

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Bronx Aerospace High School

X545

**800 East Gun Hill Road
Bronx, NY 10467**

Principal: Barbara Kirkweg

**Dates of review: March 1-2, 2012
Lead Reviewer: Simeon Stolzberg**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Bronx Aerospace High School is a high school with 406 students from 9th through 12th grade. The school population comprises 24% Black, 73% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 15% English language learners and 23% special education students. Boys account for 83% of the students enrolled and girls account for 17%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 86%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school maintains a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that supports academic and personal growth of students and adults. (1.4)
 - The school has developed some strategies and youth development supports to address attendance and social-emotional issues. For example, the school provides a two week summer “bridge” program for incoming students that allows staff to get to know students, assess their needs, and prepare them for the high school environment. The school utilizes an automated phone messenger system to call homes of absent students, and teachers are expected to call parents and alert guidance counselors in the event of chronic absenteeism. The school noted a high absentee rate in self-contained classes in the morning classes and as a result shifted to more integrated co-teaching (ICT) classes to increase learning opportunities for these students.
 - Interviewed students demonstrated genuine interest in their learning and reported that the school supports their academic development. Students felt the school is preparing them for college and next steps. Some students noted academic programs that support them in taking college level courses and preparing for the SAT as well as a program that develops business skills.
- School leaders use observations of classroom teaching to inform school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection. (4.1)
 - School leaders support teachers’ development, including those new to the profession, with feedback and next steps through regular observation of classroom instruction and student work. Teachers reported receiving feedback in areas such as pacing of instruction, student engagement and questioning techniques. An assistant principal conducts all formal observations, and review of documents corroborated an emphasis on questioning, engagement, and classroom management. In addition, the school has two lead teachers who mentor teachers and conduct informal “inter-visits” to observe instruction and provide both written and verbal feedback. These lead teachers also chair weekly meetings with new teachers to support their growth in the teaching profession. Teachers also conduct peer inter-visitations to learn from each other and share practices. Finally, teachers are beginning to use the Danielson Teacher Effectiveness framework for self-assessments, with support from lead teachers as part of a holistic effort to improve pedagogy.
- The curriculum reflects planning to integrate key standards that engage students in rigorous tasks and support academic achievement. (1.1)
 - The school has begun embedding Common Core English and mathematics standards into the curriculum with an emphasis on reading and writing across subjects, including an integrated humanities curriculum. Assignments and instructional materials frequently challenge students to analyze and evaluate

text, leading to demonstrable critical thinking skills a history of strong Regents passing rates in English and U.S. History.

- The school administration communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and has a system of accountability for achieving them. (3.4)
 - Bronx Aerospace has adopted the “Point of Entry” model, which is intended to limit teacher-centered instruction and promote independent and group work by students. Most observed instruction appeared to adhere to this philosophy, though with varying levels of cognitive engagement. Targeted support is provided for staff to help them meet expectations, such as training for a veteran teacher who had limited experience with technology. Teachers receive regular feedback regarding instruction and there is a log of assistance for teachers who demonstrate unsatisfactory instruction. These teachers are placed on probation and provided with strategies to fix their deficits.
 - The school has an expectation that students will go to college. Students participate in regular trips to colleges and guidance counselors encourage seniors to enroll in additional course work. Student achievement is celebrated through an honor roll and the staff stress that merely passing the Regents is not equivalent to demonstrating that they are “college ready.”
- The school provides staff with professional development to promote independent and shared reflection that is intended to improve learning outcomes. (4.3)
 - Professional learning opportunities at the school are usually connected to school goals and curricula; priorities this year include reading across the curriculum, engagement, technology and implementation of Common Core Learning Standards tasks. New staff members were introduced to the “Point of Entry” model at the beginning of the year. The school’s faculty participates in professional development twice per week and grade level and department teams meet regularly to discuss challenges, share strategies and plan instruction. There is some evidence of differentiated development for staff; for example, lead teachers chair the new teacher team, which provides targeted support to novice educators.
 - The school’s approach to building adult capacity provides opportunities for faculty to develop and practice leadership. Teachers lead some of the staff development sessions and the lead teacher role provides opportunities for veteran teachers to support and develop others. The lead teachers provide “non-judgmental” mentoring often focused around the Danielson rubric, increasing an understanding of the framework throughout the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure the delivery of rigorous instruction that consistently engages students in learning activities that promote high levels of thinking and participation by all students. (1.2)
 - Student engagement is a clear priority for professional development and evident in lesson plans as well as classroom observation and feedback documents. Students did note some opportunities for choice, such as selecting topics or books for essays and projects. Nevertheless, across classrooms teaching strategies, questioning, and routines inconsistently offer

differentiated learning opportunities to engage all students, including students with disabilities and English language learners. Teachers described using a variety of approaches to meet the needs of individual students within the general education classroom, but there was limited evidence of differentiated materials within classrooms. While student grouping was frequently employed, tasks were generally similar across groups minimizing entry points for all learners.

- Student thinking and participation varies across classrooms. While professional development and coaching have clearly focused on effective questioning techniques, students were not consistently challenged with questions and tasks that would develop high order thinking skills. In some classrooms individual students were observed finishing tasks quickly and then sat with nothing to do while other students struggled to engage with the materials. Finally, interviewed students also noted the variation across classes and subjects in opportunities to demonstrate understanding in school.
- Strategically use resources to improve classroom instruction that engages students in challenging academic tasks and permits all students to achieve at high levels. (1.3)
 - The school creatively uses an extended daily student schedule with short periods and staggered teacher schedules to provide coverage throughout the day. The school has coordinated meeting time in the middle of the day to ensure all staff can participate together. However, these meetings do not consistently focus on evaluating student progress against measurable goals and identifying trends among at-risk subgroups in order to inform and modify instructional strategies. Teacher discussion focused on anecdotal evidence and the data resources did not facilitate a systematic approach to improving instruction and student achievement.
 - Alignment between hiring practices, teacher assignments, student program groupings and the school's instructional goals is developing. The recent loss of the school's defining ROTC program and significantly reduced access to the aerospace program have left the school without a clear theme with which to attract students and organize itself. The school is beginning to adapt its schedule to accommodate growing numbers of at-risk students. For example, school leaders added more two-year Integrated Algebra courses for students who were not prepared to take the math Regents exam and has reduced the number of self-contained classrooms and replaced them with integrated co-teaching (ICT) classes, which have the potential to bring students with disabilities more fully into the general education curriculum. The English language learner population at the school is also growing and the school acknowledged its ESL department is currently understaffed limiting effective access to the curriculum for these students.
- Enhance capacity of staff to use assessments and analyze student performance data to inform instructional decisions at the team and classroom level. (2.2)
 - Teachers have access to a range of data regarding their students' academic performance. At the beginning of the year they receive transcripts and credit reports and 8th grade scores for incoming 9th grade students, which they said they use to target the lowest one-third. However, while they do track student performance, they do not employ a systematic approach to analyzing

data to inform classroom practices, and consequently do not adequately evaluate the impact of instruction and interventions on individual students or at-risk sub-groups.

- In some observed classes teachers effectively used questioning to check general understanding and circulated among students while they worked in groups or individually to identify students in need of assistance. In other classrooms it was evident that individual students were struggling or did not have the requisite conceptual understanding to access material and teachers did not have an effective means to identify them until it was clear they had disengaged and were off task. While teachers often used questioning, it did not always generate a clear picture of whether students had grasped concepts.
- Set interim and long term goals that guide regular examination of student data and the implementation of any required adjustments to support continued student growth. (5.3)
 - While quantitative goals were specified in this year's Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP), they do not appear to be driving improvement efforts. Clear measurable benchmarks to evaluate student progress and the efficacy of specific strategies were not in place. School leaders recognize the increasing proportion of at-risk students, but have not adopted a systematic approach to setting goals and tracking progress of programs and strategies for meeting the needs of sub-groups.
 - Teams of teachers and individual teachers do not have systems for measuring progress towards interim goals. The school does collect a significant amount of useful data, such as performance on mock Regents exams and periodic assessments, to identify students for remediation, but staff is not adequately establishing quantifiable interim goals or tracking progress towards goals to collectively evaluate and improve their programs and instructional strategies.
- Enhance the use of structured professional collaborations using an inquiry team approach that focuses on improved student learning. (4.2)

Teachers participate regularly in structured professional collaboration on teams, and the use of an inquiry approach is developing across the teams. Grade and department teams and a new teacher team meet regularly and two lead teachers facilitate inquiry work in English and Social Studies. Teams meet to discuss students, but do not have a systematic, inquiry-based approach to their work. For example, a grade team met to review the performance of the bottom one-third of students. They moved through the list talking anecdotally about each one and in some cases pulling transcript and Regents data. They did not focus on the efficacy of past interventions or trends across students, but rather problem-solving for individual students or non-instructional supports. While some programs have been implemented as a result of team input, e.g., a credit recovery program, the impact of the program has not been monitored or evaluated, a key component of the inquiry approach. Consequently, teams are not maximizing the use of collaborative inquiry to improve student learning.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Bronx Aerospace High School	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					
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?		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