



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Metropolitan Corporate Academy

High School 530

**362 Schermerhorn Street
Brooklyn
NY 11217**

Principal: Lennel George

Dates of review: May 12-13, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Denis Pittman

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Metropolitan Corporate Academy is a high school with 392 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 84% Black, 13% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 1.6% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 46% of the students enrolled and girls account for 54%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 69.1%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 79% eligibility.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has a clear, well-articulated vision for the school and a focused strategy, which is driving improvement.
- Data collation and dissemination is increasingly systematic enabling effective tracking of individual students' performance.
- The more secure learning has promoted improved relations between students and staff and between students themselves.
- Parents are well informed about their children's progress and they value the open dialogue they have with the school.
- A supportive Saturday tutorial program and an increased range of extra curricular activities enhance the curriculum.
- The productive arrangements with business organizations effectively support the learning experiences of students.
- Professional development is well focused and promotes the objectives of the school.
- Budgeting decisions have been appropriately aligned with the school's improvement needs.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve the monitoring and evaluation of progress towards interim goals through measurable and timely actions.
- Provide effective training in the use of data to inform instructional planning and track progress through regularly maintained records.
- Ensure instructional strategies have variety, are differentiated and are relevant to the specific learning needs of individual students.
- Ensure consistency of practice in the expectations of students, the quality of classroom environments and in sustaining the focus on improving attendance.
- Focus on planning for, implementing and monitoring literacy across the curriculum to improve achievement in English language arts.
- Develop the use of past performance and similar schools data so as to provide benchmarks for improvement.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

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

Overall Evaluation

This school is underdeveloped with proficient features.

The principal has a clear vision and planned strategy for improving of the school. Professional development and budgetary expenditure are appropriately geared to planning. He has successfully established a more ordered learning environment. The principal has effectively promoted more open and collaborative communication with both staff and parents. They are appreciative of these efforts and feel better informed about their children's progress as a result. However, the focus on improving student achievement, particularly in English language arts, and raising the quality of instruction is not adequately addressed through sufficiently rigorous monitoring. Day to day procedures are clear and enable the school to run smoothly. Students are appreciative of the help they receive with their work specifically if they are experiencing difficulties. Relationships between students and staff are positive, reflecting a mutual respect between them. Although attendance is improving, it is too low particularly with the older age groups. This lack of continuity in students' education is impacting negatively upon their achievement. Teachers are increasingly using data systems to track the performance of students but there is insufficient use of this data to modify instruction to meet students' needs. In consequence, lesson planning for some classes is not geared to providing a variety of teaching approaches. More general data such as that relating to past performance and comparisons with similar schools is not analyzed systematically. Teachers are committed to improving discipline and engagement in classrooms but there is a degree of variability across the school. The school's processes for formulating and deciding upon school plans are collaborative, enabling contributions from each facet of the school community. However, there are shortcomings in specifying measurable interim targets for these plans so that the implementation can be monitored effectively to sustain improvements. Students are appreciative of the increased range of extracurricular activities which is promoting greater involvement with school life. Productive partnerships with a small range of businesses support the curriculum program and promote learning opportunities for students. The school has made some progress in relation to issues raised at the previous Quality Review but attendance and teaching quality remain an issue. The school has established an inquiry team for monitoring low achieving students who are struggling with their writing with a view to promoting support strategies for improvement.

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 proficient.

The school routinely collects relevant performance data from State and Regents examinations and from its own assessments. Recently introduced computer software programs have improved diagnostic assessment of mathematics competence and core

skill levels of special education students. The school appropriately utilizes data in order to identify initial intervention support for students. An inquiry team has been established to focus on low achieving students who have difficulties with writing. Utilizing a range of formative assessments and teachers' conferencing information, the team successfully promotes strategies to improve students' writing skills. Effective diagnostic data and formative assessments for special education students enable relevant referral systems to be identified. Yet, this data is not used consistently to inform planning in some classes. There are few English language learners, but their needs are identified through systematic diagnostic testing and progress is monitored proficiently. A broad analysis of a gender achievement shows that in credit accumulation, girls perform better than boys but in standardized tests their performance is weaker. The relative progress of ethnic groups is not systematically analyzed but is being appropriately addressed through individual assessment and support programs. The school does not have a sufficient range of past performance data to identify trends in student achievement but is beginning to make relevant comparisons between successive years. The analysis of similar schools data is not sufficiently robust so as to identify relative benchmarks that would act as a target for improvement. The principal has a continuing focus in training staff on utilizing data to achieve consistency of practice in monitoring progress.

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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

The school has not used data consistently to devise detailed plans and set challenging goals for students. Some planning is the result of collaborative meetings between departmental staff but it is not routinely reflected in classroom practice. The principal systematically analyzes scholarship reports after each marking period to identify common issues within the subject area or specific requirements for individual students. However, the school gives insufficient attention to specifying interim objectives for promoting improvements. Action plans lack timelines to check whether progress is being made. Most teachers set next step goals so that individual students are given a purpose to their learning. Sometimes effective collation of formative assessment helps staff efficiently to identify students who are underachieving. This is increasingly evident in the collection of data for students in the sample identified by the inquiry team. Students' underachievement is often the result of the lack of continuous education because of poor attendance and the high mobility of some students. Support and intervention strategies for these students are increasingly effective. Students are not always able to articulate what personal targets have been set for them. There is insufficient routine reinforcement through discussion with teachers over such issues as presentation of work. Behavior management and classroom procedures are not consistently applied. However, there is more coherence in a shared understanding of the importance of proficiency in literacy skills. The school reinforces the need for high attendance by aligning it with passing requirements. Information is routinely conveyed to parents through regular conference meetings and documentation. The school is proactively providing an increasing number of parental workshops, surveys and informative newsletters. Parents appreciate these efforts at promoting improved communication between them and the school.

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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

Curriculum maps and planning proficiently reflect the requirements of Regents courses. However, there is insufficient coherence in implementing literacy across the curriculum in order to promote a specified goal of improving achievement in English language arts. The curriculum is enhanced through a suitably diverse range of elective programs. Students who are having difficulties with the completion of assignments and homework can attend a supportive Saturday tutorial program. These programs are helping to engender greater mutual respect and trust between students and staff. Teachers are accountable for the quality of their instruction but there is inconsistency of practice. A few staff embrace new technology and have a good range of teaching approaches and make their lessons interesting and motivating for students. However, too large a proportion of staff use a limited range of teaching strategies, being predominantly didactic, focusing mainly on question and answer methodology. Often the absence of structured lesson plans hinders the reinforcement of learning objectives for students. In particular, there is insufficient use of data to inform teachers’ planning in order to provide differentiated instruction. In general classroom environments are not stimulating and do not provide sufficient evidence of exemplars of student outcomes or guidelines as to what are relevant standards in subjects. The budget is managed proficiently to promote the needs of the school. The principal has made a significant financial commitment to promoting professional development to enhance teachers’ competences. The impact of the use of external consultants to promote these objectives is being reviewed. The school recognizes that it has insufficient information technology resources that limit opportunities to promote independent learning for students. Attendance is too low and so is monitored closely at class and whole school level.

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 proficient.

The school is gradually building the capacity of its staff to sustain improvements in the quality of its outcomes. There is a structured program of lesson observations conducted by the administration to monitor and develop instructional practice. However the outcomes are variable. Professional development priorities have centered on improving lesson planning to accommodate differentiated activities, building positive relationships, behavior management and identifying the skill needs of students. The impact of these activities has not been adequately monitored. However, in general there is an appropriate focus on improving the culture of the school to focus on the outcomes of learning and student engagement. Individual staff are encouraged to attend external courses on teaching specific subjects or help with lesson plans. The school appropriately provides a mentoring program to help staff new to teaching and support for “seasoned” teachers who are joining the school. Staff applaud these arrangements. Students receive good guidance that is welcomed and appreciated by them. Administrative procedures are efficiently structured and in general effectively implemented. The school is effectively managed. It is now well ordered and disciplined. However, the application of student management procedures is inconsistently implemented by some staff, which impacts negatively on the tone and atmosphere of the school. Productive partnership links exist with a range of business organizations. In particular the links with Goldman Sachs has been successful in broadening students’ perceptions of business life through a mentoring

program and internships. Students are productively involved with an entrepreneurship program “Junior Achievement of New York”. This enables them to be involved in job shadowing activities and “teaching” elementary school children the fundamentals of financial literacy.

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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

Improving analysis of performance data and classroom-based assessments is providing a better basis for planning and identifying subject goals. However, the process is not rigorous enough because of a lack of clearly identified “steppingstones” and prescribed timeframes to measure relative progress in meeting objectives. The lack of consistency in implementing literacy across the curriculum and embedding differentiated instruction within the school is evidence of this. Greater coherence in strategic planning is reflected in relating professional development to the goals of the school. The school has collated data in relation to the graduation cohort to provide a focused strategy of intervention support for individual students but continuity is adversely affected through student absence. There is insufficient coherence and consistency of practice amongst the senior managers of the school to evaluate the achievement of whole school goals rigorously. The school is making more effective use of diagnostic materials for the identification of baseline competencies in relation to core subjects. The item analysis of test material is enabling teachers to identify more precisely key learning needs of students. Currently this diagnostic process is being proficiently phased into the school. The maintenance of student profile data within the guidance program provides an effective basis for the analysis of progress of individual students. This data leads to meaningful conferencing between teachers and subsequently students. Collaborative discussions within the faculty generate useful data but this is not systematically recorded or analyzed for action points to promote strategic planning. The school does not use interim goals in strategic planning so it is unable to respond proactively to changing circumstances. In many cases it is “firefighting” and reacting to circumstance rather than being “ahead of the game”. The principal does have a clear vision for the school and commitment to promoting relevant goals for the success of students. Whilst these goals are shared with the school community the transition into practice has been impeded by too great a focus on organizational issues rather than instructional leadership. The principal is aware of this issue and has taken steps to rearrange administrative responsibilities and take on a more pre-eminent role, supported by his senior administrators, in promoting effective teaching and specifically student progress and learning.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Metropolitan Corporate 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