



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Aerospace and Science Academy

Elementary-Middle School 127

**98-01 25 Avenue
Queens
NY 11369**

Principal: Chayvonne Harper

Dates of review: June 3 - 4, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Debra Spivak

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Aerospace and Science Academy is an elementary-middle school with 1160 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 26% Black, 62% Hispanic, 3% White, and 9% Asian students. The student body includes 27% English language learners and 5% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 93.7%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 67% eligibility.

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Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is a respected leader who encourages reflective practice, and whose clear vision is supported by a strong infrastructure.
- The institution of “data days,” learning walks and focused pre-observation conferences promotes the development of a community of learners.
- The “New Teacher Network,” vertical planning and collaborative structures support the development and empowerment of all teachers.
- The inquiry team’s work models effective practice and encourages staff to be more thoughtful about the needs of struggling students.
- All school constituencies understand that high expectations have been set for students and staff.
- Implementing the school-wide enrichment model develops the strengths, talents and creativity of all students
- The school’s behavioral and disciplinary framework supports successful learning and the social development of students.
- A variety of effective partnerships successfully supports the academic and personal growth of students.
- The school environment of trust, respect and order benefits instruction and learning very well.

What the school needs to improve

- Set rigorous, measurable interim goals with specific timeframes for achievement to evaluate progress effectively.
- Consistently monitor progress and revise plans in response to qualitative and quantitative data to improve student outcomes.
- Expand the systems, approaches and tools to differentiate among students with varied levels of academic proficiency and so meet their needs.
- Ensure that the academic rigor evident in the work produced in the lower grades is matched throughout the middle school.

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.

The school is led by a well-respected principal. Parents, teachers and students speak highly of her dedication and determination on behalf of the school community. It was this determination and dedication to the community that facilitated the combination of an elementary school, serving students in the surrounding neighborhood, with a magnet middle school that screened its students, to create what is now a community elementary-middle school. Parents are extremely appreciative of the K-8 structure that allows their children to remain in the immediate community until high school. The school-wide enrichment model, which offers students the opportunity to participate in a variety of enrichment clubs, is another example of her determination to provide the best educational and extra-curricular opportunities to children. The two-mile hike made by 600 students and parents to a Mets game is yet another. The school also has an array of partnerships with community-based organizations that contribute to the broad and engaging curriculum offered at the school.

The school has made good progress since last year's Quality Review. It trained teachers in the proper uses of interim assessment programs, created content specific checklists to assist with assessment and the inquiry team piloted a student portfolio system. Common planning periods instituted on each grade within content areas include cluster teachers.

Staff members gather data that is primarily displayed in content-specific folders in each classroom. The inception of "data days" has ensured that all staff utilize available data to plan and consider the differentiation of instruction for students of varying performance levels. While differentiation has been a topic of professional development, its implementation has not been actualized in every classroom. The administration is working to ensure consistency of differentiated instruction across both the elementary and middle school grades. Currently the elementary school is more rigorous. Similarly, interim goal setting, periodic monitoring of goals set and consequent adjustments is not uniform, routine practice.

Teachers plan collaboratively. Evidence of the project-based learning units can be seen as you walk the halls, view the bulletin board displays and literally walk through the fifth grade rain forest. The "New Teacher Network" collaboration sees first and second year teachers improving their craft in a risk-free environment. They have challenged themselves to create a "New Teachers Survival Guide," to continuously support each other and prospective new teachers to the school and/or to the profession.

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.

Staff from each grade are afforded the opportunity to meet and review the data gathered during monthly "data days." These days develop a better understanding of the data, collection formats and the practical use of the information gathered. Staff treasure these days, and other schools that have visited have expressed an interest in replicating this model. The weekly pupil personnel team meeting focuses on the progress of students with disabilities, with teachers asked to systematically assess each child's development toward meeting the grade-specific performance indicators. The newly hired assistant principal shares her expertise in teaching English language learners, improving the way the school looks at the data for that growing population. Data supports the fact that these students show yearly improvement, becoming proficient in English in suitable time.

There is an achievement gap between the performance of males and females, and among various ethnic groups. The school does try to meet the needs of the distinct gender groups by offering a few gender-specific classes. The school wishes to explore the expansion of this practice in order to address the aforementioned achievement gaps. The administration reviews the recent achievement and progress of individual students, classes, grades, and the school overall, but has yet to review this progress long term. Conversations around the reasons for certain successes are reflective in nature and based in current research. The principal empowered the school leadership team to examine the school's performance relative to its peers, which proved to be quite enlightening to those involved.

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.

While the school community has a clear sense of the principal's vision, the school goals are not written in a measurable or time-bound format. As goals are not specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely, it is difficult to rigorously assess progress towards meeting the stated goals.

Weekly school newsletters inform parents and teachers well of the school's focus in each curriculum area. The staff handbook and detailed checklists ensure that teachers understand the whole school focus and the expectations regarding subsequent professional development. The school invites, and expects, parents to offer useful information to teachers in order to support the learning needs of their children.

Parents, students and teachers are keenly aware that the administration has high expectations for all, and the rigor exhibited in the elementary school clearly aligns with this. These expectations are strongly reinforced throughout the year at curriculum night, "Meet the Teacher" night, parent-teacher association meetings, the specialized high school admissions institute, through interim progress reports to parents and the school newsletter. The school views college as a "must," so the administration is reviewing the

timing of a career month to allow partnerships made during the month to develop throughout the school year instead of at the end.

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.

Students receive a well-rounded education at the Aerospace and Science Academy. The school has implemented a school-wide enrichment model through which students join one of several clubs, which include cooking, arts and crafts, martial arts, dance, film and a crime scene investigator club. Students described this as one of the things they like most about the school. The strong collaboration between the in-house music and arts providers and classroom teachers is also evident throughout the hallways.

Although the school has lost funding due to the decrease in Title I funding, the principal manages the budget effectively to ensure that the needs of all students and staff members are met. The decision to hire a new assistant principal, well versed in the pedagogy of English language learners, was a strategic one to impact on the achievement of that growing subpopulation. The hiring of this additional administrator has allowed the other two assistant principals to focus on instruction and administrative issues, instead of administrative issues solely. Teachers receive immediate supportive feedback on the learning walks and all formal and informal observations. School staff focus on the implementation of differentiated instruction in each classroom, with work on refining and improving their practice continuing. Differentiated instruction to meet individual student’s needs and provide suitable challenge is clearly visible in the elementary grades. The middle school does not evidence such rigor consistently, in both the delivery of instruction and the work produced.

The student daily attendance rate is above average, effectively supported by a daily outreach program that includes the school administrators, the family worker, guidance counselors and office personnel. The school recognizes the challenge of educating children who are living in temporary housing situations and strives to work with all agencies to ensure that these children receive a premium education.

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 “New Teacher Network” sessions and the implementation of “data days” give new and seasoned teachers the enriching opportunity to learn together. Tenured teachers offer their expertise to those new to the school or to the profession in a collegial setting, which is a distinctive feature of the school. Teachers describe the school environment as “warm,” “nurturing,” “understanding” and “respectful.” Many staff members stated that they would not work anywhere else and their desire was to have more of the same, with an expansion of the peer mentoring/coaching that occurs.

Teachers and students are an integral part of the decisions made at the school. School leaders review the information from needs assessments and surveys to ensure that they

are rigorously meeting the needs of all staff and students. Staff members participate in school, network, and Citywide professional development sessions based on interest and/or need. The professional environment is reflective and the community centers around professional learning. As the student population continues to grow in numbers and diversity, the school is looking to understand the needs of a culturally diverse population through book studies.

The “STAR bucks” reward system is part of the effective positive behavior intervention system. Posted reminders in the hallways, lunchroom, yard, auditorium, and classrooms remind students of the positive behaviors expected. Each sign specifies the ways in which someone can be a “star,” such as, “Stay safe,” “Think and be thoughtful,” “Always follow rules,” and, “Remember to be respectful.” The high visibility of the administration throughout the day, the hiring of a dean to address pressing issues, and a staggered lunch schedule all contribute positively to the overall school tone and discipline. Additionally, the school has affiliations with many community-based organizations and cultural institutions, which provide a breadth of services to students. For example, “Elmcor” facilitates an afterschool program for all middle school students, Vaughn College tutors grade 8 students in math and the Kiwanis Club supports the science and technology program.

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.

The formulation and dissemination of interim goals is not sufficiently specific or robust in this school. While the administration has shared the expectation that all goals for students targeted by the inquiry team and students with disabilities must be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely, this emphasis has not been shared with the entire school community. The majority of stated goals are yearly. All students in the school articulate their personal and academic goals, yet these too exemplify a lack of understanding regarding interim and long-term goals. The school leadership is looking to enhance its goal setting procedures, to include quarterly meetings to discuss the overall progress toward meeting benchmarks.

Teachers are encouraged to use a reading level tracking form and the checklists provided in “Everyday Mathematics” and “Impact Math.” They share this information with the administration so that the administrative team can see the progress across classes, grades and throughout the school. One of the “data days” this winter was devoted to the review of the data for English language learners and the implications for instruction. Comments and suggestions in teacher observation reports show the school recognizes that monitoring of student progress and associated action is not sufficiently secure.

The school community at large has a joint vision for the future development of the school and works strenuously together to make that vision a reality. The academic and personal achievement of the students is paramount and, to that end, the parent body participates in workshops, meetings and classes offered at the school. In recognition of the school’s efforts to support them, many parents volunteer at the school or show their deep appreciation for the staff in other ways.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Aerospace and Science 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