



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Leadership and Community Service Academy

Intermediate School 303

**1700 Macombs Road
Bronx
NY 10453**

Principal: Patricia Bentley

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Reviewer: George Wallace

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Leadership and Community Service Academy (Intermediate School 303) is a small school with 324 students from Grade 6 through 8. It is housed on the top floor of a five-story school building. Over 90% of students are Title 1 eligible.

There are approximately the same number of boys and girls in the school, with 49% White students, 36% Black, 63% Hispanic and approximately 1% Asian and 1% White students. The proportion of special education students is 14% and for English language learners is 12%. The school has a relatively stable population in that over 90% of students who start remain at the school for the full three-year period. The general trend for attendance is one of improvement. The attendance rate for the school has been rising over recent years and is currently running at 92.4% for the school year 2006-07 which is higher than similar schools and the City average.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school is welcoming and runs smoothly on a day-by-day basis.
- There is a strong climate of self-improvement where teamwork and collaboration flourish.
- All staff care about the students' personal and social development as well as academic progress and therefore all students, especially those at risk are well catered for.
- Attendance and lateness are high priorities and effective systems ensure that students attend and are on time.
- Parents and students value the advisory program as having a positive effect on the lives of students at school.
- Teachers' approach to curriculum planning is effective where there is a focus from the start on what it is that students need to know and understand.
- The principal is well respected, has the capacity to ensure that the school improves, and knows her staff, students and parents very well.
- Student performance helps to drive budget decisions, staffing levels and scheduling.
- The school has good mechanisms to keep students and parents informed of the achievements and areas for improvement of each student.
- Staff are kept well informed about events, priorities and deadlines on a day-to-day basis, allowing staff to be proactive in the school's development.

What the school needs to improve

- Sharpen the process of whole school action planning to include clear targets, and the rationale for the strategies, including professional development, and the success criteria which will allow the school to evaluate its progress.
- Produce a clear set of rubrics for subjects across grades so that students have a permanent record of what is expected at each level.
- Increase the frequency of lesson observations to assess the effectiveness of teaching and student learning.
- Improve staff understanding of data analysis of data.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

This is a welcoming school. The positive atmosphere together with the commitment to students, their learning and personal development, and rising student performance, all indicate that this school is clearly improving. The principal and staff are well respected and show that they have the capacity to ensure that the school continues to improve. Standards of achievement are now rising in all grades and are significantly higher than those of 2005. Projected scores for 2007 show a leveling off for English language arts, and continued improvement in mathematics. Teamwork and collaboration are strong and growing. Staff are keen to be involved in the overall development of the school.

The school successfully operates an advisory program for all students. This has been well received by students and parents. A successful interim evaluation of the program has occurred and even at this stage the changes arising from the interim evaluation are already being re-evaluated. Approaches to curriculum revision are being translated into new approaches to curriculum planning. Importantly, this means that where teachers are planning new units of work they approach their planning from the standpoint of what they want the students to know and understand by the end of the unit, rather than simply plan the content regardless. It is evident that analysis of performance information drives aspects of financial expenditure, staffing levels and scheduling in the interests of raising achievement. However, data analysis is a little narrow and needs to address a wider variety of themes, and include teachers in a strong program of data analysis techniques. Although goals and plans for the school are in position, and in some instances have strongly supported developments, there are still some important refinements to be made.

Teaching largely engages students. Many teachers use effective techniques to involve students in their own learning, but this is not always the case. While the principal and assistant principal observe teaching, the frequency of observations, particularly walkthroughs, remains too low and the monitoring of teaching and learning is therefore not sufficiently rigorous. However, this is a growing school. Staff and parents are kept well informed about the school. Staff now feel that they are becoming stakeholders in the school's development. Self-evaluation is satisfactory. Attendance is currently running at 92.4% and has been consistently at this level for several years.

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 collects a wide range of useful data. The information on individual students and whole classes is assessed at a variety of meetings. The senior staff and teachers know how well students are performing, and as a consequence fully understand student needs. Most of the data arises from teacher assessments, end of marking periods and standardized test results. As such, student performance information is up-to-date and

useful for teachers, senior staff and students. The school has a system which allows students to access their levels and goals at any time via a web page from a secure internal site. The school's knowledge and use of specific data on English language learners and special education students are good. As a consequence and, where required, specific decisions are made to aid such students' learning. However, there is little use made of data analysis in other ways, such as asking questions about student performance in relation to ethnicity, gender or, for example, why some things are especially successful whereas others are not.

The school uses data on its past performance suitably frequently. As such, the principal is acutely aware of the need to raise standards whilst maintaining a positive climate for learning. All teachers know how well their students are progressing. At grade meetings various students are frequently discussed with a strong focus on assessing their rate of progress, and what to do to aid the student's learning. In some acute cases progress is slight, whilst, when a breakthrough comes, teachers are able to identify why it arose and whether it was a product of the school's influence.

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

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Over the past year the principal has increased the effective use of data to address short-term goals. She has engaged with the faculty in several valued and essential collaborative activities to set up specific programs in school with the intention of interim evaluations to determine levels of school success. In all cases the goals set have been evaluated and modifications to the programs made. The school is in the process of setting even longer-term goals with timeframes for reaching them. It is good that the school has embarked upon a productive program of collaborative strategies to reach its goals and recognizes the value of interim evaluations of the progress towards such goals.

With the principal's guidance, the school has improved its focus on its goals and plans. Part of the current program is to re-set the school's vision and mission, and identify goals to satisfy such agreements. Teachers talk frequently with students, particularly in the advisory lessons, to let them know how they are progressing and to discuss with them their set weekly goals. While the rationale is excellent, there is inconsistency in the way teachers follow through the goal achieving part of the process. However, the school continues to identify both performance and progress as particular areas of focus, recognizing that attention to personal and social development goes hand in hand with academic performance.

The school pays strong attention to those students in particular need of improvement. Collaborative grade meetings ensure that the progress of such students is discussed and monitored. Importantly, with the help of teachers, students produce brief action plans to help focus their minds and ensure teachers cater for their specific learning needs. Expectations are high. Parents recognize that the school works hard and provides a wide range of information for parents and plenty of opportunities for them to discuss their child's needs. However, the overall program for producing a school action plan, showing goals with specific strategies for improving student performance, is in its infancy.

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 curriculum successfully covers the mandated curriculum. In addition, students are provided with a good quality physical and health education program taught separately for boys and girls. Students frequently go on school trips, and each Friday there is a good program of electives. The whole curriculum generates a wide range of useful data that is used to confirm progress, and to assess whether the progress has been great enough. Teachers know that they are accountable for students’ learning. As such there is a climate of trying to work out best ways to plan and teach students. Importantly, budgeting decisions are driven by student needs and as such, both staffing levels and scheduling have been dictated by the needs of learners. In some circumstances it is the need of an individual student that provides a focus for staff, in other situations it is whole class needs that are addressed. An example of targeting a specific need occurred in an analysis of mathematical performance data. As a consequence it was agreed that smaller classes might aid learning.

Teaching largely engages students. However, it is stronger in some areas than in others, and there is recognition, even by students, that the work is sometimes insufficiently challenging, especially homework. Students and parents know that staff respect students. They work with them to satisfy their personal needs and develop their thinking about resolving difficulties. Students know and trust several staff so that if they feel the need to talk about concerns or anxieties they can. High priority is given to raising attendance. Attendance has been over 91% for several years and there are strategies to improve on this. The school has a good policy and is effective in keeping in touch with parents.

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 has had a relatively high turnover of staff which makes it harder to ensure collaborative approaches to school development. However, it is evident that staff value the current stability and look forward to further developing their partnership in the development of the school. The senior staff know that this is the right way for school improvement and last year took the necessary steps to involve staff fully in school improvement discussions. Hiring procedures are fair and are based on high expectations of staff together with a commitment to stay at the school for at least the medium term. Competence in data analysis at the time of the appointment is not a key issue. One significant reason for this is that planning for the professional development program takes into account the need for all staff to be proficient in interrogating data and able to recognize value in the way questions arise from such analysis. There is an annual professional development program. This plan has in-built flexibility for change as required and in particular being able to respond to school needs as they arise. However, it is recognized that the action planning for the school not only requires refining and the involvement of all staff, but also that the professional development program exists to support the action plan development points. Teachers also have the opportunity to improve their subject skills and ideas by attending courses off-site. However, there is a need to produce a clear set of rubrics for subjects across grades at detailed levels for teachers, and a more student friendly edition for

students. The principal and assistant principal formally observe lessons and also undertake walkthroughs. However, the frequency of such informal visits especially, is low and therefore a core element of potentially extremely useful data for the school is missing from the overall data profile.

Planning takes place in teams. There is a strong culture of working in teams, especially, but not exclusively grade teams. The senior leaders keep informed by attending a large number of these meetings. Not all aspects of the planning meetings are evaluated, but key features are subject to questions about success or otherwise of the programs agreed, or in particular the students' responses to their learning. The current position is satisfactory, but it is recognized that this area of evaluation has room for improvement. Importantly, where there are areas yet to be developed, there is confidence that the principal has the ability and capacity to effect change. The principal is well respected. The school runs smoothly on a day-by-day basis. Although there is no handbook outlining specific school procedures, staff operate to agreed procedures. Where the school has partnerships with outside agencies, there is alignment of this work to the school needs and aspirations that ensures support for students' personal, social and academic development.

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 does not have plans that are sufficiently developed to allow for diagnostic assessments to reveal whether there is sufficient progress being made to reach the planned targets. However, the exception to this is in the area of interim evaluations of the success or otherwise of the advisory program, which have led to changes in some aspects of the program. The goal and target-setting process is not sufficiently widespread in relation to overall action planning. Nevertheless, comparisons of student progress at different levels are made, especially in grade meetings. Student progress is frequently the subject of discussion leading to agreements as to how best to serve their interests.

The school has not yet fully developed a widespread school action plan and therefore, while diagnostic measures of progress are used for the two main goals for 2006-07, such measures cannot be applied elsewhere. Monitoring of the target areas needs to be increased so that targets can be modified when required. The school is in an interesting stage of its development, in that many aspects of the monitoring program and essential post evaluation revisions are not yet in place, but are recognized and being discussed for future implementation. The goals and plans for the specific development of the advisory program and an English program this year are evaluated. However, the systematic use of goal setting, strategies for achieving such goals and the process of measuring achievement against success criteria are not yet in place. There is recognition of the need for flexibility when evaluating targets. The current experience shows this to be a feature in place, but overall there is not yet a culture of evaluation driving successive phases of target setting.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Leadership & Community Service Academy (CIS 303)	∅	✓	+
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		