



# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**South Bronx Academy for Applied Media**

**Public School 296**

**778 Forest Avenue**

**Bronx**

**NY 10456**

**Principal: Roshone Ault**

**Dates of review: January 22 - 23, 2007**

**Reviewer: George Wallace**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The South Bronx Academy for Applied Media is a new school, opened in September 2005, currently serving 210 scholars<sup>1</sup> in grades 6 and 7. The projected capacity of the school is 325 scholars by next year accommodated in grades 6 through 8. The Academy, housed in a building with three other schools, opened in September 2005. The population comprises 59% Hispanic, 40% Black and 1% White scholars. Eleven percent of the school population is made up of special education scholars and nearly 16% are English language learners. The school is Title 1 eligible with 95% of scholars qualifying which is very high and well above similar school and City-wide school averages.

Attendance targets are set and, to date, attendance figures for 2006-07 show an improvement over those for the full year 2005-06, which were below 90%. This is below the average for similar schools and the City-wide average. The school has a full complement of teaching staff. Scholars have the opportunity to attend a range of after-school activities.

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<sup>1</sup> **Scholars:** In South Bronx Academy for Applied Media all students are referred to at all times as scholars. Therefore throughout this report the word 'scholar' is used instead of student.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- There is a shared understanding of the school vision, which is supported by staff and scholars.
- The staff ensure that scholars are receiving the right intervention and support programs.
- The principal has good capacity to effect change, and the vision and passion she has for her school is evident in all she does.
- The goals in the Comprehensive Education Plan are specific and measurable with clearly defined strategies to achieve them.
- The school has good procedures and a robust drive to secure improvements in attendance.
- Teamwork is strong with agreement over the school's core values and consistency in the way staff are working to realize them.
- The principal visits classrooms on a frequent basis and gives a strong professional lead in improving the quality of instruction.

### What the school needs to improve

- Improve, extend and make more systematic the ways in which the school assesses, records and monitors scholars' academic progress, performance and personal development.
- Use this data more effectively to establish interim milestones against which progress towards goals can be evaluated.
- Ensure that all teachers use assessments effectively to differentiate activities for scholars working at different levels.
- Provide learning experiences that involve scholars actively and promote high levels of engagement.
- Continue the work with parents to involve more of them as partners in their children's education.
- Provide further opportunities for teachers to observe each other and share good practice.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a proficient school.**

The South Bronx Academy for Applied Media is a new middle school working very hard to provide a high quality experience for scholars. In a short space of time it is beginning to achieve good links and involvement with the media, including instruction in media studies for all scholars to support its specialist designation.

The principal has ensured that her vision for the school is known and understood by all staff. All classrooms have notices on the walls about the school's values and the procedures that scholars are expected to follow to achieve them. Teachers are good at drawing many of these to the attention of scholars. Work is in progress to ensure that all staff adopt similar approaches to teaching and engaging scholars in their learning. Staff work collaboratively and share ideas to develop their skills. They know their scholars and what specific needs they have, although formal monitoring to provide data, whether at class, grade or whole-school level, is at an early stage. Goal-setting for whole-school improvement is thorough, although progress is difficult to measure accurately, because the assessment of scholars' overall progress is not systematic enough.

The school runs smoothly each day and feels welcoming. Levels of attendance are increasing. At the heart of the school is a commitment and drive to make the school a success and make a difference to the lives of the scholars. Parents are contacted frequently and meetings are held, but apart from the formal parent-teacher consultation periods, parental involvement is very low.

### 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 scholar knows and is able to do and to monitor scholar progress over time.**

##### **This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The principal gathers school data from standardized tests and teacher assessments. Once the results of standardized tests are received, the principal analyzes them and provides teachers with an update on the achievement profile of their class. This information is used with each teacher to discuss each scholar's strengths and weaknesses. They provide a satisfactory understanding of the performance of each scholar. Teachers keep and are beginning to analyze more assessment data on their scholars. However, the school does not ensure that ongoing records are consistently kept in all subjects, so that progress in some is difficult to assess accurately. The lack of such data means that there is an over-reliance on the results from standardized tests, for example, the Princeton Review or the New York State tests for an objective overview of the pattern of achievement for each scholar, across the grade or in each class.

Although teachers know their scholars well, little formal monitoring is undertaken at interim points to provide data, whether at class, grade or whole-school level. Grade meetings are used to share information about achievement and to plan the best strategies to move scholars forward but more work is required if data is to be used effectively at school and

subject level to guide instruction consistently. Data is available and used well to make judgments about the progress and performance of special education scholars and English language learners. Although the principal is aware of the need to analyze performance data in other ways, such as on the basis of ethnicity and gender, this does not occur yet.

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each scholar’s next learning step. Through collaborative planning and scholar and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each scholar’s learning.**

**This area of the school’s work is proficient.**

Since the school is new, the principal’s vision is being developed through short-term goals to establish clear ground-rules and procedures for scholars and staff. Collaborative working, for example, forms a fundamental way in which scholars and staff work. The main goals for the school, as set out in the Comprehensive Education Plan, are specific, and for the most part measurable. Some have already been achieved. The goals are written in a clear and usable way. However, they are without interim milestones to systematically use as a checkpoint against which progress can be measured.

Staff teams have devised stepped procedures that are used to determine the academic and social progress of scholars. Teachers identify subject-specific goals for their scholars. These are written up in the scholars’ progress reports that are periodically sent to parents. However, these periodic goals are not sufficiently evaluated so that new goals can be set for scholars to work on. Nevertheless, the principal and teachers know their scholars and ensure that priority for support is given to those in greatest need. This is a listening school and therefore feedback from staff and from scholars is important as the school develops. For example, the scholar government association meets weekly to discuss current school issues and to make proposals for developments. Each scholar member is a representative from each class. Scholars and staff value the association, which provides an active scholar voice that effects change.

The school has high expectations and scholars know that the systems are fair and that they have to conform to the rules, proof that some of the school’s priorities are beginning to have an impact. In a broad sense, they know what they are aiming for, but this is not specific enough for them to be actively engaged in the process of setting and reviewing their own goals. Parents are regularly invited to meetings and about 85% attend parent teacher consultations at which they discuss their children’s progress. However, attendance by parents at other meetings is poor.

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and scholar engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each scholar.**

**This area of the school’s work is proficient.**

The school provides the mandated curriculum for all scholars. In addition there are classes about the media, and activities and links with the media that have already been successful. Teachers know that they are accountable for improving instruction. This message is successfully dealt with through professional development and school meetings. It is clear that teachers know that they must work to facilitate learning and ensure that scholars are engaged in learning rather than just passively listening to

instruction. The goal of 'learning by doing' is evident in classrooms, but much additional work is required for the school to reach its goal of actively engaging scholars in learning. Scholars are compliant and willing to work. They listen and try to perform the tasks and activities given. Although in some lessons scholars are engaged and their work is differentiated, too frequently, however, the activities are insufficiently challenging.

The school budget is set around the direct needs of the school and is aligned with its goals. The school's vision and mission drive staffing decisions. In turn the specific needs of scholars also drive the way in which staff are assigned to provide interventions and support. Class schedules are a product of balancing the availability of common space shared with the four other schools in the building, and the aims of the school. Therefore, the mandated curriculum is built into every class schedule, as is time for media studies and student government meetings. The atmosphere in school is highly positive. Staff know and respect scholars and the response to academic needs is largely good. Scholars feel that they have adults in school that they know and trust should they wish to talk about an area of concern.

Attendance is running at 90% which is an improvement over last year. The school takes attendance extremely seriously and has a wide range of procedures to secure increases. Scholars also know the importance that the school attaches to their coming to school regularly.

**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 scholar.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The procedures for hiring staff are rigorous and demanding. The staff feel that the process is thorough and fair and, by the end of interviews, applicants know clearly the expectations of being a teacher at this school. Many teachers are new to teaching and have yet to be trained in the art of collecting and using data to confirm success or effect change. Professional development has so far been focused on building their skills in teaching the core subjects of English language arts, mathematics and science, rather than on the use of data. At the beginning of each new school year, before scholars start school, an invaluable five-day orientation program is provided for all teachers which, according to staff, successfully reinforces the school mission, promotes collaborative working and allows teams to plan effectively for their subjects.

The principal frequently observes lessons and provides good quality feedback. She knows her staff well, and they know that if she observes any aspect of a lesson that is not working effectively she will intervene and demonstrate how that particular issue or process should be taught. The staff know and accept this from the principal and coaches because they value it as another way of improving teaching. At present, there are few opportunities for teachers to observe each other to share good practice.

Teams of staff meet frequently. The school cabinet deals with progress on the many personal and social development issues of scholars. Grade meetings and monthly faculty meetings provide a focus for academic discussions. However, there is insufficient attention placed on evaluation, for example, of the outcomes arising from strategies provided for supporting scholars, or of achievement as measured by teachers at any given point in the year.

The principal is highly respected and through her vision, commitment and understanding of school development, this school has the capacity to improve. Each member of staff has a handbook, procedures are clear and as such the school runs smoothly.

The school has a wide range of successful partnerships with outside bodies, particularly in the pursuit of its emphasis on the media. They include a New York radio station, the Center for Social and Emotional Education, Urban Dove Hi-Risers Program, and the Bronx Council on the Arts. There is a before-school program, which includes breakfast. The after-school program is also wide-ranging, including opportunities for scholars to go on trips. These activities are valued by scholars.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each scholar'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 goal-setting process through the Comprehensive Education Plan is thorough and involves many people. The goals are clear, measurable and relevant. The overall school plan is of a good quality and provides for staff an explanation of the key components and strategies necessary to successfully reach the goals, although there are no interim milestones against which to measure progress. Because the monitoring and evaluation of scholars' progress is not rigorous enough, it is difficult to use student performance data to judge whether the school is on target to meet its goals.

There are many interim goals set by the principal and coaches in the pursuit of raising achievement. These are a product of knowing what is working and what needs immediate remedial action, rather than through formally collecting and analyzing data. They are not systematically evaluated against the whole-school goals. The focus of the school is on ensuring that all ground rules concerning attendance, personal and social development and academic achievement are met. Interim goals for the promotion of good behavior, positive attitudes to learning, and the encouragement of scholars to work collaboratively are set and reviewed, and are leading to improvements in student performance. The staff are working hard on these goals and the procedures across classrooms and as a whole school are working effectively.

In grade meetings, discussion of scholars' progress results in teachers sharing and re-thinking ways to teach topics, especially where underachievement has occurred. From these meetings, the first indicators of new programs of support for individual scholars occur, based on data analysis. The outcome of such discussions sometimes results in changes to the way topics are taught to improve standards.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: South Bronx Academy for Applied Media (PS 296)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>		X	

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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"> <li>• each student, classroom, grade level,</li> </ul>		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"> <li>• ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students*</li> </ul>		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"> <li>• all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>	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		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>		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.

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>		X	

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>		X	
<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>		X	
<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>	X		