



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Young Scholars Academy of the Bronx

**Middle School 289
3710 Barnes Avenue
Bronx
NY 10467**

Principal: Vaughn Thompson

Dates of review: October 16-17, 2007

Lead Reviewer: John Collings

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Young Scholars Academy of the Bronx is a middle school with 565 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 71% Black, 22% Hispanic, 2% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 4% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 -2007 was 92%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 66% eligibility.

The school opened In September 2005 on a large campus shared with three other schools. The students who entered grade 6 in 2005 are now in grade 8. The school is divided into three academies, one all boys, one all girls and one mixed gender.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- There is a very strong climate for learning in the school, where students say, “it’s cool to be clever”.
- The school uses data well to identify the progress of groups of students and individuals.
- Students make good progress, ‘find learning fun’ and want to do their very best.
- The academy structure in the school results in students being supported well both personally and academically.
- Because of the strong leadership and vision of the principal the school has challenging goals that are well articulated and understood by staff and students.
- Students progress well because of the innovative approaches to learning the school adopts and the good support services provided.
- Professional development is used effectively to support teachers in developing their use of data to create increasingly differentiated lessons.
- There are very high expectations of staff and students.
- Staff are collegiate and support each other in striving to improve instruction so students learn as effectively as possible.
- Attendance is high, demonstrating that students are engaged in learning and really like school.

What the school needs to improve

- Further develop the use of data analysis to ensure that work given to students is based on their prior achievement and differentiated to meet their needs.
- Create further opportunities for professional development enabling teachers to implement the school goals.
- Make greater use of information technology to support students learning.
- Ensure there is consistent communication with parents so they are fully involved.
- Develop management systems to delegate responsibilities.

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.

Students are well behaved and give each other good support in their work. They want to succeed for themselves, their teachers, and the school. Students make good progress and the school has a very good climate for learning.

Because of the strong leadership and vision of the principal, the school has closely monitored challenging goals that are well articulated and understood by staff and students. Data is used well to identify the progress of groups of students and individuals. With its full complement of teachers and students, it is now in a position to review its management structure to develop greater delegation of responsibilities across the school.

The school has just fewer than 600 students divided into three academies boys, girls and mixed. This is in order to support their different learning styles. The mixed academy contains honors classes. This innovative approach, supported by good support services, ensures students learn well and make good progress. There is effective professional development in order to support teachers in developing the skills to teach single gender classes, and in the effective use of data to aid the planning of differentiated lessons based student's prior achievement. Expectations are high and staff are collegiate and supportive in striving to improve instruction to promote effective learning.

Although information technology is used to support learning, it could be integrated more successfully into the cross-curricular planning to allow knowledge, understanding and skills learnt in one part of the curriculum to be applied and consolidated in another.

Although the goals for the school are well articulated, some parents do not feel they are well informed about the school goals or their children's progress. Attendance is high, and overall students make good progress.

Good progress has been made since the last review. The school is now firmly established with a full complement of students. Students behave well and the school is a place of learning. Staff are rapidly developing their use of data to inform instruction and goals are increasingly being shared with members of the school community. The inquiry team has met and identified the students it wishes track from one grade to another. It has yet to decide on the nature of the intervention for these students.

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 has good procedures for monitoring student progress. State data is carefully analyzed to identify trends in achievement. The criteria for success is the growth students have made from one year to the next and short weekly assessments are analyzed to identify whether students are on track to meet their goals.

The progress of special education students is carefully monitored by the progress towards the goals identified in their individual education plans. Good teaching and personal and academic support allows a significant number of students to move from special education classes into mainstream, and to then achieve well. English language learners also make good progress. The school monitors the progress of gender groups very well and has demonstrated that single gender instruction has improved the progress of many students.

The school has only just received its full complement of grades. The students who entered grade 6 in 2005 reached grade 8 this year. The school therefore has limited data for comparison with previous years. Ambitious targets have been set for the grade 8 students to reach this year and the whole school is determined to meet them. The school compares favorably with similar schools.

Professional development supports teachers in analyzing data to inform instruction, which has had a positive effect on progress in many classes. However, the systematic use of such data is not yet endemic but the good examples are being turnkeyed to ensure greater use.

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 proficient.

Data is used well for identifying where additional resources and support are likely to have the greatest effect in improving performance. Good progress made last year was used to set ambitious targets. Early indications show that the school is on track to achieve these.

The school knows its students very well. There is a holistic approach. The school identifies those in need of academic, emotional, and family support and uses significant resources to help them. The school philosophy is that students do not learn well or make good progress, when issues outside the school distract them. Special education students are very well supported through well-focused academic intervention services, collaborative team teaching, 12:1 classes and individual teaching where necessary.

Many teachers use data in their classes to ensure work is at students' instructional level and sufficiently demanding. However, data analysis could be used more effectively to ensure that work is differentiated, challenging and firmly based on students' prior achievement.

Academic goals are shared with teachers and students, but some parents do not feel well informed about their children's progress. However, the school has very high expectations

of teachers and students and as a result, students make good progress, “find learning fun” and “want to do their very best”.

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.

The school has adopted a good range of structural and curricular approaches to monitor student progress. The innovative structure of two single gender academies and one mixed gender means there are less than 200 students per academy. As a result, students are very well known to the staff and can be supported academically and personally very effectively where necessary. Students feel safe and supported and enjoy the very strong climate for learning where, “it’s cool to be clever”.

Due to the innovative approaches to learning, students progress well. Many teachers work together to identify where similar content and concepts are being taught in different subjects and plan for their application and consolidation across the curriculum. Whilst information technology is integrated into lessons, its use to support students’ learning through word processing and presentations in English language arts, social studies and science is limited

Teachers use data to differentiate their teaching to meet students’ identified need. However, planning work based on student’s prior understanding of the knowledge, understanding and skills being taught is not yet firmly embedded throughout the school.

The budget has been used well to maintain the commitment to small classes and the academy structure with single and mixed gender classes. These structures give coherence and a unique learning climate.

The significant support given to students and their parents promotes a strong climate of mutual trust and respect. This results in students being proud of their school and wanting to do well. Consequently, attendance is high, demonstrating that students are engaged in learning and really like school.

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.

There are frequent informal classroom observations by the principal and assistant principal. Staff find these constructive and helpful in identifying student learning styles and supporting differentiated teaching. Professional development has focused on implementing the school goals of good use of data to enable teachers to plan lessons firmly based on students’ prior achievement, and their style of learning. However, these approaches are not fully embedded throughout the school and further supportive professional development is planned.

Teachers are given good opportunities to visit each other’s classes within each academy and in subjects across academies. There is a mutually supportive environment where teachers reflect on the effectiveness of their own and others’ teaching, and strive to improve instruction to promote the most effective learning. There are sound induction

procedures for new teachers and teachers new to the school, and they feel well supported through mentoring, intervisitations and lab sites.

The academy structure enables teachers to know their students very well. The school has a very good range of support services supporting students directly but also indirectly through family support. There is a very strong belief that helping the families also supports students' learning. Teachers, councilor, social worker and attendance teacher, collaborate well and play a significant part in ensuring students attend school and make good progress both personally and academically.

The school runs well. Students are well behaved, engaged in learning and want to do well. Now that the school has its full complement of teachers and students, it is aware that it needs to establish a management system with clearly delegated responsibilities.

There are effective links with outside entities supporting academic and personal growth. These include; Principal for a day with Castle Harlen, the YMCA supporting the advisory curriculum in the school, a conflict resolution agency and programs to develop self esteem through dance and drama.

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 well developed.

Since it opened, this new school has made significant progress, largely due to very clear goals and direction led by the principal. New staff joining the school have been led into the goal setting and review process. Goals are very clear, measurable, have identified responsibilities, time frames and a clear process for reviewing progress towards their implementation. There are achievement targets for students, and teachers are held accountable for their students reaching those targets. Good use of data identifies suitable targets. The effect of the school structure and interventions such as 'writing across the curriculum', greater consideration of students' learning styles, use of information technology and increased differentiation and are consistently reviewed and modified as necessary. The effectiveness of the academy structure and single gender classes are reviewed to ensure they are working in the best interest of students. Review and reflection of goals has resulted in adjustments to professional development, intervisitations and student expectations.

There is a very clear vision for the future with a clear philosophy of small academies and single gender classes. The school has high expectations of all and is striving to improve student achievement through increased consideration of students' learning styles and differentiation. However, this vision is not clearly understood by all parents.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Young Scholars Academy of the Bronx (Q289)	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 demanding, 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?			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?			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	