



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

York Early College Academy

Middle School 284

**133-25 Guy Brewer Boulevard
Queens
NY 11434**

Principal: Deborah Burnett

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Reviewer: Cheryl Baker

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

York Early College Academy is a new empowerment school serving 81 students in grade six. There are no English language learners and 2% are special education students. Eighty-two percent are Black, 9% are Asian and 5% are White. The school does not receive Title I funds. Attendance is 95% or higher, above the City average.

The school opened in September, 2006 plans to add a grade each year until it reaches its full capacity as a grade 6 through 12 combined middle and high school. Currently, it occupies three classrooms in a large junior high school. As an empowerment school, it has 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 school's mission is an ambitious statement of high expectations for student achievement and post-secondary education.
- The school enjoys deeply entrenched support from its partner organizations in fostering its unique college-bound mission.
- The principal and her teachers demonstrate deep commitment to the success of the school and the academic, social and emotional growth of their students.
- Students feel known, respected and protected by their principal and teachers.
- Parents express confidence in the school's capacity to provide their children with preparation for, and access to, higher education.
- The school's mandatory eleven month instructional year supports students' accelerated learning.
- Attendance practices and expectations effectively produce daily averages above 95%.

What the school needs to improve

- Engage in a collaborative process of data analysis that results in a strategic plan for continued school improvement and supports the needs of a growing school.
- Increase opportunities for professional development in data analysis, classroom management, literacy instruction and differentiated instruction.
- Provide teachers with regular instructive written feedback resulting from formal and informal classroom observations.
- Establish practices relative to the analysis of the available data that incorporate routine disaggregation by student sub-group and other categories of interest.
- Establish practices for identifying, planning interventions for and monitoring the progress of at risk and special education students.
- Engage students and parents in establishing individual student success plans for reaching grade level proficiency by the end of eighth grade.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is an undeveloped school.

The school opened its doors in September 2006. Its five teachers are led by a principal selected by its partners, York College and the Early College Initiative. The principal and staff have set high expectations and embody the school's mission of preparing students to earn sixty college credits before high school graduation. In many respects the school has made good progress in its first eight months, especially with regard to developing the instructional program and instituting collaborative leadership practices. The school is learning how to effectively utilize and generate data. In the context of a very small school, much planning and decision making has taken place at the conversational level and the school intends to engage in more structured planning and management practices as it moves into its second year.

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 school has used the results of State tests, teachers' classroom assessments, a baseline assessment in mathematics and English, and a periodic assessment tool to provide an objective and updated understanding of the performance of each student in the sixth grade. Scores and grades are compared with respect to academic subject area and are a primary source of data regarding student progress. Much of the focus of the current analysis of achievement data has been adjusting the instructional program to meet the actual needs of students which have proven to be different from the projections based on entering students' grade 4 State tests.

Informal reviews of marking period grades have revealed similar patterns of student performance when disaggregated by teacher and content. Patterns of behavioral infractions vary among classrooms. As the school has been operating for less than one academic year, comparisons with its own previous performance are not possible, nor are comparisons among grade levels. Until more data has been collected, comparisons of academic achievement with similar schools in the Early College Initiative network are not appropriate at this time.

The school has not interrogated its data with respect to the relative performance of its ethnicities, special education students or other groups. The school has made a commitment to enroll an equal number of boys and girls and actively encourages its Black male population to take part in extracurricular enrichment activities in order to broaden learning opportunities and increase achievements for these students. . While this is monitored anecdotally, an analysis of the emerging results of this thrust is premature at this time.

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.

While a parent teacher organization has been formed and representatives on the school leadership team have been identified, the school has not, as yet, undertaken a formalized collaborative process of goal setting and planning for its future growth. The proposal for the school, which preceded its opening, informed initial decisions regarding its mission, hiring and curriculum. In support of the school’s commitment to ready students for the accrual of 60 college credits during their high school career, its current overarching goal is to ensure that all students are performing at grade level by the end of grade eight. While this goal is well understood by administration, staff and the school’s partner organizations, no plan has been devised to support its attainment, nor have parents and students been enlisted in planning for individual students’ success. Parents applaud the school’s strong academic values which figures prominently in their choice of York Early College Academy for their children. They feel welcomed and supported by teachers and the principal.

When the results of the school’s baseline assessments revealed deficits, especially in basic English language arts skills, the school undertook to form remedial instructional groups, increased the number of tutors for in-class and after school tutoring, created a Saturday academy and adopted a remedial reading program. The progress of students is beginning to be tracked as many of these interventions have been in place for a relatively short period of time. For those students identified as performing significantly above grade level, academic enrichment opportunities with York College are emerging.

The school does not have staff licensed to address the needs of its special education students, nor does the school employ a guidance counselor or social worker to assist in supporting students’ social and emotional needs. To their credit, the current staff does its best to provide a broad nurturing support for these students. While students are routinely discussed at weekly staff meetings, the school has not formalized practices or procedures relative to academic intervention services.

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 proficient.

The school has adopted a format for the development of its curricula that defines monthly units, topics, texts, materials and assessments. The content covered is aligned with the State standards. Each teacher is responsible for the curriculum in their respective discipline. The school also collaborates with York College to address the needs for vertical alignment of the curriculum in support of student readiness for college level courses in the future. Teachers hold themselves accountable for their students’ performance and routinely share successful instructional techniques. They all meet daily and exhibit a deep understanding of each student’s progress across classrooms. Accountability for improving instruction and student outcomes has not been formalized by the principal. The data that has emerged with respect to students’ literacy skills has informed the differentiation of instruction by activity, instructional grouping and one-on-one tutoring interventions. Instruction is generally engaging, especially when technology is effectively integrated and

students report that they find their instruction to be challenging. Students speak about the school, its teachers and the principal as a family. They feel supported and nurtured academically and emotionally. They like coming to school and most stay on for after school support and enrichment. They know that if they are absent, the school will call their home to check on them if their parents have not already alerted the school. Attendance is very good, often at 100% and routinely above 95%, its goal for the year.

The principal and her staff have made budgetary, staffing and scheduling decisions based on some data that revealed unexpected weaknesses in literacy as well as identifying a much broader range of student achievement than originally projected. In response to this information, additional tutors were hired to address remedial needs, the school identified and purchased a remedial reading program and reprogrammed students and teachers schedules to accommodate institution of this intervention. Also, an enrichment class was created for students' not needing remediation. Further, to support the school's mission for accelerated learning, an eleven month academic year is being instituted, extending instructional time by 10% for all students.

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 school's hiring practices are collaborative in nature and involve representatives from all school constituencies. Candidates must demonstrate the capacity for academic rigor and collaboration. Model lessons, including assessments of students' learning, are a requirement of the screening process. All staff was newly hired in 2006 and they support one another through regular observations of their instruction resulting from shared classrooms and the assignment of push-in support. The principal also visits classes on a daily basis, sometimes providing suggestions for instructional improvements. However, teachers have not, as yet, received written feedback or evaluation reports as a result of either informal or formal classroom observations by the principal.

The principal is respected by parents and students. She is an equal partner with the Early College Initiative and York College in fostering the mission of the school. Her staff views her as a colleague and value the trust and respect that is mutually shared among them. Together, the principal and staff ensure that the school runs smoothly and that procedures are clearly understood and adhered to. Weekly staff meetings serve as the format for all decision making. Alertness to emerging data serves as the basis for candidly evaluating decisions and revising actions.

The school enjoys an active relationship with its partners who support professional development and student achievement. Retreats organized by the Early College Initiative have supported staff in developing curriculum and implementing the workshop model of instruction. Coaching offered through America's Choice has supported some in classroom management. Currently, the demands of addressing instructional and operational issues have occupied much of the time when teachers might engage in professional development activities and the small number of staff members prohibits teacher attendance at off-site trainings during the regular school day and teachers have identified a number of topics where they need assistance. Student achievement and the school's academic goals are supported through the York College partnership. The school's full time college liaison assigns and manages on-site college tutors, devises enrichment activities with the college, assists in planning for curriculum alignment and monitors student achievement data.

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 undeveloped.

The school leadership team has not yet created a Comprehensive Education Plan for the school. The proposal for the school, while guiding its initial configuration, is a static document at present. The schools' mission establishes ambitious goals and staff have come to realize that students must be achieving at grade level by the end of grade either to be prepared to take on college level work in high school. However, the school has not created formal policies and plans to support these goals as well as the demands that adding 100 new students each year will bring.

Comparisons of student progress are undertaken primarily at the grade level, rather than between classrooms, as each teacher instructs all of the schools' sixth grade students. Comparisons across schools are not undertaken due to a lack of data. Samples of students' work are reviewed to determine growth in skills. The results of the school's periodic assessment, while cumbersome and difficult to use diagnostically, shed light on students' reading comprehension and vocabulary deficits which led to remedial interventions which are carried out in small group instruction by all staff members. Subsequent administration of periodic assessments should reveal initial effects of interventions. Additionally, the school has made plans to administer tests at the end of the school year in order to form a comparative data point relative to students' entering base-line achievement.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: York Early College Academy (MS 284)	∅	✓	+
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		