



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Literacy and Arts Academy

Public School 196

1250 Ward Avenue

Bronx

New York 10472

Principal: Lizzette Rivera

Dates of review: October 31 – November 1, 2006

Reviewer: Jan Lomas

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public School 196, The Literacy and Arts Academy, is an elementary school which has 383 students in grades 2, 3 and 4. The school shares a building with two other schools.

Students come from a range of ethnic backgrounds although the greatest proportion, 70%, comes from Hispanic families. In addition, 25% are Black, with the remaining 5% from other backgrounds.

The proportion of students who are known to be Title 1 eligible stands at 100% in this school year. Historically, the figure has always been above similar and other City schools except for a slight fall in 2005.

The proportion of special education students is small at 5% whilst the figure for English language learners is higher at just over 11%.

Attendance figures have been consistent historically and are close to those for similar and City schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is well respected and has set the tone for a collaborative, united learning environment focused on learning.
- The staff is committed to the aims of the school and achievement for all.
- The principal and staff are relentless in striving towards the development of appropriate interventions.
- High expectations appreciated by staff, parents and pupils permeate the school.
- The curriculum, including extended school activities, has been developed well to enrich and support learning.
- Professional development is a well-developed and effective element of the school's work.
- Classroom environments are inviting and prompts and displays support learning.
- The school respects and values each student and they, in their turn, respect the values of their school.
- The school is a calm, orderly environment and behavior is very good.
- Praise is used well to reinforce learning and to raise self-esteem.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop the analysis of groups of students within the school to better ensure that teaching strategies and interventions are equally effective for all.
- Strengthen the use of the Comprehensive Educational Plan as a strategic tool by developing interim milestones and timescales to show how goals are specifically monitored and evaluated and that they are on track.
- Further develop strategies for assessment of writing to ensure that these fully support staff in monitoring and evaluating progress.
- Develop strategies to gather the views and perceptions of students about the work of the school and use them to help evaluate the impact of teaching strategies and intervention initiatives.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school with proficient features.

The Literacy and Arts Academy has a culture of high expectations and a clear focus on achievement for all pupils. It provides a calm and well-structured environment which is conducive to learning. Parents and students value the school highly and the principal and staff are well respected. Parents are very satisfied with the progress their children make and with the 'open door policy' which enables them to discuss any concerns with appropriate staff as they arise.

Teachers work together closely and productively to develop instruction and intervention that supports the whole child and strives to maximize each individual's opportunities to do well. It has still to develop thorough analysis of the performance of sub-groups in the school to determine where attention should be focused to raise overall school achievement.

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 uses individual student data effectively to maintain records of progress and achievement, but has less focus on the analysis of the performance of groups of students within the school. The school collects and uses a range of data drawn from City and State tests, ECLAS2 and Princeton Review. They couple this with more internally-generated information to develop a regularly updated view of student needs and the next stage for learning. These useful tools include teachers' running records, informal assessments, reading levels and professional observations.

The principal and the two assistant principals keep an overview of progress within each classroom and grade level and meet regularly with individual teachers and teams to discuss each student, often using data to drive the conversation. One example is a colored bar chart that has been internally developed to show simply and clearly students' progress over time. The administration and teachers use this to put the spotlight on individual students to clarify the next steps or to probe the interventions that have already been put in place. Issues arising from individual student data are used carefully when considering plans and interventions. This means that the response to any shortfall in learning is addressed in a timely way and is plotted quickly to show the resulting progress.

To accelerate the rate of improvement, the school takes account of issues arising from a range of formal and informal data to address the needs of special education students and English language learners. Assessment and testing procedures are carefully utilized to see how these students are progressing. Where other needs emerge, the results of assessments and observations about students' personal needs are brought to the fore and acted upon. For example, the school recognized that a new group of recent immigrants

needed particular support and put in place strategies for students which enhanced their progress and support for the parents to ensure that they were able to feel more comfortable when helping their children with their learning.

The school does not, however, routinely take the opportunity to analyze data by gender or ethnicity, to check that instruction is equally effective for all students. Limited comparisons are carried out with schools in a similar context.

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 well-developed.

Teachers use data and prior achievement to establish goals for their class. These are tangible, measurable goals for different subject areas. The administration meets with each teacher to discuss these goals to ensure appropriate challenge through moderation and amendment of the targets where appropriate. This means that the school’s high expectations are reinforced and targets are understood by teachers. Ongoing discussion during the year allows for an overview of progress towards these goals to be maintained.

Grade teams plan together and support each other in developing teaching and learning strategies and differentiated instruction. The administration often joins these meetings to support, guide and query. Teachers use data from assessments, running records and observations to collaborate with specialist coaches to develop well-focused plans and interventions for individuals, classes and groups. They meet for such activities as moderating the levels of students’ work to ensure that their planning and groupings are based upon secure evidence. Appropriate interventions are well used to accelerate the progress of those students most in need of improvement and extended-school activities are also targeted carefully to give additional support and enrichment. This detailed and consistent approach means that appropriate progress is carefully monitored and that the response to any identified deficit is quick and flexible.

Parents are aware of and value the school’s expectation that each child can and will achieve. They appreciate the open approach of the school and opportunities to talk with staff informally to discuss progress to complement more formal parent consultation. For example, they discuss ways to support their children and how to assist with homework tasks. Teachers frequently meet with students, enabling them to contribute to plans and goals so that they know how well they are doing and how to improve. Students have regular and valuable opportunities to develop the skills of self-assessment, which means they have a good understanding of the next steps for their own learning.

Upheld by the principal, there is a very clear focus upon achievement within the school. Staff collaborate and work very hard together to plan for interventions and strategies in order to maximize progress and performance for all.

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.

This area of the school’s work is well-developed

The school has mapped the curriculum carefully to ensure that it meets mandated requirements, makes best use of time periods and provides links between subject areas. For example, the specialist art teacher worked with grade teachers to build a skills-based art program around a book being used to as part of English language arts. Students understand that learning is continuous across areas of the curriculum.

The curriculum is well-balanced, having a clear focus on the basic skills of English language arts and mathematics as well as providing opportunities for science, art, social studies, physical education and the use of computers and technology. The overall plan is adjusted each year to ensure that it meets the current needs of students.

Classrooms reveal students absorbed in their learning in an environment which is consistently inviting, provides displays which celebrate, and rubrics that support, learning. The approach motivates and has a positive effect on student achievement. Students are quick to express their enjoyment of a broad range of opportunities and recognize the strategies that are used help them to progress. One student said 'Rubrics help me to know what I need to learn next '. Praise is used effectively to reinforce learning and to raise self-esteem. Parents appreciate telephone calls which are used to pass on good news as well as to inform or alert. This is a very good example of how the school addresses the needs of the whole student. Students like their teachers and express themselves comfortable with asking for help.

The principal has encouraged a culture of dialogue and teachers meet regularly to discuss the effectiveness of their teaching and differentiation, and to provide mutual support. They are accountable for their students' progress not only through goal-setting and formal discussion with the principal but also through this collaborative partnership with colleagues.

Teacher time and the budget are used flexibly to support issues arising from data analysis and assessment. For instance, teachers in one grade recognized that some students needed more support to develop specific comprehension skills. Additional input was provided by grouping across grade classes to provide differentiated support, thus making good use of staff time and the resource of the specialist literacy coach to accelerate student progress. Scheduling is carefully managed within the constraints of this shared building.

The school responds carefully to any punctuality or attendance issues. Often staff seek to address broader issues that support the family and impact upon patterns of tardiness or absence by forming a plan utilizing the skills of, for example, the family worker alongside teachers and the administration. While comparative data has not shown attendance to be an area of concern, the school is not complacent in its approach.

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.

Staff selection is based upon applicants' interest in working at the school and their expressed commitment to its aims and high expectations. The process has been effective in establishing a team who work together very well and are enthusiastic about the work the

school is doing. One assistant principal commented, 'We've come a long way. I take pride in the growth of the school.'

Opportunities for professional development are broad and varied. Input from Teachers' College has been effective in taking forward practice in English language arts. This is evident in the classrooms which are print-rich and well resourced and through the engagement of students in their reading and writing. Teachers and the principal are now keen to ensure that procedures for assessing writing are developed further to enhance achievement and to promote fine-tuning of skills development.

Teachers learn from each other through discussion, leading training sessions, sharing good practice and peer observation. Teachers plan for their professional goals at the beginning of the year and are asked to suggest how the school can support them. Their views are surveyed to evaluate the program. Many ask for positive criticism and for support in the form of modeling of best practice, evidencing a team which is both reflective and proactive in taking professional skills and instruction forward.

The principal and assistant principals observe both formally, as mandated, and informally using a proforma on which they record key points. The administration knows the staff and their strengths and areas for development well and this knowledge is also used to enable productive dialogue and focus the choice of professional development.

The principal is well respected by staff, parents and students. She has high and consistent expectations and ensures that the focus on achievement for all and the needs of the whole child are of paramount importance. The school is a calm and orderly community and the behavior of students in the classrooms and around the school is very good indeed.

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 Comprehensive Education Plan is written by staff committees working together to develop and bring together elements of school priority. Goals are mainly measurable but the plan does not always give sufficient detail to establish, for example, time-frames for each stage of the priority nor specific accountabilities to enable a better overview of whether all is on track or needs reconsidering. The plan as a whole is reviewed mid-year and evaluations are fed in to the planning cycle for the following year.

Staff spend focused time in meetings with colleagues and regularly meet with the principal and assistant principals to discuss student data and assessments to monitor achievement and to consider adaptation of strategies and interventions. They are willing to try out new initiatives and these, in turn, are reviewed and revised as necessary in response to the rate of progress.

The school highly values the work it has done to develop student skills in self- and peer-assessment. This is an effective way of adding another dimension to the evaluation of student progress which is used throughout all classrooms and grades. The school has not yet explored ways of extending students' skills of evaluation by surveying their views about elements of their experience of the school as a learning environment and using these to add to the picture of the effectiveness of specific policies, practices or new initiatives.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

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| SCHOOL NAME: Literacy and Arts Academy (PS 196) | ∅ | ✓ | + |
| PS 196 Quality Score | | | X |

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| 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.

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| 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 |

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| 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 | |