Each day, Catherine Vasquez can’t wait to arrive at Bronx Latin, a small high school where her teachers know her well.

Extraordinary students arrive at New Visions schools every morning with a wide range of hopes and dreams, talents and challenges. Teachers and principals nurture those dreams with high expectations and rigorous support for academic achievement.

“I never thought there would be a school like this in the Bronx,” says Catherine, a senior who began her freshman year lost and anonymous at a large school but whose academic performance improved upon enrolling at Bronx Latin. “My friends at other high schools want to go to college but don’t know what they need to do. Here, everyone is by our side every step of the way.”

Bronx Latin students — and their families — discuss college early and often with their teachers. Beginning in the ninth grade, students start to meet key benchmarks developed by New Visions to make sure they are on track for college and career. Catherine’s principal and teachers help her to stay on top of her credits, pass her Regents exams and fill out her college applications.

With plans to enroll at New York City College of Technology, Catherine is one step closer to her dream of becoming a fashion designer.
Aaron Bart Addison is competing to be first in his high-performing class.

Aaron and his best friend are vying for the top spot in their junior class at the Bronx Engineering and Technology Academy (BETA). With a 95.6 grade point average, Aaron is 0.7 percentage points away from his goal. "Don’t worry,” he says. "I’ll get there.”

Students at BETA always know exactly where they stand. They know how their numbers compare to the target GPAs (80+) and SAT scores (1000+) needed for college success. "Data is at the heart of BETA’s success,” says Kara Sperling, BETA’s principal. "Data drives our programming, our instruction and our staff and student goals.”

With a longer school day and Saturday academic support, New Visions schools work to give students what they need. BETA’s graduation rate of 85 percent exceeds citywide averages by 20 percent. All students take four years of math, science, and engineering and at least one AP course. They engage with the professional world of engineering through conferences, mentorship programs and visits by experts in the field.

Aaron’s exposure to engineering has led him to think about a career as an architectural engineer. With college clearly in his sights, he’s free to think about his future. "My dream has always been to design my own house,” he says.

A larger percentage of students in the New Visions network are passing their Math Regents exams — and doing so earlier in their academic trajectories — than ever before.

Aiming for number one: Developing 21st-century skills
Felicia Newland came to North Queens Community High School at age 17 — with fewer than half the credits she needed to graduate and a history of skipping school. “I got swallowed up in the crowd,” she says of her old high school. “Here, I get more attention, so I’m motivated to do the right thing.”

For Felicia and the 2,500 students enrolled in 12 New Visions transfer schools, there is an urgency to make up for lost time. Run in partnership with community organizations such as Good Shepherd Services, transfer schools provide vital interventions for students who are up to three years behind in credits. These include adult counseling and advocacy combined with social and emotional — as well as academic — supports.

“I always tell teachers, don’t teach the lesson, teach the kids,” says Winston McCarthy, principal of North Queens. “We’re constantly rewriting our curriculum to better assess where our students are, then finding the right scaffolding, the right learning opportunity for them to move their thinking skills upward.” North Queens relies on data and support provided weekly by New Visions.

With a love of reading and a newly discovered work ethic, Felicia is on track to graduate in 2011 and plans to go to college to become a nurse.
Imagine a high school where, as part of the curriculum, students re-create scenes from Alfred Hitchcock movies — directing, manning the camera, and constructing sets — and put in an extended day working for the school’s own production unit.

So describes the popular Academy for Careers in TV and Film (ACTvF), New York City’s first film high school, designed by New Visions and the New York Production Alliance. Providing rigorous preparation for both college and a career in the film industry, ACTvF powerfully engages students who often enter the school performing below grade level. With an average daily attendance rate above 90 percent, ACTvF was among the top three best-attended, nonselective public high schools in the city during 2009-2010.

“We’re working to create a high school that’s very much in line with the mission of New Visions: where prior academic performance does not predetermine where a student will go in life,” says Mark Dunetz, ACTvF principal. “It is the norm across the city that what happens up until eighth grade determines everything. We’re creating an institution that’s powerful enough — in how it’s structured, the relationships it builds with young people, the experiences in their classes — for students to change their course.”

Lights, Camera, Education: The value of extended learning time
For a school that once struggled to field full teams of academically eligible student-athletes, New Dorp High School is getting accustomed to winning — on the field, in the classroom and out in the world. "We used to be in the losing column, but now, team by team, we're feeling the pride that comes with winning," says Dierdre DeAngelis, the principal. In 2010, the bowling team won the city championship, New Dorp fielded the city's top high school golfer and the school's Virtual Enterprise program (students running virtual firms, mentored by local companies) swept the national competition. Also in the winning column: the school's graduation rate, which has increased by 20 percent in the last five years, and the attendance rate, which is near 90 percent.

Thanks to robust and detailed student data available in real time—as it is across the New Visions network—New Dorp students, teachers, guidance counselors and coaches know at any minute who is academically eligible to compete in extracurricular activities and what they need to stay that way. "Nobody plays, appears on stage, or competes in Virtual Enterprise unless they're academically eligible," says DeAngelis, "so my kids are learning to manage it all. They are learning responsibility and teamwork."
Joshua Martas, a senior at Bronx High School for Law and Community Service, is breathing easier now that he has gotten into college, where he intends to major in criminal justice and become a U.S. marshal. No one is prouder of his achievement than his grandmother and guardian, Maria Figueroa (pictured right). She’s grateful for the help she has received navigating the college application process, especially with the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), through an evening event sponsored by New Visions. “This is concerning his future,” says Maria. “Every day, I talk to him about his future.”

New Visions works closely with students’ families to make college aspirations a reality. We create tools to help parents keep track of their children’s academic progress, vital for students who will be the first in their families to go to college. We work with our network of high schools to plan college visits with students and families, provide information sessions about financial aid and scholarship opportunities, and offer robust academic support throughout the school year.

Angelica Martinez, who also attended the financial aid event with her son Fabian, a senior at West Bronx Academy, lauded the school for keeping parents informed. “There is an open communication with us,” she said. “There are always people available when we have questions.”

The proportion of New Visions students who have passed the English Language Arts Regents exam at the 75 percent level (indicating college readiness) has increased 7 percent over three years.

Leveraging parent support:
Working with families to keep students on track
Each day brings new opportunities for the 38,000 young people who attend New Visions schools. Working with outstanding principals, teachers and community partners, we strive to ensure that all students are prepared for success in college and in life.
With ambitious instruction, effective teachers and parent and community involvement, public schools can transform students’ lives and equip them for college and economic self-sufficiency. New Visions is committed to do whatever it takes to create and sustain more of these great schools for New York City’s highest need students.
Dear Friend,

We believe that in order to change lives, we must change how schools operate. For more than two decades, New Visions has worked with parents, principals and teachers to pioneer new classroom strategies, reshape the school day, incorporate new technologies and help more students achieve in school and beyond.

We are seeing success.

Over the last decade, New Visions created 99 small high schools and special schools for overaged-undercredited students. Recent evaluations demonstrate that these schools are outperforming expectations and graduating more students. A study by MDRC and commissioned by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation suggested that if New Visions strategies were scaled, we could close the achievement gap — as exemplified by more students graduating high school — across New York City.

Our students include a higher percentage of African American, Latino, low-income, English Language Learner (ELL) and special education students than the rest of New York City, yet our graduation rates outpace citywide rates, and our students are increasingly passing Regents exams and accumulating credits faster than their peers throughout the city.

We have also worked with existing schools to improve their performance. New Visions pioneered the use of teacher teams to design small learning communities in large schools with enrollments exceeding 2,000. Stanford University researchers found that this work increased teachers’ effectiveness and professionalism and, more importantly, increased graduation rates at participating schools. Over the last three years we have worked with the Department of Education to provide unique, intensive support to a newly formed network of 77 schools, serving 38,000 of New York City’s most at-risk students. We remain excited about continuing, improving and expanding all of this work.

But more must be done. We must continue to innovate dramatically to create better schools for our students.

To this end, while we remain committed to work in district schools, New Visions is
launching 18 charter high schools in New York City — premised on new curricula, a longer school day and a commitment to serve our highest need students. We are creating our own programs as well as working with university partnerships to certify and support teachers prepared to take on the challenges of the 21st century classroom.

We are creating tools that all New York City teachers can use to improve student learning in and beyond the classroom.

We need your help to do that and take change to an even higher level. Today, a high school degree is nonnegotiable and must ensure that every student is ready for college or the workplace. We share the widespread ambition to equip students with the skills, attitudes and commitment to excellence that ensures that New York will succeed in the future. We hope we can count on your continued support.

Since 1989, New Visions for Public Schools has been a leader in New York City’s school reform efforts by acting on our beliefs. In the 1990s, we established 34 small, effective schools, a model that remains the city’s key strategy for turning around low-performing schools. Working with more than 200 community partners, the United Federation of Teachers and the Council of Supervisors and Administrators, we next helped launch 99 small high schools throughout New York City under the New Century High School Initiative. Today, New Visions serves as a Partnership Support Organization (PSO) of New York City’s Department of Education, managing a network of public high schools in high-needs areas of the city. We are making steady progress increasing student passage rates on New York State’s Regents exams and, more importantly, on high school graduation rates, including the number of students who graduate with a Regents or Advanced Regents diploma.

As a PSO, we provide instructional leadership and operational supports to educators serving a student population equivalent in size to the Pittsburgh or San Jose school systems. To cultivate an accountable, college-ready culture in each school, across our network, and, ultimately, at scale, we have pioneered a number of innovations that get results, including:

- robust data tracking
- inquiry-based leadership development
- a college-readiness model that actively engages parents and students

FINDING STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

We believe that data — used well — can be a powerful tool in reforming education. In order to foster accountability on a student-by-student basis, as well as to identify...
trends and design interventions, New Visions has developed next-generation data tools, including an “on track to graduation” metric, that allow teachers, advisors, students and parents to see a comprehensive and up-to-the-minute picture of student progress.

For Leticia Pineiro, principal at Bronx Latin, New Visions data tracking systems have been invaluable in helping her identify struggling eighth graders and intervening to keep them on track. Without the data available through New Visions, she and her teachers would have had to wait until first-quarter report cards were issued in order to see trends.

Now, by looking at math scores, ELL data, pass/fail trends and other data on incoming students, her team can target those in need of intervention from the very first day of school. As a result, Bronx Latin was able to reduce the proportion of eighth graders whose promotion to ninth grade was in doubt from 25 percent in September to 11 percent midyear. “New Visions pushes us to look at our data, look at our students — so problems are addressed even before they occur,” she says. “I’ve been trained well to do that.”

CULTIVATING LEADERS, ENRICHING TEAMS

Teaching is no longer an individual profession. New Visions has been at the forefront of organizing and teaching teams of educators to examine the needs of individual students across disciplines in order to improve student learning system-wide. Collaborating as inquiry teams, these teachers develop learning interventions to help struggling students and fine-tune in-class strategies that get results. New Visions is committed to developing a pipeline of school leaders who champion collaborative, supportive and academically rigorous environments focused on student achievement.

Supporting Principals

Our Scaffolded Apprenticeship Model (SAM), developed in partnership with Baruch College, builds a corps of leaders that extends beyond the principal, so that teachers and staff share accountability for student performance. The program has been so effective in improving student learning, strengthening teaching skills and inspiring teachers to become change agents within their school communities that the Department of Education has adopted the form of inquiry teams modeled by SAM across 1,400 schools in New York City.

Deirdre DeAngelis, principal of New Dorp High School, credits her school’s dramatic turnaround to “getting small,” using SAM to identify and remediate specific problem areas across the curriculum. “In the old days, we had one day of teacher training and hoped teachers walked out with a bag of tricks,” she says. “Now, with SAM as part of my culture, teachers are prepared to take on a leadership role, and that’s made a tremendous impact.”

Within our network of schools, each principal works closely with a Leadership Development Facilitator (LDF) — a New Visions staff member who has deep expertise in education and school leadership — to ensure that students have the resources and support they need to be successful.

Supporting Teachers

Seeking to train highly qualified teachers to fill the nearly 200 annual vacancies at our schools, New Visions, in partnership with Hunter College, launched a school-based teacher certification program, Urban Teacher Residency (UTR), that graduated its first cohort of teachers in 2010. Linking extensive clinical experience in the classroom with content-rich professional development, UTR offers a new model for training teachers who graduate with demonstrated success in raising student achievement.

Through the combination of SAM and UTR, New Visions connects educator preparation to instruction from day one and creates a career ladder that places student achievement at the core of the preparation, professional growth and career progression of teachers and leaders.

ON TRACK FOR COLLEGE

Graduating students who are ready for the rigors of college-level work is central to New Visions' mission. Working with our schools, we have developed resources and tools necessary for helping students stay on track and for involving parents early and often in discussions about what it means to be college ready. Beginning as early as ninth-grade orientation, parents and students at New Visions schools are given the support they need to navigate the demands of a college preparatory curriculum.

We have developed a four-pronged strategy to improve college access for our students that includes creating an individual academic plan for each student, planning college visits for interested students by 10th grade, working with parents to fill out student aid (FAFSA) forms that have been a hurdle for low-income students of color and providing support applying for college.

“Our school provides us with the things that we need to succeed and go to college,” says Catherine Vasquez, a senior at Bronx Latin who has been accepted to New York City College of Technology. Although she is the first in her family to go to college, Catherine finds herself advising friends at other schools on college applications. “My school helps us take the classes and exams we need, helps us with the application and even helps us look at schools that are right for us.” Her principal went above and beyond the call of duty when Catherine’s sewing machine broke while she was preparing a fashion portfolio for a college application. Principal Pineiro volunteered a family member’s sewing machine, for which Catherine was grateful. “My friends at other schools don’t even know their principals’ names,” Catherine says.

LOOKING AHEAD

New Visions is at a critical point in the development of our work. In the upcoming years, we intend to build upon and expand three key efforts — school creation, school support and human capacity building — to transform New Visions into the only hybrid education organization in the country that directly manages a cadre of public charter schools and provides supports to traditional district schools within a public school system.

In 2010, we committed to an ambitious strategic plan to create 18 new charter high schools over the next five to seven years, doubling the number of such schools for families in high-need neighborhoods. With the addition of our planned charter schools, we will serve more than 50,000 — a student population that exceeds the total enrollment in cities such as Seattle.

By supporting and advancing public education across the spectrum, New Visions hopes to demonstrate that a high-quality public education is possible at scale for all students, regardless of race, ethnicity or income-level, and to serve as a national model going forward.
launching 16 charter high schools in New York City—pioneered new curricula, longer school day and a commitment to serve our highest need students. We are creating new partnerships as well as working with university partners to certify and support teachers prepared to take on the challenges of the 21st century classroom.

We are creating tools that all New York City teachers can use to improve student learning in and beyond the classroom. We need your help to do that and make change as an even higher level. Today, a high school degree in education and school leadership is much more important than it was in the 1990s, we established 34 small, effective partnerships.

Taking the lessons learned at UTR, New Visions connects educator support and human capacity building to strategy for turning around low-performing schools over the next five to seven years, we intend to build upon and expand our work. In the upcoming strategic plan to create 18 new charter high schools over the next five to seven years, we intend to build upon and expand our work.

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