

# Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**Bronx Regional High School  
High school X480**

**1010 Reverend James A. Polite Avenue  
BRONX  
NY 10459**

**Principal: Colin Thomas**

**Dates of review: February 14, 2012**

**Lead Reviewer: Geri Taylor Brown**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Bronx Regional High School is a high school with 351 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 44% Black, 54% Hispanic and 2% White students. The student body includes 3% English Language Learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 43% of the students enrolled and girls account for 57%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 – 2008 was 70.6%. The school is in receipt of Title I funding with 79% eligibility.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal and staff work collaboratively to maintain a calm and orderly school environment that supports student learning. (1.4)
  - The administration and staff members provide a school atmosphere that, according to students, is a place “where your life will change forever.” Multiple students noted that they could go to several adults for assistance and guidance in resolving both personal and academic issues. This feeling of security also empowers students to take more ownership of their learning. One student poignantly explained that Bronx Regional is a transfer school that gives you “a fast track to a second chance.” As a result students’ behavioral issues are low.
- Student support services are an integral part of the school fabric, which promotes student academic and personal growth. (4.4)
  - The school provides pointed and focused orientation sessions with students and their parents. This finely tuned process assures that each student upon admission is clearly aware of their individualized academic “roadway” to graduation. This multi-day event is followed by a semester of enrollment in “Family Group.” This class integrates socio-emotional development and skills-building. Each child builds working relationships with fellow students and the class instructors, the principal and assistant principal. In addition, each student creates a presentation which uses academic skills and expresses their future aspirations.
  - The school continues to work closely with the LYFE Program that provides childcare services for students. Social Workers and interns from Hunter College, provide counseling and other supports that compliment the services provided by school guidance counselors. The principal states that this level of support has helped students graduate with “better confidence and skills.” Students echo this sentiment as that they expressed feeling more prepared at graduation, to overcome life’s challenges.
- School leaders make strategic organizational decisions in alignment with the school’s instructional goals to support the educational needs of students to meet graduation requirements. (1.3)
  - The school’s concentrated goal is to expediently graduate their students who were less successful in their previous high schools. To accomplish this, the administrators and staff members made some changes in the school schedule that included double period English classes and a multi-session new student orientation. Together, these supports allow students to move toward meeting graduation requirements and assist new students in understanding the specific course requirements and pass rates to credit accumulation for graduation. Implementation of these designs paid-off as mid-year class data showed that 107 new students had higher passing percentage rates in their classes.
  - The school initiated a “zero” period that provides the opportunity for teacher teams to meet daily. This newly developed design offers “core department” members the time to collaborate and discuss their curriculum as well as share instructional strategies. Teachers of the same subject areas often use similar teaching interventions. For example, math lessons had similar lesson design formatting. As a result there is more consistency in instructional expectations aligned to the school’s goals and students are starting to show some academic improvements.

- Teachers work cooperatively to share and exchange student information and classroom strategies that have worked to increase student learning and pass rates. (4.2)
  - The principal states that the teacher teams “started in September.” These recently formed groups review data from several sources including the ARIS system. Team meetings involve lively discussions about student data to determine academic needs and instructional strategies. According to the principal, these discussions have contributed to the development of “common mid-terms and common final exams,” across all content areas, which are new this year. Teachers note that this has helped students to overcome a testing anxiety about the exam layout.
  - Teachers meet regularly and share openly about their observations and monitoring of student achievement. They agree with the principal that the inquiry approach is a ‘work in progress.’ Their collegial sharing has established a safe environment for expressing thoughts and ideas that may impact student achievement. Thus, percentage rate of student credit accumulation is increasing.
- School leaders and staff emphasize the importance of student achievement and improved student behavior as essential parts of the school's high expectations for all. (3.4)
  - The principal keeps his focus on student success. As one student stated “The principal knows everybody.” His knowledge of students involves details of both their academic and personal situations. As a result, students are assured that they will be supported during personal crisis in addition to academic concerns. Students are also clear that compassion for personal circumstances does not override the expectation of passing classes and a timely graduation. The staff is developing supports that express high expectations to all students. For example, all new students participate in an orientation to discuss the school’s academic and social expectations. The principal has provided time for teams to meet and discuss and analyze student work products. In addition, the principal states that the school holds “awards assemblies”, has established an “honor roll” and is implementing “incentives for improvement” to push students to achieve. As a result students popularly agree that they “feel” that they can do anything “they put their minds to.” This strength in students has resulted in some incremental improvements in credit accumulation.

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

- Develop standards aligned curricula that offer learning opportunities that integrate targeted Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) in order to engage a diversity of learners. (1.1)
  - The school has developed some curriculum maps for various content areas. However, administrators and staff members were not clear on the specific key standards that should be emphasized by this school to support student progress. Staff was also not clear about the required academic assessment tasks in math and English that should be performed by every student in New York City. In regards to the selection of key standards the principal states, “We are still having discussions.” As a result, students have not consistently attained success in all academic areas. In addition, classroom visits showed that in most classes all students were asked to perform the same tasks even though there were great differences in their grade

levels. This lack of customization in task development and assignment thwarts student academic growth.

- Ensure that all teachers are fully prepared to offer engaging and differentiated instruction that rigorously challenges all students to do their best. (1.2)
  - School administrators have developed a teaching template that outlines the flow of class lessons. However, the principals acknowledges that it is still a “challenge to helping teachers let go of dominance” in the classroom. This is seen in classrooms where teacher voice is the prevailing expression heard and instructional strategies and questioning are teacher-to-student. In all classrooms visited, even when students were seated in groups, all students were asked to complete the exact same task. These practices limit learning opportunities for students and inhibit achievement for post secondary work as evidenced in observed teaching practices and student work products.
  - Students were administered a learning style survey early in the school year. Teachers reference this event during team discussion. However, there is no evidence that class lessons or student work products provide the opportunity for students to truly develop work that evolves from high-level reflection. For example, with the exception of art class artifacts, nearly every task asks students to produce one dimensional report products to show mastery. This lack of effective questioning to support student engagement prohibits freedom in student thinking and inhibits natural academic development as evidenced in limited student participation in class discussions.
- Design systems to ensure that instructional decisions are regularly examined and adjusted when required, promoting improvements in student achievement. (5.1)
  - School administrators and staff members have made steps in the right direction by implementing some needed adjustments to the school schedule. However, these organizational changes were not clearly guided through a structure and system of regular checks to ensure that student learning needs are being met. Current practices of examining report card grades are not yet sufficient or deep enough to ensure that instructional and curricular initiatives are implemented as a result of careful monitoring of student assessment results. In addition, there is not yet a watchful eye on why and how instructional adjustments are implemented. The lack of a clearly articulated system to monitor student progress thwarts a smooth journey to mastery for all learners.
- Create assessments that measure student success and aid teachers in making adjustments to instruction that move student learning forward. (2.2)
  - Teachers have worked closely to develop common assessments. These exams are closely aligned with textbook information and Regents exam questions. But they do not reflect or include the academic skills required by State Standards. These assessments lack the depth that is needed for students to succeed. For example, one English teacher used an ELA Regents exam essay question as the focus of an assessment. This exercise only emphasizes parts of the ELA Standards. This lack of depth, in evaluating and examining student knowledge, limits student progress toward graduation and college readiness skills.
  - Teachers speak about using common rubrics for assessing student knowledge on homework and class work. Additionally, they discuss using strategies, such as exit slips, to ensure that students understand the class lessons. However, during classroom visits, evidence disclosed that teachers do not consistently use these

tools across academic content subjects. Thus, students have some classes where they “feel” that teachers check to see if they get it, while there are other classes where they “feel” that they must master subjects on their own. This inconsistency in evaluating student learning leads to confusion and also blocks opportunities for student learning.

- Establish a system of teacher effectiveness evaluation that includes frequent classroom observations and feedback that closely links improved student achievement with improved pedagogy. (4.1)
  - The principal and teachers agree that all teachers have had classroom visits by administrators. However, these visits have not been memorialized to provide teachers with written feedback and clear directions about next steps. In addition, there is not a clear and consistent system established that links scheduled classroom visits and observations with improving teacher pedagogy. In the sparse informal “classroom walkthrough” reports, there is a loose reference to a formal teacher evaluation framework. However, the references are not yet specific enough to the individual teachers’ instructional practices to guide improvements in their professional growth. Nor do they delineate the next steps in classroom instruction that will help teachers in aiding students to improve. As a result, student achievement is slow as reflected in students’ academic outcomes.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Bronx Regional High School	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score		X		
<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>	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	
<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>	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		
<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>	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		

<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>