



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Bay Academy for the Arts and Sciences

Middle School 098

**1401 Emmons Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11235**

Principal: Mrs. Marian Nagler

Dates of review: February 11 - 12, 2008

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Bay Academy is a middle school with 996 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 15.5 Black, 8.5% Hispanic, 57% White and 19% Asian students. The student body includes 1.3% English language learners and 3.7% special education students. Boys account for 44% of the students enrolled and girls account for 56%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 94.2%. The school does not receive Title 1 funding.

The school serves gifted and talented students from across the City. They are selected based on their proficiency in basic skills and a particular talent. Students develop their talent in, for example, drama, science, vocal and instrumental music over the three years they spend at the school.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school operates efficiently and helps students to become polite, confident young people who are enthusiastic about learning.
- The school collects a good amount of data that enables the administration and teachers to track the progress of individual students, classrooms and grades effectively.
- Students have an exceptionally detailed knowledge of their current levels of achievement and their short and long-term goals.
- Teachers work well collaboratively to share ideas and learn from one another.
- Much of the teaching is stimulating, exciting and relevant to students' interests.
- The vast majority of students attend regularly and punctually so they have good continuity in their education.
- The curriculum is diverse and interesting and enables students to develop individual talents to a high level.
- Students and teachers enjoy warm and supportive relationships that result in a very positive learning atmosphere.
- The principal and administration command high levels of respect within the school community and are strongly committed to continued school improvement.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that all teachers differentiate instruction to challenge the higher achieving students.
- Analyze assessment data more thoroughly by ethnicity and gender to identify any emerging patterns and act promptly to address any underachievement.
- Evaluate programs and interventions more regularly to ensure that they are effective in helping students make expected progress, taking swift action to amend plans if necessary.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

Students elect to attend this school because it enables them to develop their individual gifts and talents to a high level. As one student noted, “This school has opened up a tremendous amount of opportunities for me.” Many continue on this path when they go on to attend specialist high schools. However, students also realize the importance of obtaining a firm academic grounding. They rise well to the challenges presented to them at the beginning of each year in terms of their expected grades and behavior. Most work hard in class, turn in their homework regularly and put a great deal of effort into individual and group projects. Teachers involve them exceptionally well in the learning process. They set clear short-term goals, which help them to see how well they are doing in relation to their long-term goals. Students respond well to stimulating teaching, showing great enjoyment and good levels of confidence and motivation.

The principal and assistant principals know every student and teacher well. They provide encouragement and challenge to support their learning and development effectively. Teachers value this and appreciate students’ interest and motivation. These strong, supportive relationships result in a very positive atmosphere for learning throughout the school.

Acting on the last review, school leaders have developed their own and teachers’ capacity to use the data from tests and assessments and this has enabled teachers to highlight common and individual weaknesses in students’ performance. They act promptly on this information, providing additional support to help students catch up. Students and their parents are also able to access data from the school website and this means that everyone is pulling in the same direction. The introduction of common planning time this year has ensured good consistency in curriculum coverage as well as providing useful opportunities for teachers to learn from each other. Workshops have helped teachers understand how to differentiate instruction. However, this remains a key focus for improvement, as often the higher achieving students are not receiving enough challenge in their work.

The inquiry team is well established. It is meeting regularly to track a particular group of higher achieving students whose progress has slowed significantly. The group has identified the link between this underachievement and the lack of differentiated instruction. It is planning a program of classroom observations to highlight where improvements can be made.

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 the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The school collects a great deal of data about individual students' performance and progress. The principal and assistant principals maintain a clear overview of the achievements of individuals, classrooms and grades. This information is constantly updated when new assessment data becomes available. In this way, they can identify those students who are at risk of not meeting their long-term goals. Teachers are able to access Acuity data effectively to help them assess which students need individual help in specific areas and which skills require further coverage with the whole class. This drives their instruction and means that students receive good opportunities to help them catch up in areas they may have missed in the past. Teachers also keep careful records of student performance in class tests and projects and use this information well to determine short and long-term goals for individuals. Assistant principals keep a close check on these through regular grade meetings and classroom observations.

The administration has a good understanding of how current performance compares with progress in past years and with similar schools. The current grade 6 for example is stronger than usual and looks likely to maintain rapid growth over the next two years. School leaders have begun to analyze student performance in terms of gender and ethnicity but this is not as well developed as other aspects of its work.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

Students are exceptionally clear about their current performance and their individual goals. They are adept at accessing their individual Acuity data through their own and the school's computers. This provides them and their parents with detailed information about strengths and areas for improvement. "I know my listening skills are weak," explained one boy, "and my teacher is helping me to improve them before the next test." Regular parent teacher conferences, report cards, informal meetings and "Orientation Teas" ensure that parents are fully aware of how their children are doing. In addition, the science department has developed a very effective monthly progress report to students and parents, which clearly identifies any areas where students need to improve. Students know their goals for each project or piece of work that they complete. Teachers supply a rubric so students know exactly what is expected of them. In a grade 8 robotics project, for example, the teacher assessed each student and group against a short-term rubric. In this way, they were able to gain useful feedback about their progress towards the long-term goal. Teachers encourage students to reflect on their own learning in journals and portfolios, which help them become further aware of where improvements are needed.

Students and parents fully understand the school's high expectations in terms of their work and behavior. Each assistant principal knows every student in their grade and frequently challenges or questions them about their work. Student planners emphasize the need for diligence and regular attendance. Parents have to sign the planner to acknowledge they have seen any specific comments a teacher has made about their child's progress. Teachers call parents immediately if they have concerns.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

"I was a bit disappointed I didn't get into another school but I'm really pleased now," said one grade 6 student, echoing the views of many. Students really appreciate the warm and respectful relationships they enjoy with adults. They know they can ask for help if necessary without feeling embarrassed. They benefit greatly from an exciting and diverse curriculum. They receive the full range of mandated subjects but Bay Academy's program of "talents" adds richness and breadth to the curriculum. Students spend four periods a week, developing their chosen skill area. Students in the creative writing talent group present innovative projects and articles about, for example, "A Guide to Middle School" and "My Dystopian City of Arille." Musicians perform to high standards in vocal and instrumental music and the Borough President recently judged school artists' designs for a new borough flag.

Such is teachers' enthusiasm that they are constantly seeking ways of making learning more interesting and stimulating for their students. Some are using computers to present their lessons and to help students research and present their work. Science lessons are often dynamic and extremely challenging, with good opportunities for practical work to illustrate the concept and maintain students' enthusiasm. It is not surprising that attendance rates are high. Students really enjoy coming to school. Nonetheless, absence is followed up rigorously and parents contacted immediately when their child is absent. Teachers have benefited from professional development in planning their lessons to meet students' different needs and achievement. This is beginning to have an impact on instructional practice, but is not fully embedded throughout the school. Often the higher achieving students are not challenged sufficiently by the activities provided.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The school operates extremely efficiently. Students and staff pay close attention to school policies and procedures so that everyone is aware of their roles and responsibilities. Students move about the building in a very calm and orderly manner, with minimum supervision.

The administration has an accurate view of teachers' individual strengths and weaknesses gained through extensive classroom observations. Teachers respond well to the sensitive, yet clear, verbal and written feedback about areas of their work that need improvement. They are reflective about their own practice and use common prep time very productively to visit and learn from each other. Through open discussion, for example, several teachers realized how they needed to adapt their practice and expectations to meet the needs of a particular student who was finding school difficult. New teachers receive very good support from assistant principals and colleague mentors and quickly understand the school's procedures and expectations.

School leaders' good knowledge of teachers' practice enables them to arrange professional development to suit both collective and individual needs. These opportunities give teachers the chance to refine their knowledge and practice to a high level and this in turn benefits the students. For example, social studies teachers attend regular conferences and workshops, run by the National History Society. These have given them the confidence to challenge students to produce high quality projects on "How racism affects education," "The Cuban Missile Crisis" and "Women in the Military".

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

There is a strong focus on improving student performance through setting long- and short-term goals. This works well because it involves the students and motivates them to do their best. Teachers are able to assess progress regularly and provide additional support if necessary. School leaders regularly provide teachers with clear goals for improvement that are followed up quickly to check implementation. This ensures a constant focus on developing practice to meet the students' needs.

The recent introduction of a Regents program for science is a good example of how the school is striving to improve services for its highest achievers. The school has also extended the number of additional services it provides for students who need further help in meeting the standards. This reflects the data from last year's tests which showed a growing number of students who had failed to make the expected year's progress. In addition, a support group has been initiated to provide some of the higher achieving students with further levels of challenge. However, the effect of these interventions and programs on students' progress is not evaluated regularly enough to ensure they are having the desired effect.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Bay Academy	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
Quality Score				X	

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather and generate data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the students progress over time.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?				X	
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?				X	
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?				X	
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?			X		
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?				X	
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?				X	
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1				X	

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set rigorous, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?				X	
2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?				X	
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?				X	
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?				X	
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?					X
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?				X	
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?					X
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?				X	
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?			X		
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?				X	
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?				X	
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X	

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.					
To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?				X	
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?				X	
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?				X	
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?				X	
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?				X	
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning, and effectively address discipline related incidents?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4					X

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.					
To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?				X	
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?				X	
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?			X		
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?			X		
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?			X		
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?			X		
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5					X

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped