



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Academy of the Arts

Public School 335

**888 Reverend James Polite Avenue
Bronx
N Y 10459**

Principal: Erik Wright

Dates of review: October 18 - 19, 2006

Reviewer: Martin Pavey

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 Academy of the Arts is a small elementary school for students in grades 4 and 5 in the Bronx. It shares a building with its partner school, which educates students in grades pre-kindergarten to 3. Both schools opened in September 2004 on the closure of the previous school on the same site. The school inherited a very dilapidated building and students who often had very low test scores. The great majority of students (78%) are of Hispanic background, and almost all other students are Black. Currently 229 students are officially enrolled. Of these, 11% are special education students. There are 14.4% of students who are English language learners, but a larger number with proficient English speak Spanish at home. The school is Title 1 eligible. Attendance has risen and is now 92%, not far from the average for similar schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Teachers and support staff know students well and care deeply for them.
- The principal and assistant principal lead the school with energy and clear vision.
- There is a very wide range of specialist services, which are used effectively to support students and their families.
- Senior staff make very good use of data and have made a good start in spreading this practice to other teachers.
- Good attendance is energetically promoted, and attendance is improving.
- Resources for learning have improved rapidly, and are now plentiful.
- Good behavior and work habits are encouraged and rewarded at every opportunity.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to improve test results by further reducing the number of students who fail to reach level 2.
- Develop the curriculum in mathematics science and computing, in order to raise achievement.
- Enable all teachers to use of data effectively in order to help students improve their work.
- Inject pace and rigor into weak teaching so that it matches the quality of the best.
- Encourage more parents to become active partners with the school.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is an undeveloped school.

This is an undeveloped school which is rapidly improving. It has now been open for two years under its present leadership. The principal inherited a very run down building, a staff who had become used to low standards, and a large number of seriously underachieving students. 'It was diabolical,' said some parents with feeling. In this short time, the principal has achieved a remarkable improvement. Drab colors have been replaced by bright display in every space, most rooms are well furnished, and there has been a huge improvement in the quantity and quality of books and resources. The principal, the interim acting assistant principal and senior staff work as a positive, well informed and energetic team. 'Now I love my school and I love my teachers' said a student, to general agreement.

Much is still to be done, and the school remains undeveloped in important respects. Senior staff are well aware of the significance of data, and are rapidly training classroom teachers in its use. Teachers are starting to exploit the use of data, but the effectiveness of these practices varies between subjects and grades. Results on State and City tests remain low, with a very high number of students remaining on level 1, far below the standard, in all subjects tested. The school is gradually improving its test results. The quality of teaching is still variable. It is proficient overall, but a lot more rigor is needed from some teachers if students are to catch up. The school runs well and is a lively, friendly place to be in. 'I'd never not come', said one student, 'it's too much fun to miss.'

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.

Until recently, the school made very little use of data, and teachers had little knowledge of the performance of groups of students. There were few formal systems for methodically recording the progress of individual students. Once this was acknowledged by the school visits to other schools were made and professional support sought to develop the understanding of data and its use. Following this, and the appointment of an assistant principal with experience in data use, school administrators and the professional development team have a good knowledge of data and its use to help teachers understand how to help students make progress. Teachers are increasingly making good use of data. They have recently started to work with class assessment binders, and are gaining confidence in using the information to arrange students in groups and provide further help for those who need it.

In English language arts, teachers are already making good use of clear, very informative spreadsheets to identify students who need further help. They are confident in discussing this data with academic intervention service teachers and in planning the interventions students need to help them achieve the levels of which they are capable. Teachers are

now starting to develop their understanding of mathematics data, but their use of data across all subjects apart from English language arts is not so well developed.

The administration is fully aware of the relatively poor past performance in English language arts when compared with similar schools, and has been working hard to improve the situation. The increasing use of data has contributed to a gradual improvement in test results. Data has been analyzed for mathematics, but there has not been as much focus on this area, and results remain low. The school is well aware of the work needed in this subject. Data for science and social studies has not yet been analyzed in much detail, and considerable work is needed in these areas.

Although the school is beginning to compare the results of students against their past performance and at grade level, there is still little analysis of how different groups of students perform, for example by ethnicity or gender.

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 undeveloped.

In English language arts, teachers engage collaboratively in the process of setting goals, based on the evidence of data, and have developed a good understanding of how to improve students’ performance. This area is increasingly secure. In other subjects, particularly science and computing, but still also in mathematics and social studies, goals and plans do not yet focus on every student or grade. Teachers are aware of externally assessed results, but do not yet have the data as readily available as in they do in English language arts, and have not yet begun work in such detail. Goals and plans for improving students’ performance do not drive all members of the school community in all areas.

The school now collects and reviews a variety of data on the performance of individual students, particularly in literacy. Recently introduced data binders are increasingly well used to track students’ progress and in particular to identify students who need additional support. This analysis has resulted

Some parents are well aware of how they can help in developing their children’s performance, for example through the very useful work of the Committee for Hispanic Children and Families (CHCF). However, there is much more to be done in making parents more active partners in the education of their children. ‘It’s such a powerful thing when the school and parents get together’ was how some parents put it, and the help of the CHCF in reaching out to Spanish-speaking families has much potential.

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 undeveloped.

Because the curriculum in English language arts is now well established, all the foundations are now in place for the school to begin helping students make significant progress in this subject. Useful resources have been purchased and teachers have been

given effective training in their use. Students like the reading programs chosen and are very keen to make progress in their 100 Books Challenge. 'Don't interrupt me when I'm reading' was the response of one student, busily collecting titles to enter in her log book, to another. The school rewards their efforts imaginatively. Priority is given each morning to reading, and lessons are arranged to reflect the essential English language activities that students need to take part in. The school has spent its budget wisely and has invested in resources and professional supports that reflect its educational priorities. Teachers are accountable to their senior management for the progress of their students and for ensuring that each makes the individual gains predicted. Senior staff are good at asking for the evidence of a student's progress and potential.

The curriculum in other subjects is still undeveloped, but the example of English language arts suggests that equal success is possible in these subjects too. In English language arts, teachers are starting to adjust the work they give to each student, in line with needs and performance. In other subjects, a start has been made in mathematics, social studies and art, but the curriculum in these subjects needs developing into clear activities that can be assessed and resourced. In science and computing, in particular, the curriculum and resources need considerable development before each student can be given clear goals and the necessary help provided. The school has just received a major grant for computing equipment, and has carefully-considered plans to use this for the improvement of students' skills in technology, mathematics and English language arts.

At the moment, not all lessons engage students as well as they do in English, but students are very willing to learn, and in the best instruction, respond well. Staff know and care for their students well. Students say that there is always someone they can turn to for help. They like their school and are very pleased with its progress.

Attendance has improved gradually and now matches that of similar schools. The school follows up absence, analyzes and publicizes attendance very well, and rewards good attendance imaginatively.

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.

In a short time, the principal has made a huge difference to the school. Parents and staff say he has improved it beyond recognition. He has a clear grasp of the qualities he seeks in appointing staff. The principal, together with the acting assistant principal and the other members of the professional development team, make a very effective, energetic force for improvement. They compare outcomes closely, and decide on clear practical action to bring about improvement. They provide good opportunities for professional development, particularly in the use of data by teachers. Until quite recently, teachers were unfamiliar with the reasons for using data, but training by an outside expert and visits to other schools rapidly convinced staff of the benefits of this approach. As a result, teachers are becoming more confident in their use of the information they gain from their assessments.

The principal knows clearly the quality and needs of his staff. He regularly observes lessons, and teachers confirm the helpful briefings they receive on their performance. They observe each others' lessons and actively discuss their impressions of them. Planning in teams is becoming more effective. Grade meetings are well organized, and teachers have welcomed the positive help of the new assistant principal in these. For

English language arts, teachers discuss students' progress on the basis of good evidence, and this sets a good model for developing practice in other subjects.

Partnerships with outside bodies are strong. The school is fortunate in having a remarkably wide range of health services within the building, available to all students and their families. The CHCP provides outreach to families on attendance and social issues. 'If they're out there, they'll find them' was how a member of the security staff described the work of the attendance workers. In a good partnership with the school, it also provides the after-school program, a rich series of daily activities which successfully enhance the academic and social experiences of the students.

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 principal is now starting his third year in the school. His first year was spent in basic organization in dealing with serious problems of discipline, in improving the school's physical environment and resources, and in recruiting good staff. He devoted his second year to developing teachers' professional competence and establishing good support structures. He rightly identified English language arts as the subject with the highest priority, and results now reflect his careful planning and the development of his staff.

The Comprehensive Education Plan is a clear, well argued document, with relevant goals and accurate analyses of data. It provides for the regular assessment of progress. The plan is leading development across a wide range of activities, but the school has not yet reached the point where all staff and areas are responding flexibly to the evidence of the data they have gathered. Interim assessments are starting to take place. These have the potential to help the school adjust its plans and extend its goals.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Academy of the Arts (PS 335)	∅	✓	+
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		