups and structures to measure progress toward interim benchmarks have not yet been embedded throughout the school preventing teachers from measuring their effectiveness to ensure the improvement of classroom practice and increase in student progress.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

<b>School name: The Bronx School of Science Inquiry and Investigation</b>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?		<b>X</b>		
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?		<b>X</b>		
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?				<b>X</b>
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				<b>X</b>
<b>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.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			<b>X</b>	
2.2 Align assessments to curriculum, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?		<b>X</b>		
2.3 Use grading policies and tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends to inform instruction and curriculum?			<b>X</b>	
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students progress toward school and class expectations?			<b>X</b>	
<b>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.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
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?			<b>X</b>	
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?		<b>X</b>		
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			<b>X</b>	
3.4 Communicate high expectations to staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?			<b>X</b>	

<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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?			<b>X</b>				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?				<b>X</b>			
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?				<b>X</b>			
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, guidance/advisement support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?				<b>X</b>			
<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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, with particular attention to the CCLS?		<b>X</b>					
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?		<b>X</b>					
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?			<b>X</b>				
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?				<b>X</b>			
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>