



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Academy for New Americans

Intermediate School 235

**30-14 30 Street
Queens
NY 11102**

Principal: Carmen Rivera

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Reviewer: Chris Andrews

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Academy for New Americans is an intermediate school with 257 students enrolled from grade 6 through 8. It admits students who are recent immigrants and who are all English language learners and the school has open enrollment throughout the year. Most students remain in the school for no more than one year before transferring to their zoned intermediate school or graduating to different high schools. The Academy for New Americans is housed on the fourth floor of an elementary school building in Long Island City. The building was built four years ago, and the school shares the auditorium, lunchroom, gymnasium, and choral room with the larger elementary school.

Over 63% of the students are Hispanic, nearly 27% Asian, 8% Black with the remainder from other ethnic groups. The students come from all over the world and represent 38 countries and 23 languages. Attendance at 95.3% is significantly above the average for both similar and City schools. None of the students are specifically identified as special education students because the focus of the school is on developing their English language skills and their cultural awareness in a very short time. The school is eligible for Title 1 funding for over 92% of the students, which is much higher than City schools.

The teachers at the school are highly qualified and very experienced. All are fully licensed and permanently assigned, nearly three-quarters have over five years' experience in teaching and half have taught at this school for more than two years. The principal has been with the school since it opened, and sees its role as developing the students' confidence to interact with a new society and culture, as well as providing them with the skills needed to succeed in that new context.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school creates its own data for students and uses this to develop appropriate instructional programs.
- There are clear processes in place to support students with particular difficulties.
- Expectations are high and understood by everyone.
- Instructional programs engage students and help develop both their language skills and their capacity to work individually.
- The principal and her cabinet are very effective at managing the continual changes in roll numbers in terms of scheduling and budget.
- Adults have excellent relationships with students and so they feel safe and readily ask for help when they need it.
- The school's program of professional development effectively supports the needs of individual teachers and the school's goals for raising performance.
- The principal is very well respected by staff, students and parents, and has the capacity to lead change.
- The range of programs with community based organizations enriches students' experiences and contributes directly to the development of their language skills.
- Students have a good knowledge of, and respect for, the diverse cultures in the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Involve teachers more directly in the monitoring and review of school plans.
- Make more explicit links between the Comprehensive Education Plan and the other plans which have developed from it.
- Make more explicit the goals for individual students to help them and their parents, as well as the staff, understand the next steps needed to be taken for their improvement.
- Ensure that all teachers differentiate their instruction in such a way as to ensure that all students are provided with appropriate levels of challenge.
- Provide more formal opportunities for teachers to take part in intervisitations to develop their skills and so improve student outcomes.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school with well-developed features.

Data is at the heart of The Academy for New Americans, and this is very much data which the school collects for itself, as many of the students arrive with no records of prior performance and with very varied learning experiences. None speaks English, but many are otherwise well advanced academically. Others have experienced significant disruption to their education and need specific help provided through the Students with Interrupted Education (SIFE) program.

Emphasis is placed on using audio and visual resources to develop the skills of the students, and the principal is committed to developing the technology available in the school. Interactive whiteboards are used effectively and sets of laptops allow students to work individually and at their own pace.

The principal has a good understanding of the school, and in particular the specific needs of children arriving in a new environment and lacking some of the critical skills needed for that environment. Furthermore, the areas for development identified by the review relate closely to those in the self-evaluation of the school.

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 well developed.

The school uses a range of processes to gather data, beginning with an initial assessment which is particularly important due to the nature of the annual intake of students. In this way the school creates its own data for many students and uses this to develop the appropriate instructional programs for them. Assessment is both formal and informal and the portfolio of data for each student is central to the process. This effectively allows teachers to monitor the progress of the students, all of whom are English Language Learners. There are clear processes in place to support students with particular difficulties, especially those on the SIFE program, who are a group of specific interest to the school. These students have para-professionals to support them and are involved in the after school program. Teachers meet regularly with the portfolios to discuss individuals and there exists the equivalent of an Individual Education Plan for each student. Analysis against similar schools is difficult, given the nature of the school's enrollment. The main comparison made is with the previous year's data and results of the City Tests in Mathematics, Science and Social Studies (although the students are exempted from English Language Arts) which are discussed in depth at subject meetings. In addition, the Guidance Counselor takes portfolios to meetings to compare with similar students in other schools and reports back to the school. Students make good progress in the school, and the teachers are able to talk in detail and with confidence about each of their students' performance.

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 with some well developed features.

Planning is a collaborative act although the parental input into the Comprehensive Educational Plan is limited by the fact that parents do not have children in the school for more than a year. Planning for individual students is very effective, and support given to the SIFE group and others whose grasp of English is slow to develop is excellent. However, while goals are clearly set for students, these are not explicit enough to help them and their parents understand the next steps needed for their improvement. Students and parents were not able to say clearly what these steps were. The nature of the students is such, and their time in the school so relatively limited, that clarity in this is essential. However, within the school a good range of effective intervention programs are available to meet individual needs and these are supported by after school and Saturday school sessions. Where there is real concern about a student and there appears to be a pattern of absence of homework or lack of progress, then the guidance counselor will be involved and, normally, the parents as well.

Students and parents agree that the school has high expectations and that ‘they always expect the best’. This is made explicit in the first orientation or ‘Meet the Parents Night’, and in subsequent parent and student conferences. Students observed were focused on their tasks, and the principal has regular ‘Student of the Month’ awards, with published photographs, to encourage further progress. The ‘Principal’s List’ is made up of all those with Level 4 in all subject areas, and the principal meets with those who just fail to make this standard to indicate to them what would be needed to reach the next level. Students were clear that they welcomed the opportunity to learn, especially as after every marking period the evaluation of student progress leads to some students being promoted within the groups in a grade.

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 curriculum is well matched to the needs of the students and to the goals of the school. Successfully meeting the needs of these students requires flexibility in planning and in curriculum delivery. The teachers are kept accountable by the principal who regularly observes teaching, analyzes the results of tests and scrutinizes the portfolios. Planning is done both individually and in teams, formally and in teachers’ own time. This planning generally results in students receiving appropriate instruction and challenge but the school is aware that it is necessary to ensure that all teachers differentiate their instruction consistently to ensure that this is the case for all students. The principal and the administration are very effective at managing the challenges presented by the continual changes in roll numbers in terms of budget, resources and scheduling. The school enrolls students throughout the year, depending on the number of immigrants. Numbers, and therefore class sizes, change regularly and it is common for there to be over a hundred more students in the school in April than there were in October. Data therefore drives the planning in that judgments are made on the experience of previous years, but every school year is potentially very different the preceding one. Instructional programs engage students and help develop both their language skills and their capacity to work individually

with the effective use of audio and visual resources. Adults in the school have excellent relationships with students and so the children feel safe and readily ask for help when they need it. Attendance is very high and parents support the school in the procedures connected with this.

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.

The principal is very clear in what she looks for when hiring new teachers. Her team is composed of experienced and highly qualified bi-lingual teachers who share her vision for the children. The school's program of professional development effectively supports the needs of individual teachers, and a variety of strategies are used to provide that development. The principal also has a very well-thought out strategy to support any teacher where significant improvement is required. Intervisitations are made between classes but teachers indicate that this is largely organized informally. There is a need for the school to provide more formal opportunities for these intervisitations.

Planning is both individual and in teams, and with a particular focus on mid-term assessments. The scores from the City tests are used to inform planning of those areas of the curriculum where improvement appears most necessary, since the majority of students to whom the scores refer have left the school.

The principal is very well respected by staff, students and parents, and has the capacity to lead change. She is a very visible presence in the school at all times and teachers see her as very motivational with a great love for the children. The students clearly hold her in high esteem and say, 'she's here for all of us'. The school runs very smoothly and parents appreciate that they are well-informed. Movement around the school is managed very effectively, an important consideration in a small school with some of its facilities three floors down. The range of programs with community based organizations enriches students' experiences and contributes directly to the development of their language and social skills. Programs such as Learning English through the Arts (LEAD, in conjunction with the Lincoln Centre), Queen's Theater in the Park and the Leadership program all enrich the lives of the children.

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 school has appropriate groups with responsibility for monitoring progress towards meeting its goals and for the Comprehensive Education Plan goals are set after the evaluation of data. However teachers are concerned that they have relatively little input into the monitoring or review of the plan. The principal also suggests that it is difficult to develop a team for this because the parental membership changes every year, so their input is limited to making suggestions for possible developments. She recognizes the challenge here and is considering ways to improve the process.

There are different plans which emanate from the Comprehensive Education Plan for the subject areas and these are focused around the key area of 'English as a Second

Language' developments. However, the links between the Comprehensive Education Plan and the other plans are not always clear. It is clear that the analysis of data collected at the end of marking periods and from the standardized tests does trigger revision of individual plans where necessary.

The cabinet meets at a half year review to put in place any programs to address any serious shortcomings in the plan. The key features of the main plan remain largely the same year-on-year as the school population changes so radically, and there is discontinuity in terms of personnel on the School Leadership Team. In this context, the plan does provide a basic structure around which more individualized planning and monitoring effectively takes place. This can be shown as the scores in the standardized tests in Mathematics and Science have shown a steady improvement over the past three years, particularly for those groups of students who are able to take the tests in their native languages (e.g. Hispanic or Chinese students), but also for those who are taking the tests in English

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Academy for New Americans (IS 235)	∅	✓	+
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	