



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Academy for Scholarship and Entrepreneurship

Middle-High School 270

1619 Boston Road

Bronx

NY 10460

Principal: Zenobia White

Dates of review: February 12 - 13, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Ronnie Young

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Academy for Scholarship and Entrepreneurship is a middle-high school with 422 students from grade 6 through grade 11. The school population comprises 40% Black, 56% Hispanic, 1% American Indian, and 1% Asian students. 2% are of unknown ethnic origin. The student body includes 41% English language learners and 39% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 - 2007 was 89.0%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 79% eligibility.

The school is in its third year of existence and in its second premises, with a third move due in 2009. At present it is in a shared building with two other schools and this, plus its expanding roll, has led to some limitations in physical space.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has a very good knowledge of the performance and progress of individual and groups of students.
- There is a broad, deep and engaging curriculum, which extends students' experiences and opportunities.
- Intervisitation is well established and used to share good practice.
- A wide range of partnerships with outside organizations provides further experience and opportunities for students.
- The emphasis on youth development supports students socially and emotionally.
- Staff are practiced at using diagnostic tools and other assessment measures to understand students' progress.
- The Self-Directed Improvement System (SDIS) used in the school ensures goal setting is cyclical and continuous.
- The cabinet, staff, students and parents have extremely high expectations of themselves and of each other.
- The core curriculum provides meaningful interim data.
- The principal, ably assisted by the cabinet, provides strong leadership across the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Give students a more active role in setting their own goals so they can take more responsibility for their learning.
- Make sure staff individualize instruction by level, by task and by learning style so students can learn in their preferred way.
- Revise and clarify the whole-school vision so it becomes the single driving force across the 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 proficient.

In its three years of existence the school has worked very hard to establish itself as a high-achieving organization which lays the best possible foundation for its students. All students have high expectations of graduating and going to college. The principal, ably assisted by the cabinet, provides strong leadership across the school and has great ambitions for the school. Lack of permanent accommodation means that the school has not yet taken in its full complement of students and its formal systems are not yet fully established.

The school collects and analyzes data well and has put into place user-friendly and sophisticated systems which help staff to track students' progress easily. The school has chosen its core curriculum carefully, and has broadened its range of activities and extended its opening hours to give students a wide range of exciting opportunities and support, such as putting a full business curriculum into place. Its partnerships with a wide range of outside organizations extend students' experiences and support their emotional and social needs. Although the school uses data well to set goals students do not play a sufficiently active part in the goal setting, which leads to some passivity. The school does not use data sufficiently to drive individualized instruction and staff do not differentiate lessons sufficiently to challenge the most able, whilst still supporting weaker students. The mission of the school is clear with regard to its students succeeding. However, all members of the school community do not share its mission in relation to its business and entrepreneurship.

The inquiry team meets regularly and is following a group of students in grades 9 and 10 graders who have problems with comprehension in the Global History Regents examinations. The school has addressed the recommendations in the last Quality Review effectively. The Children First Initiative has helped staff to analyze data and has provided training in data use. The school has made available after school disciplines not addressed by the Springboard program and links with outside organizations have strengthened the entrepreneurial component of the school's mission. The school has provided assessment containing short-term goals every three weeks.

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 has developed very good systems for the collection, analysis and use of data. It has formed its own data team, the Children First Initiative team (CFI), which is responsible for all aspects of student data in the school. This team meets weekly to process any new data and is the primary source of internal professional development. A number of external sources of data are used, including scholarship reports and Regents and other assessment data, along with internal assessment such as Kaplan and Springboard. The school collects course performance data every three weeks and enters attendance data daily so staff have a clear picture of each student's progress and attendance.

The school analyzes its data well. Teachers carefully track small groups of English language learners and special education students. This helps students to transfer to mainstream classes as early as possible. The school tracks ethnicity and gender separately, and is therefore able to act on significant differences seen. For example, after identifying that girls outperformed boys in English language arts and math in grade 6, the school has started to teach one class in single sexes for English language arts and math to see if it improved boys' grades. It is too soon at the moment to see any impact. The school has boys-only and girls-only advisory periods, as students say they feel more comfortable, and has started an initiative to find male role models to mentor boys, with the intention of raising self-esteem in boys.

A computerized database holds all data to make its collection and use more sophisticated. All staff have access to computers in each classroom. The school has also installed an electronic grading system, which is accessible by all staff. It is also accessible by students and parents so they can also keep track of their own or their children's progress. This has encouraged staff to use and store data as a matter of routine.

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.

Levels of staff collaboration are good and teachers work with guidance counselors and special education or English language teachers to set goals for students. Staff also work with each other at grade and subject meetings. Students know their goals but are not active in setting goals for themselves. This leads to some students being too passive and not taking responsibility for their learning. The school is skilled at identifying groups for special focus, such as the single-sex initiatives. Another example is the business and entrepreneurship curriculum where staff have tried, with some success, to work with students' interests for targeting project work. The bottom third of each group, including poor attenders, is tracked and provided with academic intervention. Special attention is given to those students near grade borderlines. Academic intervention is available after school, on Saturdays and before school starts. Those students needing credit recovery or preparation for Regents examinations are also welcome at these sessions. This has increased student progress.

The cabinet, staff, students and parents have very high expectations of themselves and of each other. Said one parent: "I expect this school to get my child into Yale or Harvard". The school has the expectation that every student will graduate school and go to college and to this end, it displays college memorabilia such as sweatshirts and t-shirts throughout the school. For example, each classroom is named after a college and displays its t-shirt on the door. The school lays out its behavior expectations in the acronym CARE (Character, Attitude, Respect, Effort) and this is on display in all classrooms and hallways.

Communications are good between the school and parents. Weekly newsletters, monthly calendars and frequent parent-teacher meetings are the main communication routes for whole-school goals and student reports. Parents are constantly encouraged to provide information to the school about their children. However, the school does not always transmit individual student goals, so parents say they cannot help their children as much as they say they would like.

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 proficient.

As the school belongs to the College Board group, it uses the College Board curriculum, Springboard. This has very good provision for interim data on English language arts and mathematics and uses specialized textbooks, which lay out the curriculum for the whole school. This curriculum fits very well with the New York State mandated social studies and science curriculum, which the school follows. Art, music, business classes and a choice of French or Spanish also form part of the weekly schedule. The school has worked very hard on producing a wide range of exciting electives and extra-curricular activities. These are accredited and take place on three afternoons per week after school. Examples of this program include mask making, theater arts, sports and fitness, cooking club, year book club, robotics, Brazilian dance and drum line.

The school has started to introduce differentiation into classes and has invested in external consultancy to provide professional development and to work with individual teachers. In class, students usually work in groups but staff do not usually differentiate the work by task, and teachers do not often form groups by level or by learning style. Some teachers put a strong student to work with a weaker one, so the first can help the other, but do not individualize the work to challenge the stronger student or support the weaker. This results in poor engagement in some classes. The school has made great efforts to improve attendance and punctuality. Because the school identified Hispanic boys as the poorest attenders, the school appointed a Hispanic male attendance officer who follows up all absences by phoning home and calling the parent into school for a conference after three absences. The school has also appointed an F status teacher to head up grade 9, which are the most challenging group for attendance. These measures have increased attendance this year.

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’s collaborative ethos has led to close team working, and intervisitation between teachers is well established. The College Board runs a “Train the Trainers” program for its schools. Three teachers who have been through this program act as coaches and mentors for the rest of the staff. They also act as co-coordinators who bring staff together to share good practice. The school encourages staff to visit other schools and this, along with common grade and subject planning times, has facilitated the sharing of good practice. There are very good systems in the school for youth development and guidance. The College Board has trained a guidance counselor to assess gaps in

individual student data that could affect credit scores and graduation. She has become the dedicated college counselor who will work with the first grade 12 next year. The Children's Aid Society, another of the school's partners, provides trainers for health education, job club, art, advisory and tutoring, all of which are part of the daily schedule. The school also has specialist guidance counselors for the middle and for the high school. This provision has ensured that students feel comfortable at school and has addressed their emotional and social needs.

The school has successful partnerships with a range of outside organizations. The College Board prepares students to access and succeed in college and provides a number of specialist tools and opportunities for college entrance. The Children's Aid Society works with the physical and emotional wellbeing of students and their families. Other partnerships include the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NTE) and Working In Support of Education (WISE Institute), which provide educational support and build financial literacy. The Male Initiative helps male students improve their study skills and assists with sports activities, and the Leadership Program helps 8th and 9th graders to build self-esteem and interact positively. These partnerships extend students' opportunities and enhance their experiences.

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.

Because there are six points during the year when students receive reports, goals for them are time limited and mostly measurable. Teachers' goals are also time limited, as they all work with pacing calendars and again are mostly measurable. However, because others set goals for teachers and students, and the teachers and students themselves do not set them themselves, they take too little ownership of their goals and so the goals do not always drive activity in the school.

School staff are practiced at using periodic assessments and diagnostic tools and most are quick to revise plans or practice if data suggests it is necessary. As one teacher said, "We are always changing our plans – it comes with the territory." An example of this is the identification of the middle school as not progressing sufficiently quickly in English language arts and mathematics. The school developed an intensive Saturday program to accommodate all the topics for the whole of the middle school instead of just the bottom third. This raised scores significantly. The resources for these classes were taken from the Kaplan assessments so staff could easily track progress. The school uses the Self Directed Improvement System (SDIS) to ensure goal setting is cyclical and continuous so the achievement of a goal automatically leads to the setting of the next.

The school's overall mission to ensure every student graduates school and has a successful college career is well promoted and understood. Its mission with regard to entrepreneurship and business is less clear however, so it is not a driving force, which can easily facilitate change.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME:	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
Academy for Scholarship and Entrepreneurship (X270)					
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