



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Millennium Art Academy

High School 312

**1980 Lafayette Avenue
Bronx
NY 10473**

Principal: Ms Maxine Nodel

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Reviewer: Mary Crampsie

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Millennium Art Academy is a new high school serving students in the Bronx. There are approximately 360 students of whom 49.7% are Hispanic, 43% are Black and 7% are from other groups. There are 59 special education students and 27 English language learners. Nearly 40% of students are overage for grade. The proportion of students (72%) known to be eligible for Title 1 funding is higher than for similar or City schools. Attendance is consistently over 90%, which is higher than the average percentage found in other City schools.

A significant challenge faced by the school is its location on the same site as five other schools. A distinctive feature of the school is its delivery of the curriculum through a stimulating interdisciplinary and visual art program. Another is an intergenerational program in which students interact with senior citizens for academic, artistic, social and emotional purposes. The school has a well attended before- and after-school academy, a Saturday academy and extra-curricular activities, which include a painting club, mosaic club, Salsa club, basketball club, anime club, Advanced Placement World History course, College Now CUNY class, credit recovery programs, mathematics tutoring, ESL classes, and SAT preparation.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is a visionary, inspirational leader who commands the respect of staff, students, parents and the community.
- Staff are hard working, professional and loyal and there is an overwhelming feeling of purpose and dedication, which is understood and appreciated by students.
- The commitment to the arts as a vehicle for teaching, and the innovative intergenerational program, provide a unique impetus for student support and achievement.
- A very high priority is given to all aspects of student welfare and students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning.
- A range of data is gathered and carefully analyzed, and used to track the academic progress of students.
- Good attendance is a high priority and effective systems are in place to secure it.
- The school builds strong partnerships with parents and the community, and these are routinely used to support the achievement of academic and other goals.

What the school needs to improve

- Collect a more thorough range of data and use it more effectively to inform appropriately differentiated planning and instruction.
- Fully integrate the good practice of the cabinet and some senior staff into the practice of those who are less experienced.
- Formalize records of strategies and interventions tried, either successfully or unsuccessfully, with individual students, to show what works well in achieving stated goals.
- Use data on students' performance to evaluate more consistently progress towards whole-school goals.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school with well developed features.

The principal is an inspirational leader who personally developed the vision for the new school. She has been able to translate that vision into practice through the loyalty she has earned from her staff. As a result, they frequently give more of their time and energy than is formally required. This is understood and greatly appreciated by students and their parents. The principal is strongly committed to the welfare of the students and has succeeded in turning around the life chances of many.

The cabinet share a common motivation to demand the best from their students and involve them in their own learning. To that end, they are committed to refining their use of quantitative and qualitative data, in order to implement appropriate targeted support programs. The school makes use of a range of data, including teacher assessment, commercial programs and that provided by the State. This is shared visually within classrooms. The cabinet is not complacent as the use of data at this level of detail is relatively recent and therefore not fully integrated, but there is a strong commitment to its development.

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 has a philosophical commitment to giving each student a clean slate on starting at the school. It also experiences some difficulty in getting timely information from the wide range of schools from which students transfer. Nevertheless, the administration collects and uses standardized data and diagnostic teacher assessments to establish each student's academic level upon enrollment in the school. Based on that information, students are placed in appropriate classes. The administration analyzes data carefully to provide teachers with a regularly updated understanding of each student's performance. This information is also shared with students and their parents. Projections for the numbers of students currently on track to graduate are in place for each grade. Data is carefully analyzed by ethnicity, gender, level of language acquisition and special education and the performance and progress of each student is carefully monitored and reviewed.

Particular care is given to students with additional learning needs. Because data on special education students is usually available before they enroll, the special education teacher is able to visit the schools these students come from. As a result of this analysis of this data, the school provides a range of programs including a summer bridge program and extended schooling to help students adjust to their new environment, as well as to address their academic and social needs.

Performance and progress are compared with the other schools on the shared site. Both qualitative and quantitative data is collected by the administration and by teachers on how

students learn best, although outcomes are not yet fully integrated, as the school is relatively new.

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 with well developed features.

The principal has established a collaborative culture and sets goals which are reviewed together at regular faculty meetings. Across the grades, data is used to identify students who are on or almost on track to graduate and to identify those who are off track. Data identifying students with Regents credits across the subjects is produced and shared in graphic form. As a result, there is constant dialogue and discussion about suitable intervention strategies to address student need. Students are also involved in setting personal goals for their learning.

The principal has a strong instructional background and combines a holistic approach to school planning with an eye for detail in relation to academic progress at classroom and grade level. She appears to know every student and how they are doing.

Very high expectations are conveyed to students, their parents and caregivers. Parents appreciate this and value the fact that goals and plans for improving student performance drive the activity of every member of the school community. The principal is not complacent and encourages student participation by collecting their views through the use of questionnaires.

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 with well developed features.

The school recognized that it had a number of students who had a history of failure in school, and who were not well motivated. It initiated an innovative, theme-based curriculum, which prepares students to become critical thinkers and socially conscious citizens. The ‘Millennium Pearl Initiative’ is published by the Student Press Initiative (SPI) at Columbia Teacher’s College, and students give annual book-readings at a Barnes and Noble book store. The visual arts are used in equally innovative ways to support English language arts and mathematics. As a result, instructional programs have become highly engaging and motivational for many students who were previously uninterested in school.

At the classroom level, teachers know their students very well but specific goals for particular groups of students are not always reflected in their planning. As a result, teachers are not yet able to say if goals are sufficiently challenging, specific and measurable. Although they work very hard to ensure that appropriate programs are tailored to their students’ needs, they are currently insufficiently differentiated. Teachers’ accountability is, in part, addressed through the collaborative culture of the school, as they discuss their students’ performance, review goals and share strategies for instruction.

Analysis of student need is used to inform hiring and budgeting decisions, such as funding after-school and extra-curricular programs. Although it is too early to judge their impact, these programs are well attended and greatly appreciated by students.

Staff and students operate in a culture of mutual respect, and student welfare is a high priority. Students are confident that they can seek staff support when necessary. Attendance, which is at 92%, is good and is carefully monitored. Strong support systems and procedures are in place and staff and parents are aware of this.

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 with well developed features.

The principal chooses her staff carefully, based on her very high expectations. The school has energetic, highly motivated staff and morale is very high. Teachers feel supported and meet monthly as a whole staff, share weekly common planning meetings and conference regularly on student progress. As a result, they form a learning community constantly comparing outcomes and revising plans based on their experience of what works.

Professional development is determined by instructional need as evaluated through observations, staff discussions and review of students' progress. This year 35% of the staff are new and need support. The principal has ensured that staff receive training in the use of data analysis to drive instruction.

The principal and her assistant principal carry out regular formal and informal classroom observations and engage staff in professional dialogue. The principal is regarded as inspirational. One member of staff said: "The reason I love (her) is, she really wants you to take flight - not just the students, and she'll back ideas." Staff have regular opportunities to observe each other and share a strong commitment to student achievement.

The school's procedures are clear with good communication systems but currently they have to manage the demands of sharing the site with a troubled school. This means that staff have to work hard to manage clashes of culture and preserve autonomy. They are largely successful, and behavior is generally good.

There is a very strong program of youth development and a wide range of support services aligned around student need.

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.

School planning contains short- and long-term goals and curriculum maps are regularly reviewed. There is frequent and on-going diagnostic assessment to identify whether or not planning is being effectively implemented, but records are not consistently kept in such a way as to reveal whether this is effective in achieving stated goals.

There is comparison of student progress within classrooms and across grades and where it becomes clear that student academic outcomes require the use of specialist resources and time, this is quickly provided. As a result, outcomes for students are positive and 80-85% of current 12th graders are targeted to graduate this June, double that in some other local schools.

The school works to ensure that students take responsibility for their own learning and by the end of this term each student will have received an individualized learning plan. Each student is made aware of exactly how well they are doing and what they need to do next. The principal has systems in place that allow her to monitor progress and identify weaknesses. Student academic outcomes will become clearer once the first class graduates.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Millennium Art Academy (HS 312)	∅	✓	+
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	