



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Monroe Academy For Visual Arts

High School 692

**1300 Boynton Avenue
Bronx
NY 10472**

Principal: Richard Massel

Dates of review: October 24 – 26, 2006

Reviewer: Martin Newell

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

This is a high school that serves approximately 517 students from grade 9 through to grade 12 as well as 65 ungraded students. Over 89% of students are Title 1 eligible which is a much higher percentage than similar and City schools.

The school population comprises of 69% of Hispanic students and 29% Black students with very small percentages of White and Asian students. The percentage of special education students and the proportion of English language learners are higher than found in similar and City schools. The school's attendance rate at 73%, is below that found in similar and City schools. The appointment of the present principal has resulted in a significant upturn in terms of student achievement, behavior, safety and a far more positive learning environment where student aspirations are raised.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has turned this school around.
- The dynamic leadership and very clear vision of the principal has resulted in a significant improvement in student achievement and a far safer and more positive learning environment.
- The introduction of high quality assessment procedures to more closely align students' study courses with their academic needs has led to accelerated learning for many students.
- The principal uses data very effectively to give him a good grasp of how well individuals and groups of students are performing.
- Staff morale is good and there is a shared and renewed vigor to work together to move the school forward.
- Good quality instruction is evident where tasks are challenging, capture the interest of students and are closely matched to their individual needs.
- Students' aspirations are higher where instruction is stronger and it is here that students are often well behaved, focused and attentive learners.
- The school is very successful at maximizing the use of the extended day to provide a wide range of additional study courses.
- Parents and students speak highly of the changes at the school and are looking forward optimistically to the future.

What the school needs to improve

- The principal should seek to delegate more roles and responsibilities of school management to key personnel.
- Build the capacity of staff to gain a greater awareness of how data at all levels can be used to impact on bettering school achievement.
- Ensure all teachers make good use of data to inform lesson planning and meet the needs of different student in the same class.
- Make the best use of professional development opportunities to meet the individual needs of teachers and to drive forward the school's agenda of continuing student performance.
- Continue to follow and implement procedures aimed at improving attendance rates.
- Seek to involve students more in the target setting process and to continue to explore ways in which to parents gain a better awareness of how they can support their child's learning

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The present principal took over at the school about 15 months ago and in a short period of time he has turned around the development and progress of the school. There has been a significant improvement in the standards that students reach by the time that they leave the school and this has seen a greater number of students graduating than has occurred in the school's recent history. Much of this is due to the highly effective assessment and data analysis procedures the principal has implemented and the changes he has introduced to develop a far safer and more positive learning culture and environment. Students and parents spoke passionately about these changes and how they are looking forward to the future with a real sense of optimism with students eager to point out that 'our aspirations are now far higher.' However, the principal is a realist and recognizes that he needs to delegate more management responsibilities of the school to key personnel and to broaden the capacity of staff to analyze and use data rather than relying too heavily on his expertise.

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

Quality Statement 1: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor and facilitate the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The principal has put in place some excellent procedures for analyzing and using data to help improve student achievement and the results have been very successful. Student achievement throughout the school is on a steep upward trend, against all and similar schools and the percentage of students graduating in 2006 was the school's highest. This pattern is set to continue. The main reason for this is that the principal has designed individual study profiles for every student in school and ensures that areas and levels of study are very closely aligned to their individual abilities. Student progress is rigorously tracked and intervention and support strategies swiftly put in place if any student is not making the expected rate of progress. The principal makes very good use of City, State and ongoing school test and assessment data to continually check on student achievement and progress. He uses data innovatively to group special education students and English language learners and then ensures that the course of study they are following is very closely aligned with their academic needs. His thorough data analysis enables the principal to identify students that would benefit from additional English language arts and mathematics instruction both during and beyond the school day. The higher aspirations that are now instilled in students results in many taking full advantage of the additional instruction. The school's use and data analysis overall is recognized as a work in progress. The principal and staff recognize that there is a clear need for teachers to improve their own data analysis skills and how to use data more sharply to guide and inform their instruction and long term curriculum planning and not simply to rely on the principal's expertise.

Quality Statement 2: 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.

The principal has worked very hard and successfully at collecting and analyzing a wide range of assessment data to gain a strong awareness of precisely at what level each student is performing. The information is then given to faculty leaders and teachers who are expected to use it to guide and inform their curriculum planning and instruction. The rise in student achievement owes much to how well data is used to drive forward an agenda for school improvement. Graduation results are testimony of this. However, it is very much driven from the top. While there is evidence of good practice of teachers collaborating well to ensure that students make good progress, this practice is not integrated across the school. The responsibility of identifying particular students or groups of students whose performance is in greatest need of improvement falls too often under the auspices of the principal. The school recognizes that widening teachers' understanding of data will help to address the issue.

Discussions with students demonstrate that the principal has communicated his very high expectations to them and an equal level of expectation is required by most teachers. Students are clear that the principal would go more than the extra mile to help them make something of their lives and to create a school that students can be proud of. The principal goes out of his way to inform parents about their child's progress but recognizes that there are still some parents that the school has to reach and convince that they too can play a critical role in their child's education.

Most teachers identify clear learning objectives and encourage students to evaluate how well they have succeeded in meeting them. The setting of individual goals and targets is encouraged and is now far more formalized than it has been in the past. The practice of involving students in setting and reviewing their own targets is at an early stage of development.

Quality Statement 3: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school generally follows the mandated curriculum but a great strength is the way that the principal has looked precisely at what each student has so far achieved, examined what credits have so far been reached, which are missing and what is needed to help students reach higher standards and to move towards graduation. The information is used by the principal to inform teacher scheduling and in establishing learning groups for students of similar abilities and for students who are English language learners, including some bi-lingual classes. This great attention to detail is having a positive impact on helping to accelerate students' progress. Learning is further helped by the way in which the school now prepares students better for examinations, enrolls students for additional English language arts and mathematics instruction and, where necessary, teaches them examination techniques and strategies. In addition, extra classes before and after school and on weekends are provided. Two members of the English language arts faculty have written a good quality modified English curriculum which is impacting well on student

achievement because it ensures that students' prior learning is built on in a more systematic and progressive manner.

Instruction is at its best in the school where lessons are lively, move along at a good pace and where the tasks capture the interest of the students. It is no coincidence that it is in these lessons where students' behavior, focus and attentiveness are at their strongest. However, not enough teachers are proficient enough at using data to guide their lesson planning so that it consistently aligns learning tasks to students' individual abilities. The school continues to be increasingly successful at building a safe and secure learning environment where students want to attend. However, there remains, despite the best efforts of the school, a hard core of students whose attendance is a major issue and this impacts negatively on the overall attendance rate which is below the City and similar schools average.

Quality Statement 4: 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.

This aspect is judged proficient because of the impact that the principal has had on significantly improving students' achievement, behavior and aspirations. He has also been successful in raising staff morale, as there is now a greater shared vision amongst many of the staff to move the school forward at an accelerated rate. This commitment is centered on the need to work together in collaborative teams to share the good practice that is identified through the regular formal and informal observations of teaching and through developing a better awareness of how to use data. There is recognition that if the school is to continue to develop, staff must play their part to the full in providing instruction and a curriculum that continually and consistently turns the students on to learning.

The principal provides dynamic and totally committed leadership and in a short time has won the respect of staff, students and parents. The school runs well on a day to day basis because the principal spends considerable time in upholding the school's expectations for behavior, dress code, tracking student progress and their emotional well-being. The principal now recognizes the need to step back and invest responsibilities in key personnel and other veteran members of staff; develop their capacity to lead initiatives, for the staff as a whole to take responsibility for checking students' progress and to be held more accountable for outcomes in terms of academic achievement.

The school has accurately identified the need to make the best use of professional development opportunities to broaden teachers' understanding of how to use and interpret data at all levels to impact on student performance in addition to allowing individual teachers to pursue subject training opportunities to embellish the quality and vibrancy of their instruction.

Quality Statement 5: 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.

Since his appointment the principal has been very successful in his initial goal to improve achievement, behavior and safety at the school. As a result students' aspirations are far higher, student progress is checked regularly and robustly and students are left in no doubt as to what is expected in terms of their behavior and application. The results have been impressive in terms of the improved picture of achievement and behavior and in how the whole school community is looking forward to the future with a renewed and tangible sense of hope and optimism.

The school has drawn up a detailed and comprehensive education plan which rests at the core of all that the school seeks to achieve. The plan clearly outlines how the needs of all students are to be met, including rigorous intervention strategies and programs for those students in greatest need, although the principal passionately argues that all students are in need. Given the adverse circumstances of the school and the low achievement of students when the principal took over, he had little time to consult with staff and parents as to the content of the plan and its success criteria. However, the time is now right to involve staff and the wider school community in playing a far more active role in evaluating and reviewing the plan so that it develops a far greater capacity to influence a sustained development of the curriculum and instruction. The principal is well aware of the need to build the capacity of teachers to make best use of data and, in doing so, to increase their individual accountability and develop a strong awareness that the contribution of every member of staff matters in the greater scheme and vision for high achievement and sustainable success.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

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| SCHOOL NAME: Monroe Academy For Visual Arts & Design (HS 692) | ∅ | ✓ | + |
| Quality Score | | X | |

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| 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.

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| 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 | |

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| 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. | ∅ | ✓ | + |
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| 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 |