

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**Bronx High School for Law and Community Service
High school X439**

**500 EAST FORDHAM ROAD
BRONX
NY 10458**

Principal: Michael Barakat

**Dates of review: May 30-31, 2012
Lead Reviewer: Catherine M. Powis**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Bronx High School for Law and Community Service is a high school with 450 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 34% Black, 60% Hispanic, 2% White, 2% Asian students and 1% other students. The student body includes 14% English language learners and 22% special education students. Boys account for 44% of the students enrolled and girls account for 56%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 82.5%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Highly effective lines of communication strengthen relationships with parents and engage them in their child's high school experience to reach their potential. (2.4)
 - Parents convey their great appreciation for the accessibility of the principal at anytime of the day, via email or phone calls on his direct line. As one parent expressed, "The principal is 'hands-on' and can stop a problem before it goes too far." Families share that teachers also reach out to them or are always available via email, phone, or a visit to the school to discuss their child's behavioral and academic successes and challenges. In turn, the parent coordinator shares the same commitment to support parents and students throughout their high school experience commencing with a welcome packet of informative literature about the school and support services and programs to get started. Additionally, parents benefit from their daily access to a school-based electronic system for checking attendance, grades and homework to further understand and monitor progress. Furthermore, parents check the online grading system and work with teachers to decide on next steps in supporting their child's success. As a result, stronger home-school connections and greater communication with parents promote collaborative efforts to increase student support and improve learning.
- External partnerships and professional development for staff effectively cultivate a school environment that supports youth development and improved learning for students. (4.4)
 - During this school year the school established a most notable partnership with Lincoln Center Institute (LCI) for the Arts in Education. This program supports students' academic as well as Arts education. A customized professional development workshop for key teachers provided key concepts and tools to partner with LCI teaching artists. The teachers then participated in a successful, integrated unit of study co-planned and co-taught by an LCI music teaching artist focusing on the live music performance, *American Art Song*. This unit serves as a springboard for the ongoing partnership phase two planning for the 2012-2013 school year. The program not only provides ongoing teacher team support and professional development, but also cultivates students' ability to think perceptively, question, analyze situations, and ultimately become creative and innovative. Consequently, valuable skills are learned by students to support their success when they graduate and enter college or embark on a career.
- A relevant, interdisciplinary curriculum engages students in Common Core learning tasks that are aligned to selected key State standards leading to improved student work. (1.1)
 - In response to a gap analysis and to fulfill citywide instructional expectations key standards are identified that emphasize the development of writing skills, deepening the writing process by implementing a Topic, Introduction, Evidence, Discussion (TIED) approach supported by non-fiction text to write arguments. Low stakes as well as high stakes writing assignments are planned across all core subjects utilizing a cross-curricular approach to strengthen literacy skills. School leaders and faculty agreed to incorporate rigorous "Five Literacy Strategies (FLS)" throughout curriculum maps. Additionally, the cross-curricular approach to mapping resulted in the development of a Common Core Social Studies/Literacy unit developed by the Social Studies/English Language Arts interdisciplinary team. The successes of more focused curriculum development that addresses student skill deficits and the

scaffolding of a general education curriculum in self-contained classrooms support learners to achieve credit accumulation. As a result, a 9% increase (from 53% to 63%) of students in cohort 2009 that are on track for graduation within four years, is projected.

- The gap analysis of last year's Progress Report data revealed that raising the Global and U.S. History Regents pass rate continued to present a challenge to all stakeholders. In turn, a more rigorous Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) literacy-based, interdisciplinary curriculum and tasks were developed this year. Furthermore, a baseline assessment analysis administered to all incoming 9th grade students revealed skill deficits in both math and English Language arts that contradicted their 8th grade State exam results. This data analysis led to the planning and refining of curriculum and academic tasks to re-align them to the cognitive demands of the CCLS. For example, a new interdisciplinary study skills curriculum was created and lessons taught on a daily basis to incoming 9th grade students as an extended support and reinforcement of literacy skills embedded in core subjects. Additionally, the Agile Mind curriculum, a literacy-based math curriculum aligned to CCLS was expanded this school year in 9th grade Integrated Algebra classes. Consequently, the January Integrated Algebra Regents pass rate has increased from 32% in 2011 to 57% in 2012.
- The principal is an analytical thinker who collaborates with faculty to ensure that adequate support structures are in place so that instructional goals are achieved to improve student performance for all learners. (1.3)
 - The principal plans the use of resources wisely as time and funding is allotted to a Summer Bridge Program for incoming 9th graders. This is a course designed to familiarize students with the skills, standards, and expectations for high school level work across content areas. Thirty five students enrolled in the two-week course this past summer. Parents and student indicate that participation in the program benefits incoming freshman by getting to know the teachers, the facility, and academic behaviors and skills that will ensure success in their high school experience. They also earn one high school credit. Subsequently, the school is on track to achieve its instructional goals to improve State Regents exams passing rates and credit accumulation rates this school year.
 - The principal and curriculum cabinet recognized that extended instructional time through block programming positively impacts on improved student outcomes. This year, 9th grade students are programmed for a seventy-five minute block of English language Arts and the same for Integrated Algebra. Additionally, one period per day is dedicated to the teaching of the study skills' units of study by the teacher who authored the curriculum. This allows for these teachers to collaborate with the study skills teacher on effective instructional strategies and analyze the work of students they share. As a result, 77.8% of present 9th graders are on track to earn 10+ credits this year as compared to 75.9% last year.
- School leaders are strategic and thoughtful in creating structures to evaluate teacher effectiveness designed to maximize professional growth and student learning. (4.1)
 - School leaders place high priority on professional growth that leads to increased student achievement. Each administrator takes responsibility for specific departments in which they calendar and conduct frequent classroom observations to assess pedagogy and student learning. These observations are measured against a research-based Lesson Expectation Guide (LEG) that was developed by faculty and administration incorporating research by Bloom, Maslow, Gardner, and Danielson. Upon review of written reports it is evident that the principal and both assistant

principals norm their expectation for what the elements for effective teaching entails and what elements will be emphasized this year via the LEG. This is followed by professional conversations that engage teachers in an in-depth reflection regarding the activities and strategies used during the learning experience observed in their classrooms, in order to support next steps for continuous alignment with the LEG and instructional goals. Next steps include focused learning walks throughout the year and/or one-on-one coaching following mini-observations. This is coupled with a regular review of scholarship data with teachers. Furthermore, written feedback is electronically logged and shared with teachers creating a portfolio for each teacher. This process results in coherence of expectations for good teacher practice among school leaders and faculty and all teachers, including new teachers being thoughtfully supported and exemplifying improved teacher pedagogy.

- All stakeholders are working diligently to build a culture that conveys high expectations for personal and academic growth that positively impacts on student achievement. (3.4)
 - The faculty wholeheartedly embraces the principal's vision to convey high expectations to all stakeholders by providing opportunities for student success. The faculty handbook clearly defines expectations for student attendance, grading policy, and honor roll. The school continues to expand advanced placement coursework and although numbers are very small more students are on track to receive an Advanced Regents diploma this year. Additionally, four guidance counselors are accountable for specific groups of students and conduct individual meetings after every marking period. In turn, students are clear about continuous course requirements, credit accumulation, college application status, and necessary interventions to ultimately graduate in four years with a minimum of a State Regents diploma. Families are informed of the same through the parent coordinator, teachers, and school leaders and speak highly of "how the principal pushes our children to do better." As a result, 100% students in cohort 2009 received college acceptances this year.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen teaching strategies so that all lessons are challenging and extend student thinking for all students with particular attention to higher achievers for accelerated progress. (1.2)
 - Faculty and school leaders share a cohesive set of beliefs about teaching and learning that is expressed in school wide, teacher team, and classroom level goals and practices. Daily lesson planning follow expectations clearly defined in the Lesson Expectation Guide (LEG) and school-wide action plan and teacher-generated "Five Literacy Strategies (FLS)", posted in many classrooms, are incorporated into daily lesson planning. For example, accountable talk strategies are explicitly taught to students, i.e., to respond orally or in writing in complete sentences with opinions that are supported by text evidence during an argument. However, in some classrooms teachers do not release the discussion to the students and continue to control the direction of participation with a limited arrow of recitation and group discussion. Consequently, across classrooms there are uneven levels of participation, student thinking, and engagement hampering opportunities for students to comprehend and produce meaningful work products, especially special education students.
- Build on assessment practices at the classroom level to ensure that all students are adequately challenged in all content areas especially English language learners and special education students. (2.2)
 - Interdisciplinary teacher teams, i.e., Social Studies/English and Math/Science assess student writing and problem solving using specific protocols to provide feedback on

the effectiveness of curricular and instructional decisions. The Social Studies/English team reviewed students' writing samples using an "Evidence-based Target Skill Protocol". However, a task-specific rubric of expectations was not evident or used as a measure by the team. Additionally, although there is some evidence of the use of rubrics attached to student work in some classrooms, for the most part students cannot articulate how rubrics inform them of what they know and what they need to do to get better. Also rubric development does not yet match higher levels of thinking and rigorous expectations. As a result, there are missed opportunities for students not performing at proficiency to improve their writing, thus hampering student achievement.

- Across classrooms teachers frequently circulate to check for understanding during individual and group work. Listening to group discussions, collecting a written summary or exit slips are some examples of how teachers assess whether the intended outcome of the lesson was achieved. However, while some lessons provide structures for students to engage in self- and peer- assessment, not all students can articulate a deep understanding of what they should know and be able to do, and reflect on their next learning steps. In turn, teachers cannot always make accurate adjustments to instruction to meet students' needs. This hampers their progress toward independence and success beyond high school.
- Extend the practice of using data to set measureable and differentiated learning goals in all subjects for students in need of additional support to consistently target their needs, track their progress, and improve outcomes. (3.2)
 - Teachers are consistently recording assessment data using a school wide online tool. As set with general education students, using this data and other diagnostic and classroom level assessments, special education teachers are diligent in establishing meaningful learning goals and recording next learning steps for students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs). However, specific and detailed learning goals are not yet established for English language learners (ELLs) by classroom and/or the English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) teacher. Consequently, not all subgroups of students are making sufficient progress in coursework in order to maintain the credit accumulation required to graduate in four years.
- Enhance systems for measuring teacher team effectiveness and capacity building to ensure that modifications leverage improvement in student achievement. (5.4)
 - Interdisciplinary teacher teams develop curriculum maps and units of study, examine student work and rethink classroom strategies. The special education teacher team, including an assistant principal, review student IEP goals and current student work and learning skills across subject areas with an eye on moving those that are ready to less restrictive environments while continuing to provide supports to help them succeed. Other team meetings are visited periodically by the literacy coach and assistant principal to determine next steps. However, teams do not yet consistently receive specific and detailed feedback following the development and implementation of units of study and tasks that includes commendations, items for further consideration, and possible refinements. Additionally, school leaders do not consistently and explicitly measure the efficacy of teamwork through constant analysis of student work and classroom observation of unit activities that engage students across classrooms with the intention of assisting teams in making improvements to support this work. As a result, a coherent cycle of monitoring for results is not yet consistent in all aspects of teamwork and leadership development therefore, not all decisions resulting from teamwork leverage improvements in student outcomes.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Bronx High School for Law and Community Service	UD	D	P	WD
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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 as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			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	
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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 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?		X		
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?			X	
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students' progress toward school and class expectations?				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>	UD	D	P	WD
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 staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?			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>	UD	D	P	WD
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	
1..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?				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>	UD	D	P	WD
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?			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	

Quality Review Scoring Key

UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed
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