



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

La Guardia Academy of Arts and Technology

**Public School 205
2475 Southern Blvd
Bronx
NY 10458**

Principal: Maria Pietrosanti

Dates of review: Feb 28 – Mar 2, 2007

Reviewer: Sheldon Berman

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Overall evaluation

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

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The La Guardia School of Arts and Technology is located in the Belmont section of the Bronx. The student population of about 980 students in grades kindergarten through 5 has approximately 25% English language learners, most of whom are recent immigrants from the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Central America, the Middle East, and southern Europe. This reflects the fact that the neighborhood is one of the most dynamic multi-ethnic areas in New York City. The majority of the students, 74%, are Hispanic and 16% of the students are Black. White students represent 8% of the student population and are nearly all non-English speaking. Ten percent are special education students. Over 90% of the students are Title I eligible which is higher than that in similar and City schools. Student attendance and stability are a bit higher than the 91% for similar and City schools.

The school is housed in two facilities a block apart, both built into the basements of high-rise residence buildings in the era of open classroom design schools. The larger facility houses grades 2 through 5, and that part of the school has been segmented into separate classrooms.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Exemplary practices for gathering and using data to develop appropriate planning for individual students and identified subgroups are routinely integrated into all phases of planning.
- The principal, supported by three assistant principals, provides effective and thoughtful leadership.
- The principal utilizes her resources well, including limited space and time, to staff, schedule, and support the changing needs of the instructional program.
- The school environment is calm, orderly, and conducive to learning.
- The halls and classrooms are warm, inviting and visually stimulating environments.
- A focus on effective, respectful and continuous communications among staff, and with students and parents, contributes importantly to a strong sense of school-as-community.
- Both the administration and staff clearly reflect an ethos of collaboration and mutual support.
- School events and programs keep many parents involved and meaningfully integrate the school with the surrounding community.
- There is clear evidence of differentiated instruction in every classroom setting.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop strategies to get shorter cycle feedback on implementation of planned efforts.
- Ensure that technology is being better and more routinely integrated into the planning and delivery of instruction.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

The La Guardia School is truly vested in its dynamic neighborhood, where many cultures live side by side with a sense of pride. It benefits from dynamic leadership that inspires achievement, purpose and a hope for the future. The school provides very good educational opportunities for all students and their parents, in a safe, nurturing and stimulating environment. Good use is made of the expertise of the staff, parents and such important community based organizations as the Bronx Zoo, Botanical Garden, Fordham University and the Guggenheim Museum.

The arts are effectively integrated into the curriculum. Technology is well used in some classes, though it is not routinely utilized to support opportunities for students to achieve in many of the classes. Students are encouraged to participate in the many literary and cultural opportunities available to them, as well as an active student government.

The principal has a keen focus on bringing in staff, programs and resources that amplify the already well-established collaborative practices, ensuring that the needs of all students are considered in planning.

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 gathering and use of data is routinely integrated into planning for and supporting the instructional program. Base-line, interim and final assessments are used over the year for English language arts as well as mathematics. Student portfolios are maintained, get updated regularly over the year, and follow the students through the school and beyond to the middle school. Teachers keep comprehensive running records on every student, and maintain an assessment binder using a school-wide format. This summarizes all assessment records of all of the students in a class in an organized way.

Particular attention is paid to the progress of special education students and those struggling with English. This includes both the English language learners and those students who enter with undeveloped language skills. As a result, specialized support services are provided in a timely fashion as needed.

The staff routinely use updated evaluations of students' academic and social strengths and needs in making adjustments as needed to the instructional plans within classes, across classes, and for individual students. Performance in City and State tests are used to make comparisons across grades and with similar schools and used to inform grouping and curricular decisions. Running records are maintained by teachers for all students, and

shared within collegial teams or with specialists, coaches and administrators to plan strategies for individuals and small groups.

The school has recognized the need to analyze the performance of different groups more closely and has begun to develop plans to, for example, segregate data based on ethnicity.

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.

Planning and setting goals are high priorities, as illustrated by the practice of having a full day devoted to team, student, and school goal setting at the beginning of the year, and a full day mid-year to evaluate progress and adjust goals. Levels of collaboration are high. Goals are set, within an annual timeframe, for individual students across subjects and grades. While goals focus upon the needs of the lowest achieving students, none the less, the school also considers the needs of students with higher attainment in its planning.

The individual needs of students are well met through structures such as the collegial team, in which two classroom teachers at the same grade with an academic intervention support teacher. This allows for teachers to review the effectiveness of interventions for students within and across classes. The involvement of four additional English language learner support teachers, frequent grade-level team meetings, and regular pupil intervention planning team meetings targets assistance well for students who are struggling, resulting in quick interventions which have a positive impact of student progress.

High expectations are planned in and clearly communicated to all members of the school community. Parents are encouraged to support their children in a variety of ways, from counseling concerning their student’s progress, supporting or attending the monthly school performances and participating in the school leadership team. They are able to develop their own learning by using the available childcare support to attend parent workshops or to access the technology in the impressive school library. Parents are able to take advantage of the open-door policy to speak to a teacher or administrator, supporting student success in a timely fashion. Parents are clear in their view that good communications from the school, help them in supporting their children’s education at home.

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 aligned with state and local mandates and is analyzed well in building a picture of student achievement. The school makes accessible technology and experiences with the arts that animate, enhance and extend the core curriculum. For example, the research projects in the fourth and fifth grades involve an array of

instructional and support staff in using technology to find, develop and communicate information effectively. While there is ample access to technology in the buildings, it is not yet effectively and routinely integrated into lessons by all teachers.

Teachers make good use of assessment to plan for students' different needs through small groupings, centers, pairings, one-on-one instruction, use of software or websites. They readily acknowledge their accountability for their students' learning and are at pains to establish classroom activities and conversations that are stimulating and engaging. High expectations and mutual respect are evident in the classroom exchanges. Consequently, students are confident that there are adults to whom they can turn should they be experiencing difficulties. Students describe their school as a safe and caring place, where attendance is seen as crucial to their success.

The principal has made budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions driven by needs identified from data. She has effectively added significant instructional personnel and used them to give added value to all students and support for teachers. The use of coaches, collegial teams, and additional support teachers makes possible many opportunities for one-on-one and small group instruction. It also supports frequent professional growth opportunities via staff dialog and intra-visitation.

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 has been at pains to attract able assistant principals and many dynamic teachers. Commitment to the school community, continuing professional growth, and teamwork are all values that are clearly expressed in words and deeds by the staff, and expected as values seen in new appointments.

Teachers feel well supported by the administration and accepted as responsible partners. They are empowered by the responsiveness to their inputs and by the implementation of their ideas, and seriously consider the needs expressed by data about student performance. They report having access to resources, materials and professional development opportunities. Common planning time is used well for team analysis of teaching practices, lesson design and data analysis.

The principal is regarded with great respect by parents and teachers as being capable, enabling and attentive. Organizational structures are clear, well communicated and, so, are followed well within a smooth running organization. Through regular formal and informal observations, she and the assistant principals are perceived as hands-on, visible, and knowledgeable professionals. Learning walks, involving all members of a grade, are used well in share evaluations of classroom practice. The principal also analyzes teachers' unit work including students' drafts, teacher responses and final drafts in order to maintain an overview of practice.

The school has a very effective partnership with a range of organizations to improve student performance and reach its goals. These include the Bronx Zoo, the Botanical Gardens, Young Audiences New York, Center for Arts Education, Fordham University and contribute well to students' learning.

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 well developed.

Planning, and setting or evaluating goals for individuals, teams, grades and the school is routinely part of the school's practices. This is accomplished in regular meetings of collegial teams, grade teams, coaches, the instructional support team, pupil intervention planning team and the school leadership team. The focus of continual attention pervades the interactions around assessing and supporting the progress of individual students, classes, and identified groups of students

The very effective focus on individuals and evidence of the resulting flexibility are exemplified in the rapid response that takes place should interventions appear not to be achieving their desired result. Regular review of progress, particularly of students who are struggling, enables rapid recognition, planning and implementation of change in support programs. While the planning processes concerning students and instruction are very well developed and timely, the longer range planning at whole school level is less well informed by interim reviews of progress. The current twice yearly evaluation means that response cannot be planned early enough should modification be required.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: La Guardia School of Arts and Technology (PS 205)	∅	✓	+
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