



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

City College Academy of the Arts

Public School 293

**4600 Broadway
New York
NY 10040**

Principal: Dr Bernadette Drysdale

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Reviewer: Paul Cosway

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The City College Academy of the Arts is an early college school with 257 students. Students enter in the 6th grade and will remain through to grade 12. It is a newly formed school, in its second year of operation, and so at the time of the review only had students in grades 6 and 7. The student population is almost entirely Hispanic. Admission is via a lottery. To be included in the lottery, parents and their children must demonstrate their interest and commitment by attending a school tour and completing an application form that includes a writing sample. Around 15% of the school population is made up of special education students, close to the average for similar schools. Approximately 20% are English language learners. This is above average for City schools. The proportion of students with Title 1 eligibility is higher than that in similar schools at 85%.

There is a strong emphasis on the arts in the school's education program and it has forged strong links with cultural institutions such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which significantly enhance the curriculum. A feature of the school is the way that teachers work collaboratively to produce integrated lessons. The school aims to establish a culture of commitment and hard work and one result of this is an attendance rate above that of similar schools at 95.62%.

This is an empowerment school. These schools have more flexibility to make key decisions and control the resources for their school community. Empowerment schools are free to develop or purchase professional development services, choose which schools to affiliate with, and benefit from reduced reporting and paperwork requirements.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The students have very positive attitudes towards school, value what it can do for them and respect their teachers.
- There is a very good atmosphere for learning in every class and students are well-behaved, listen attentively and make good progress.
- There is a clear vision for the development of the school, driven by data, which has already resulted in significant changes to the curriculum in only the second year of operation.
- The principal has an excellent understanding of the usefulness of data and is using it well to monitor and review the work of the school, although the full impact of this has yet to be felt.
- She has a strong and dynamic presence around the school and has high expectations of both staff and students.
- The regular 'Kidtalk' meetings, involving all staff, are very useful ways of sharing data about students' academic and personal development data.
- Some instruction is of a high quality, ensuring students make good progress, and there are good systems for teachers to share and benefit from each other's planning and teaching strategies.
- Data is used well to identify which students need additional support and there is an excellent range of intervention programs to provide it.
- Students feel safe, trust their teachers and feel that there is always an adult they can turn to for help.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to work to improve students' levels of literacy, especially their reading scores.
- Work to improve the accommodation, which is restrictive and cramped for the number of students enrolled.
- Negotiate with the other schools in the building to improve scheduling and space accommodation.
- Improve the consistency of teaching by continuing to monitor lessons and share best practices.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The City College Academy for the Arts is only in its second year of existence, but it is already a proficient school which is making good use of data as it becomes available, to raise the standards of the students in its care. The school is making effective use of the designated periodic assessment materials to generate data, and this is having a positive impact on students' progress. The results from its first year demonstrated that students were making sound progress in mathematics, but that there were weaknesses in their literacy results. The principal undertook further analysis and identified reading as the main problem. The curriculum revisions that resulted ensure that a range of teaching strategies is available, which are matched to the needs and abilities of all groups of students. Data is being used well to monitor the effectiveness of these innovations, but it is still too early to confidently predict how successful they will be.

Students are happy at the school, attend regularly and work longer hours than those in the partner schools on the same site. They wear their uniforms with pride and believe they are lucky to be attending the City College Academy for the Arts, convinced that they are getting a good education. They trust and respect their teachers and behave well in class, all of which is helping them to make good progress. They feel loved and cared for, saying: 'Our teachers are like our second parents'. This confidence is shared by their parents and guardians, who praise the school almost without reservation.

The teachers meet twice weekly to review the progress of their students and these meetings are well run. Data is used to track students' progress and well considered plans are set in motion to support students based on wide-ranging evidence. The principal leads the school with vision and excellent people management skills and so has the full support of staff and parents. She fully understands the areas that can be improved, including the need to ensure consistently good teaching.

The lack of space in the building creates some challenges. For example, classes are held in the basement and rooms do not have natural light. In some cases, small groups work in the auditorium. Because lunch is served in the late morning, due to space constraints in the cafeteria, students' concentration is impacted towards the end of the day.

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 proficient.

The school has begun to use data well from State and City tests, as well as its internal assessments. However, because the school is still developing, there is only a limited range of data available to it. In so far as it is able, it uses comparisons with City wide results and those from similar schools to measure its own performance. There are clear and well-defined procedures for analyzing data and sharing it with all responsible for student progress. The 'Kidtalk' sessions involving all staff are a powerful forum, allowing

for many-faceted discussions of all factors affecting each student's, classroom's and grade's progress and leading to well-planned, mutually-agreed support mechanisms being put in place for targeted students. The school considers the performance of categories of pupils, including ethnic groups, English language learners and special education students. For example, the first year's results were analyzed and swift action taken where weaknesses in programming were revealed for lower achieving students. The curriculum revisions, put in place a month before the review, are wide ranging and ensure that several approaches are adopted, matched to the needs and abilities of groups of students.

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 proficient.

At this stage in its development, the school has limited data available to it. Although, it uses the data it has well to ensure that timely interventions are made to support students who are falling behind with their work. The principal and faculties work together to set challenging and measurable goals for immediate and longer-term improvement with clear time frames and success criteria. These plans focus on the whole school and, where appropriate, on individual subjects, teachers or students. Data is checked closely to monitor the effectiveness of teachers and groups, intervening swiftly where remedial action is needed.

The plans and the need to raise students' progress drive the work of everyone connected with the school, including parents, students and other partners. All staff understand why decisions have been taken and meet regularly as a whole school to discuss students' progress and agree to strategies for improvement to the curriculum or teaching approaches. These discussions and the plans that stem from them are holistic, and involve all the agencies that support academic, social and behavioral development. The systems that the school has for identifying and supporting both individuals and groups of students whose work or attitudes are causing concern are well-developed and a strength of the school.

Grade levels are shared with parents and they have regular contact with the school to discuss how they can help their children to progress. The students know their grade levels but have not received clear short term targets that would help them to make the next steps. As students progress, they are praised and they are given more challenging work.

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 well developed.

The school has clear strategies for integrating its teaching with the mandated curriculum to ensure that students can succeed in external tests. As results from internal and external tests become available, the school has been particularly adept at modifying its curriculum, of grouping students and of changing its teaching strategies in order to address any shortcomings that become apparent. When it became clear that the first year students had made less progress in reading skill than expected, immediate and far-reaching revisions

resulted. Three separate methods for teaching reading were identified and students placed in classes according to the teaching and learning approaches that proved most effective for each individual, including small group reading periods and guided reading. An additional period every week is dedicated to developing reading skills. All of this involved budgeting and scheduling decisions, including the hiring of additional staff.

Teachers are fully aware of their responsibility and their accountability for their students' progress. Some, but not yet all, differentiate their teaching well to meet a range of needs. In the many classes where teachers ensure that their lessons are relevant and interesting to every individual, students are engaged and motivated, but this is not yet true of every class. All students feel cared for and secure. They have many adults they trust and respect every member of staff. They are happy at school and attendance levels are high.

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 well developed.

Professional development of teachers is aimed at giving them the capacity to use data well to plan effective teaching that will move their students forward in their learning. They are given good opportunities to be trained in ways that help them gain confidence when using data specific to the courses that they are teaching. For example, diagnostic testing in English and math identifies the areas of strength and weakness for each student. Many teachers are increasingly confident in the use of this data to set up individual work programs to help students. Teachers make use of differentiated teaching modes suited to the students' preferred learning style, whether it is oral or visual. There are excellent opportunities for teachers to share their approaches and to compare information on their students at the school's regular 'Kidtalk' sessions as well as informally. Teachers regularly watch each other teach and both teachers and the principal use data well to monitor the effectiveness of the methods used. The teachers plan and review their work together weekly, which helps to ensure that the school has a good overview of its work and achievements. Relationships are excellent, systems and procedures are clear and the principal manages continuous improvement very effectively, developing confidence and team work amongst her staff so that they are all working towards common, agreed goals. One reason for this is that the principal has been able to hire all her own staff and part of the selection process is to ensure that they are in tune with the overall goals of the school.

The care and concern for individuals that are at the heart of the school's work stem directly from the lead set by the principal and her senior staff. The excellent relationships that are fostered by them go beyond the immediate staff and students of the school. There are extremely positive relationships also with all parents and all the outside community based organizations that are involved with the school's day-to-day running.

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 systems are well-developed for monitoring and revising plans and teaching practices in response to the school's evaluation of students' progress. However, at this early stage in the school's development it is too soon to be certain of the impact and effectiveness of these procedures. There is already a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and the principal, in consultation with all staff, has appropriate and prioritized plans for further improvements. The structure of the school day, for example, is already being revised. The current schedule leads to students becoming tired and hungry during the very long afternoon session and this is affecting their progress towards the end of the day.

Every teacher attends the regular sessions at which the school's progress towards its goals of meeting the needs of all students is monitored and evaluated. This means that review and evaluation is fully integrated and involves everyone. As the school grows this system may become unmanageable and the school is aware that it will need to meet in smaller groups. The wider school community feels fully involved in the school's development. Parents visit regularly and many give up time to help with special projects. They understand the school's goals and support it strongly. Those interviewed were thrilled that their children can attend. The only significant change that they would make would be to increase the size of the school so that more children from the neighborhood could benefit from the very special education that it provides.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: City College Academy of the Arts (PS 293)	∅	✓	+
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.	∅	✓	+
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.	∅	✓	+
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.	∅	✓	+
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	