



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Metropolitan Corporate Academy

High School 530

**362 Schermerhorn Street
Brooklyn
NY 11217**

Principal: Lennel George

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Reviewer: Helen Donnellan

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Metropolitan Corporate Academy is a high school located in the borough of Brooklyn with 423 students enrolled, serving grades 9 through 12. Numbers have risen since 2005, as a result of students being enrolled as part of the No Child Left Behind program. Special education students account for 16% of the numbers on roll. A far smaller proportion of students at 1.5% are English language learners. At 84%, most students are Black. There are 12% Hispanic students and other ethnic groups make up the remaining 4%. The school is Title 1 eligible.

Attendance has risen from 82% to 85% in the current year, which is above the average for similar schools in the City.

The school is located within a heritage building, which is shared with a district 75 school. The building was a hospital during the Civil War and not designed as an education site. The lack of adequate laboratories and appropriate teaching spaces is an impediment to student progress in science, art, music and physical education.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The recently appointed principal takes rigorous actions to identify issues, concerns and under-performance.
- As a result of the principal's recent actions, the school runs smoothly.
- A purposeful learning environment has now been created.
- The principal conveys high expectations to staff and students, making clear their roles and responsibilities
- Students, their families and staff value the changes that have been made and are supportive of the principal's actions.
- Where instruction fully reflects the students' needs, students are engaged in lessons and are active in their learning.
- External funding is used well to supplement the school's allocated budget, so that students' learning can be supported.
- School-wide priorities are defined in a clear plan, which includes interim monitoring to evaluate progress.

What the school needs to improve

- Collate the data gathered on students, to give an overall view of their progress and highlight patterns and trends in performance.
- Base plans for short and long-term improvement on assessment information, making clear the goals for improving instruction and student learning outcomes.
- Use and share data to highlight student needs, so that all staff differentiate instruction and enable students to make faster progress.
- Continue to develop ways of enhancing the curriculum to help students increase their learning and development.
- Ensure that instruction is relevant to students and teachers use instruction time effectively.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is an undeveloped school.

The principal was appointed in September 2006 and has made significant positive changes and improvements during his short time at the school. He has changed a school with an absence of order, where conflicts between students were common and under-performance was not addressed, to one where order is established and improvement is everyone's goal. He has a clear picture of actions needed for the school to continue to improve. His stance is that while change is non-negotiable, the detail of the changes will be agreed between him and his staff.

Staff described his approach as being, "he thinks about how to work with the mind of youth." This is reflected in the drive for student-centered instruction, underpinned by the use of data. Students consider him a caring principal who "empowers students who believes in us and wants to see us succeed". He revised the school goals for the current year, creating a focused plan that reflects the school's situation and identifies appropriate priorities for improvement.

The changes being made in the use of data are recent and there has been insufficient time for significant impact to be seen. Planning for lessons still makes little reference to the needs of all students. The effect of recent professional development, is variable, therefore important improvements are not securely established.

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.

This area of the school's work is undeveloped.

The principal has started to explore and use available information to gain a deeper understanding of what students can and cannot do and to share this data with teachers on a regular basis. In-class assessments are starting to be used to supplement standardized test scores and give a wider picture of student performance. For example, information recently gathered on new and existing grade 9 students in English language arts, is used to align instruction for these students. However, such effective use of data is limited and is not evident in all subjects and classes.

Whilst data of students' progress is available, its use is very limited. The actions taken by the principal to improve matters are recent and not fully embedded in practice. That said, he probes the data and through his work has highlighted links between different information sources. For example, the correlation between low scores in English language arts matches with students' long-term absence. The principal has started to apply test results to track a cohort of students and assess their progress over time. The outcome of this is yet to be seen. All teachers are now given assessment information and details of

English language learners in their classes. With this additional information, they are better placed to tailor instruction to reflect the language levels of these students.

The recent work on data does not yet show that the school has a clear enough understanding of all its students. Currently there is a focus on the progress of students with specific needs. Data on the students 'held-over' in the same grade for more than two years now forms an important part of the principal's review of all data. The school has not yet identified other groups of students about whom it needs to track progress more deeply.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is undeveloped.

Whilst a limited range of data is available, teachers do not use this routinely to set goals for students. Great reliance is placed upon 'soft' data to determine the levels of instruction, but this is not compared to standardized test scores to give an objective view. Tests such as Regents scores and scholarship reports are not sufficiently accessed by teachers to develop appropriate plans for instruction. Raising achievement in English language arts remains a priority for the school. The principal and coach have clearly defined expectations for instruction within the subject, to support raised achievement. With the under use of data to inform differentiated instruction, the needs of individual students are not always matched well to lesson content. Potentially higher-achieving students are not consistently challenged, which leads to under-performance. Special education students do not always receive instruction to match goals in their individual education plans.

Some progress has been made in making some students aware of areas they need to improve. For example, grade 9 teachers shared weaknesses in English language arts results with students and now hold individual conferences with them to highlight mastery in reading and writing skills, and identify next steps to help them move to the next level. However this is not embedded in all subjects and for all students in other grades. Some feedback to students omits sufficient guidance on how they can improve. Contact with parents is growing, through regular written communication and informal lunches and breakfasts. However, goals are not regularly shared or discussed.

Collaborative team teaching is an area where effective working relationships are apparent, through sharing of information and planning together. However, staff who work with special education students are not pro-active in sharing information freely with the general education teachers and so important work is not always followed up. At grade meetings, information about those students may be discussed, but general education teachers do not receive full data, which limits their understanding of students' needs.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school's work is undeveloped.

Delivery of the curriculum is within a building that limits where and how some subjects are taught. Lack of practical science facilities reduces opportunities for investigative and

practical science and so science teachers are concerned about the progress students make as a result. A specialist science teaching organization has recently been engaged to provide some practical work, but it too early to measure the success of this program. Similarly, the lack of music and arts facilities limits the curriculum taught and talented students are insufficiently challenged. Some teachers adapt and deliver the curriculum well within the space available, whilst others use the building as an excuse for mediocre instruction. The physical education curriculum is inadequate, due to insufficient space and lack of variety in work available for students.

Teacher-driven, rather than student-driven, delivery of the curriculum dominates classes. Changes have led to effective collaborative team teaching, where teachers do match instruction to some students' needs. A limited number of teachers use data in planning to prepare consistently good quality differentiated lessons.

The principal is astute in seeking external funding, to extend opportunities for instruction and provide support for students. The absence of an auditorium and space for performing arts, results in an arts grant being used to rent a church for performances and celebrations. Staffing for the current year was set when the new principal took up his post and so he had no influence on decisions. This year he is observing staff, evaluating their strengths and areas to develop. This information will be used alongside teachers' preferences to determine staffing allocation in the coming year.

Saturday programs are provided for students who have previously failed the grade. Work in these programs aligns with school instruction, so students receive unified content. Students are aware of the improved culture of the school and show a commitment to work consistently hard in every grade, rather than having to work intensely in their final year. They respond and learn well when instruction holds their interest and recognize less effective teaching styles that fail to engage them fully.

Students say they feel more comfortable and safer at school, following the establishment of order and corresponding improvement in behavior. Respect for the personal needs of female students is not reflected in the bathroom facilities. This results in them feeling undignified and embarrassed whilst lining up to use limited numbers of bathrooms.

The recent increase in suspensions results from the rigor with which the behavior code is now applied. Key appointments have been effective in addressing unacceptable behavior. These actions have led to a reduction in crises and violent incidents. Effective actions taken since September to tackle all absence and lateness have resulted in attendance rising to 85%. Teachers now record and follow up all absences to ascertain reasons. Home visits are made where students have been absent for long periods.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The principal has appointed a member of the administrative staff as coach and assistant principal, to strengthen administration and support improvements in instruction. In making the appointment he explored candidates' approach to using data, and their commitment to work with challenging students.

The importance of continuing professional development is firmly stressed to all staff and that changes to instructional expectations will be supported by training. At each department's monthly meeting, the staff identify three strategies they will adopt to make instruction more student-focused. Whilst some staff respond positively and make changes, others are resistant. When classroom observations indicate that staff is not applying strategies agreed, support is arranged with the expectation that changes will follow. Underperformance of staff at all levels is challenged and addressed with rigor. Inter-visitations to share good practice are planned, as part of a wider program of professional development.

Planning in teams is a growing part of the school's work. Grade teams meet weekly to discuss and agree short-term issues and plans. They identify aspects of the curriculum and instruction that have been effective and those that need change and revision. Department teams have started to meet and discuss ways to ensure cohesive curriculum content are delivered.

The staff acknowledges the positive impact the principal has made in establishing order, setting high expectations for behavior and learning and making staff accountable. He has made clear high expectations for student achievement and the need for a student-centered approach. Students have high regard for their principal and support the changes he is making. As a result of implementation of the discipline code, the atmosphere is calm and disruptive behavior is minimal. This is a significant improvement achieved in a short time. When disruptive events do occur, they are well managed as all members of staff are clear about their role and procedures to follow.

The school's mentoring program, through a partnership with Goldman Sachs, is a robust arrangement which provides students with mentors and a link with the business world. Some students have roles within the school community's "Mouse Squad", funded by an external grant, which allows them to practice computer skills and maintains the computers.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The principal reviewed the Comprehensive Education Plan as soon as he arrived. He used the goals stated in this as the basis for an improvement plan focused on raising the standard of instruction, and improving the quality of the curriculum, special education interventions, enrichment and support services. This plan has clearly defined interim and long-term goals, which identify how progress will be monitored. The information gained from monitoring the current goals and objectives is also being used to identify possible goals for the next Comprehensive Education Plan.

Where comparisons of assessment data shows students making little or slow progress, appropriate actions are now in place to overcome this. Small class sizes and intervention focusing on weak areas revealed in tests are used to promote learning. Intervention strategies have also been put in place for students who achieve borderline passes of 55-65, to strengthen their knowledge. Data is just beginning to be used to identify where more effective actions are needed and further changes to strengthen practice and routines are being made to increase the impact of instruction and support for students.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Metropolitan Corporate Academy (HS 830)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score	X		

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> each student, classroom, grade level, 		X	
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students* 	X		
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> all other categories of interest to the school* 	X		
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.	X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 1	X		

* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.	X		
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject, and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area.		X	
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.	X		
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.	X		
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.	X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 2	X		

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	Ø	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.	X		
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.	X		
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.		X	
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.	X		
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.	X		
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3	X		
Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	Ø	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.		X	
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.		X	
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.		X	
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.		X	
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4		X	
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.	Ø	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.		X	
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.		X	
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.		X	
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5		X	