



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

South Bronx Academy for Applied Media

Middle School 296

**778 Forest Avenue
Bronx
NY 10456**

Principal: Roshone Ault

Dates of review: March 3 - 4, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Louise Kapner

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

South Bronx Academy for Applied Media is a middle school with 277 scholars¹ from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 38% Black, 61% Hispanic, and 1% White scholars. The scholars include 12% English language learners and 20% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the scholars enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 88.2%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 83% eligibility.

South Bronx Academy for Applied Media is a school of choice and shares space with three other schools. The school is a member of the partnership support organization and works with the Center for Educational Innovation – Public Education Association.

¹ **Scholars:** In South Bronx Academy for Applied Media all students are referred to at all times as scholars. Therefore throughout this report the word ‘scholar’ is used instead of student.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is highly focused on creating a safe environment to support the academic and social development of all scholars.
- New systems for collaborative planning enable teachers to work as a cohesive team well focused on instruction and creating a nurturing environment.
- The school has developed many effective partnerships that further the school's goals and provide scholars with opportunities to participate in enrichment.
- The school makes every effort to inform and involve parents in their child's education.
- The school does a good job of providing higher achieving students with suitable opportunities to challenge them to reach higher standards.
- The school's inquiry team gives very good support to the school's efforts in collecting a wide-range of data to monitor performance of scholars.
- Teachers are held highly accountable to improve scholar outcomes.
- School goals and programs are continually revisited and revised to address scholars' needs.
- Professional development is an integral part of the school program to enhance teachers' skills.
- Assessment results and expectations are shared with scholars to help them set personal goals to improve their performance.

What the school needs to improve

- Promote the use of a congruent grading system between classroom work, progress reports and report cards to give a clear message about the quality of their work.
- Refine and standardize the teachers' data collection systems to ensure ongoing monitoring of scholar performance and progress is made easier.
- Establish timeframes for interim review of scholar and teacher goals to monitor progress of achievement toward meeting end-of-year goals.
- Provide content area teachers with opportunities to participate in intervisitations to learn best practices.

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.

The principal assumed the leadership role and was responsible for the start-up of the South Bronx Academy of Applied Media three years ago. She is highly committed to creating a learning environment where all scholars have opportunities to achieve highly. She greets them each morning for a recital of the school creed, “Motivated, Enthusiastic, Dedicated, Intelligent, Achiever”, based on the school’s theme of ‘Media’. The school has created many effective partnerships that engage students in activities that support their academic and social development. The school is rightly proud of its accomplishments thus far, which include a marked improvement in student performance on the standardized exams.

This year the school has established many new systems that address effectively the areas noted in the last Quality Review and provide further support of their efforts. Inquiry team members identify and provide a cohort of scholars with either remedial or accelerated support in math. The team is also very effectively supporting staff by designing tools and providing training in the collection and use of data to inform instruction and monitor scholar performance and progress. However, presently teachers do not use one comprehensive format for recording and monitoring of scholar performance and progress. Newly identified grade-team leaders are supportive of a collaborative process enabling staff to effectively work together addressing scholars’ needs. Teachers are held to a high degree of accountability. They set long-term instructional and achievement goals to ensure teaching is improving scholar outcomes. However, teachers do not have interim timeframes for review of progress towards meeting their goals.

Teachers provide scholars with guidance and expectations. However, grading systems are different for student work and report cards. Scholars are set yearly goals based on their past performance, but do not have interim targets as they work towards their end-of-year goals. All teachers participate in varied professional development. Currently, some staff do not have suitable opportunities to enhance their skills in content area instruction. The school makes every effort to involve and inform parents. Written communication goes home about scholars’ progress and school events, and parents are invited to share relevant information about their child. The ongoing review and revision of programs and practices, and the untiring efforts of the school community, places them in a very good position to continue to improve scholar performance and progress.

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

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

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

The school collects and records a wide range of data from standardized and school-generated sources for both academics and behavior. The inquiry team is very supportive of this effort as they work collaboratively to design systems to ensure that all teachers have a grasp of the performance and progress of scholars at individual, class and grade level, and by subject. However, this collection of data is not formatted in a manner that provides staff with a comprehensive overview of scholar performance and progress that is user-friendly, making analysis more difficult than it needs to be. The school analyzes and uses information very effectively to gain a good understanding of the performance and progress for special education students, English language learners and by gender. As a result, the school is very effective in guiding instruction for these groups

Teachers maintain assessment binders with a wealth of information including results from periodic and school assessments and State tests, weekly instructional goals, and yearly teacher and scholar goals. This high level of comparative analysis provides the school with rich information relative to the average change in proficiency by whole school, by grade, by student, and by subgroups from 2005-2007 on the standardized tests and is used to inform planning and instruction. Male scholars were identified as making the least progress and English language learners saw the greatest improvement on the English language arts exam, and special education students made the greatest improvement in math. As a result, in September 2007, the school initiated a gender specific class in grade 7. Recent data analysis shows a positive impact on the performance for grade 7 girls. The principal carefully reviews the school's progress against schools in the network, peer group and district and she often visits other schools to learn best practices. She is very proud of the "largest leap" of her grade 6 scholars.

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.

The principal is highly focused on creating school-wide goals that are shared and understood by the school community. She uses data very effectively to identify areas of emphasis. A newly established model allows the principal and grade-team leaders to plan together. Teachers set yearly class achievement goals, which they see as a "motivating tool". Through an in-depth data review, teachers predict the number of scholars who will meet standards and those who will move out of the lowest performance level. Teachers identify scholars' needs and strategies they will use to meet their target. However, a formal interim revision process of students' goals is not presently in place.

Regularly scheduled meetings by grade, and content area, enable team leaders and staff to work in a highly collaborative manner to review scholar work and plan effective instruction. Teachers' instructional goals are developed and reviewed weekly. They use

scholars' ongoing assessment results to plan next steps. The school also reviews data to provide additional suitable support. Scholars attend an early morning "Scholars Sunrise" or Saturday academy for mandated services or enrichment. Higher performing scholars in grade 8 received tutoring for the specialized high school exam, and now a cohort is identified for accelerated work to prepare them for the 'Math A' Regents. The school plans to expand this practice to grade 7 scholars. Average scholars receive effective support to enable them to earn high school credits.

Academic intervention services during the day encompass highly differentiated methods and materials well matched to scholars' needs and classroom instruction. Staff carefully monitor scholar performance and progress, and make suitable changes to programming. The school has high expectations for its scholars. Each morning the principal greets scholars, and they recite the school's creed to focus them on the day ahead. Scholars are involved in formally setting their own long-term goals. Scholars are well aware of their past performance, their strengths and areas for further development. They use this information to effectively set personal long-term goals. Classrooms display instructional and behavior guidelines, and teacher comments and marks are evident on student work to provide guidance. However, grading systems on scholar work, progress reports, and report cards are different and this inconsistency gives mixed messages to students about the quality of their work.

The school does a very good job of regularly sharing information on scholar performance with parents, who are asked to sign interim progress reports and report cards. One parent said, "I am always being informed." At the September family night, and during parent-teacher conferences, parents share relevant information about their child to support the school's efforts to improve scholar outcomes.

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 provides the mandated curriculum for all scholars, implementing programs that are project-based and supplemented by suitable materials. The school is very evaluative of the impact of its programs on scholar achievement and therefore has changed its math series to one that is more structured, and that successfully supported scholars in a nearby school to make "nice growth". The impact of this program on scholar achievement is not yet evident. Interim and curriculum-embedded assessments serve to guide instruction and assess progress of scholars.

Scholars participate in a wide array of enrichment, arts activities and media classes during the day and after school. Higher achieving students receive extra help towards preparation for the Regents exam. Staff members are held highly accountable for good, engaging and well-matched teaching and for improving scholar outcomes. The school's decisions on budgeting, scheduling and staffing are carefully thought out. The addition of a full time dean's position in February is supportive of the school's efforts to reduce behavioral incidents. The school is highly focused on creating an environment of mutual respect. Scholars complete surveys sharing interests and aspirations with staff. Scholars feel that they are "able to connect with teachers" and teachers see themselves as "establishing relationships with students". Additionally, the newly created grade-team leader position has provided a "richer bond" between teachers and administrators. The school places a high priority on attendance, which is continually improving.

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 principal and assistant principal are frequently about the building visiting classes to monitor instruction. During learning walks and formal observations, administrators use a "lens" through which they focus on classroom environment and instruction. Teachers find the feedback "very encouraging". Administrators also use the observation process to identify teachers' needs. The inquiry team is providing very good professional development to staff on the collection and use of data to guide instruction. Coaches and outside consultants involve staff in suitable content area opportunities to learn best practices, resulting in enhanced skills. Intra-school intervisitations are regularly scheduled and teachers observe colleagues and discuss what they saw and what they will integrate into their teaching for improvement. However, due to the small size of the school not all content area teachers have similar opportunities to see best practices. The school has many new staff, several whose undergraduate degree is not in education. First year teachers receive weekly mentoring and others receive transitional support as needed.

The school is very focused on meeting the social and behavioral needs of its scholars. A cross-section of staff sit on the "scholar success team" and the "discipline advisory team". They meet regularly to identify students who need additional help and to establish routines and programs that improve student achievement. Numerous, highly effective partnerships support these efforts. Staff from the Partnership with Children work directly in the classrooms. They help scholars build a sense of community and stay focused. Grade 8 scholars are actively involved in effective pre-vocational conversations.

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 principal sets interim- and long-term goals for the school and looks at student performance to monitor progress. Students set long-term goals that are not formally revised on an interim basis but their performance and progress is regularly monitored to guide instruction. Teachers' class achievement goals identify the needs of individuals and groups of scholars for meaningful intervention. Teachers review results from interim assessments to measure student performance and progress, to help in setting weekly instructional goals and to guide instruction. Scholars set yearly personal achievement goals based upon their prior performance on standardized exams. However, at present teachers and scholars do not formally revise their goals on an interim basis.

The school's Comprehensive Education Plan, developed in consultation with the school leadership team and teachers, defines the school's goals. The plan is under continual review to ensure it reflects the focus of the school and sets forth clear goals related to improved scholar outcomes. The principal pays close attention to information gained from scholar's assessments and teacher conversations to modify school programs and

practices. Changes in schedules for teachers and scholars are implemented during the school year to ensure scholars are receiving suitable instruction. The school continually reflects upon its actions to determine impact of the changes and to use the information for future planning. As a result of looking at student performance and progress, average grade 8 students had mid-year class changes and are making nice progress. Using her own school survey, and through retreats with members of the school community, the principal is well focused on the school's future. She works untiringly to create systems that will result in an "ideal" school that provides scholars with a motivating and suitable instructional program.

In moving ahead to the next initiative the school does not consistently evaluate existing programs fully enough, despite the extent of the data generated by periodic assessments. One important piece of the jigsaw that is missing in its monitoring of performance is the gauging of each student's rate of progress against longer-term goals. This means that the school does not have the framework for evaluating whether the progress of each student and class is fast enough, and then realigning the goals or instructional plans as necessary.

The school's leadership has used its knowledge of the school well to make important strategic decisions about its development. The success of these decisions is demonstrated by the remarkable turnaround in the quality of the education and opportunities offered to students. The principal's clear-sighted view that order needed to be restored, and workable management structures put in place, has laid the foundations of the school's current phase of development. Staff are now much better equipped to concentrate their energies on the quality of their instruction and this is beginning to pay handsome dividends as achievement rises. Underpinning the school's substantial and sustained improvement has been the principal's clear vision of a school that produces leaders and not followers, and of the strategic steps necessary to create a school that can deliver this.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: South Bronx Academy for Applied Media	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