



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Monroe Academy for Business and Law

High School 690

**1300 Boynton Avenue
Bronx
NY 10472**

Principal: Kabaya Mbuyi

Dates of review: May 20 – 21, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Richard Woolf

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Monroe Academy for Business and Law is a high school with 561 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 30% Black, 67% Hispanic, 0% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 21% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 80.0%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 85% eligibility.

The school shares the building with four other high schools and an elementary school. The principals meet regularly to agree the most effective way to use the facilities. There is a campus wide sports program. The principal of the Monroe Academy for Business and Law has been in position for seven months.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- A new principal with a clear focus on improving instruction is leading the school well.
- The school is using data more effectively to highlight the needs of all students to improve their learning opportunities.
- The principal has a good understanding of how to compare the school's performance with that of other schools thereby enhancing student learning.
- The school provides its students with a curriculum that meets their needs, and offers a number of electives to broaden student horizons.
- The school receives very good support from a number of outside organizations and services clearly focusing on raising students' expectations.
- Teachers receive valuable assistance from the school's support service team in meeting the learning, emotional and social needs of the student's.
- A more rigorous professional development program is now in place to align with needs of individual teachers.
- Teachers feel more supported than previously and welcome the feedback they receive from the administration to assist in improving instruction.
- Students speak highly of the respect they have for their teachers and the changes the principal is introducing.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to train teachers in the use of data and assessment to differentiate instruction.
- Ensure there is a rigorous process in place for the setting and dissemination of goals specifically relating to gender, ethnicity and the highest achievers.
- Develop rigorous accountability procedures and set challenging targets for teachers to improve learning for all students, especially those at risk.
- Build thorough structures to monitor and revise teacher and student goals.
- Improve procedures to improve attendance rates, especially for the large number of disenfranchised students.
- Ensure procedures are in place for teachers to meet in grade level teams to better share data and practices to improve student learning.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

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

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

A new principal of seven months is leading the school well. He has the support of the staff and students for the measures he is securing to improve the learning opportunities of the students. The implementation of many of these measures began during his time as the school's assistant principal. As principal, he is now employing them with more conviction, which means that students feel more secure and welcome the chances they have to improve their education.

Teachers are beginning to use data with a degree of consistency to inform their instruction and identify student needs, particularly for special education students and English language learners. However, the school does not yet apply the same close analysis of data to identify and meet the specific needs of gender, ethnic or highest-achieving groups. The school does have overarching goals that link to improving graduation rates, credit accumulation and college entry. Administration has yet to set teachers sufficiently challenging but realistic targets to make a significant impact in reaching these overall goals. The principal is cognizant of the need to challenge teachers and students more vigorously through enhancing monitoring procedures. Nevertheless, these procedures are starting to occur and monitoring plans for the new academic year are in place. The principal understands data well and compares year-on-year progress and the school's performance to other schools. In turn, this is helping to improve the work of his own teachers and students. Students profit from a curriculum that is addressing their needs and a number of interesting electives that help to broaden their horizons further. Teachers are benefiting from a more rigorous program of professional development. The program clearly aims to meet their personal and professional needs with the outcome of improving student learning. Teachers feel they receive a great deal more support from the administration this year than previously and this is making for an increasingly harmonious and collaborative staff. The student body speaks highly of their teachers and especially of the innovations the new principal is introducing to raise the school's performance. The school works very hard to maintain and raise the levels of attendance but it has yet to find effective ways of re-engaging its most disenfranchised students.

Since the last Quality Review, the school has improved teacher collaboration, professional development and enhanced graduation rates. The inquiry team functions well. The formulation of the target group from data analysis is effective. Through targeted instruction and goal setting, the group already is showing improvements in external examinations results.

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 makes good use of data to gain an overview of students learning needs. This includes tracking individual groups over time and making predictions for future outcomes at both subject and grade level. This data is proving useful to set school-wide targets. The school also tracks its own performance through a longitudinal and horizontal analysis of data. This system is proving very informative as a means of charting overall school progress and effectiveness.

Teachers have a good understanding of the benefits of data in raising the achievement of some groups of students. Currently teachers use a paper-based method for the collation and retrieval of data. This is being replaced by computer software and training is helping teachers to input data to a central databank. The principal feels this approach gives teachers a more powerful tool to analyze data and at the same time judge comparative strengths and weaknesses of individual students and cohorts. The school has not fully trained all teachers to use the data system methodically to support this development. The data does provide teachers with valuable information to enhance the individual learning of special education students and English language learners. However, the school does not rigorously analyze data relating to gender, ethnicity or highest-achieving groups. The principal astutely uses data to compare how other schools progress relative to his own. This comparative work has been utilized to make a number of changes to benefit his students' learning, including the attendance of students at other schools for subjects not currently undertaken at this school.

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.

The school has a number of overarching goals that relate to improving student graduation rates and scholarship. Working with the senior leadership team, the principal sets measurable goals to include a numerical increase on previous student outcomes. The goals are challenging but realistic. However, to meet these goals the school has yet to set its teachers measurable, realistic, time-bonded individual targets. Students receive targets from their teachers and, for the most part, they are aware of these and work strenuously to achieve them.

Special education students and English language learners' targets are very specific. This is assisting them to perform at higher levels than might be the expectation for both groups. The school is yet to set the same rigorous goals for its ethnic and gender groups. Similarly, the setting of targets for the school's highest-achieving students is not yet systematic or challenging enough to ensure they achieve their full potential. The school shares the goals with all sections of the school community. Student assemblies, advisory classes and numerous parent meetings are good examples. Parents agree

with the new principal's high expectations of the students, so are working with him and his teachers to raise overall standards. Parents attend meetings to discuss their children's progress and welcome the open dialogue they have with teachers. Teachers dialogue as an important part of extending the home-school partnership to support student learning.

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 is making a number of curriculum adaptations in its efforts to improve student learning and re-engage students on the verge of dropping out of school. This is particularly the case for improving the reading and writing skills of students who data shows are below the expected grade level norms. A number of worthwhile elective courses successfully contribute to broaden student learning. The school has plans to offer more courses in the coming year that align directly to the school theme of business and law.

The school does not yet hold teachers accountable for providing students with engaging and interesting lessons. There is a visible lack of technology to support student learning. This means that many students are compliant learners who make progress over time but are not fully challenged. Differentiation occurs in some classrooms but overall there is a lack of consistency amongst teachers to use it as a means of developing each student's intellectual capacity. The principal is seeking to develop a school-wide policy for the implementation of differentiated instruction. The school uses data efficiently to identify how best to use its budget to meet school goals. Staff and students work well together and the tone of the building is now conducive to learning. Students say this results from the principal setting much higher expectations of the entire school community. Students also feel adults within the building are now more approachable and treat them in a manner more appropriate to their maturing years.

Attendance is low because of a large proportion of students do not attend regularly. This is despite the school's very best efforts to systematically contact parents and reach out to individual students. The school can demonstrate that many long-term absentees arise from a small but significant number of students, many who no longer reside in the locality. However, the school has not yet developed procedures, or suitable courses of instruction, to re-engage students for whom consistent attendance remains an issue.

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.

Administration undertakes informal observations to each class at least once daily. Teachers appreciate the instant feedback they receive that helps them to develop their instruction. These visits lead to the identification of individual teacher professional development needs. Teachers comment how this approach is enabling them to become

better practitioners. The introduction of voluntary after school sessions that embrace whole school issues are proving most popular and informative. The school provides time for common planning in subject areas but does not yet afford teachers time to meet in grade levels to share data and ensure consistency of practice. There are numerous times for staff intervisitations to observe and share best practice. Teachers welcome this as a positive approach for improving instruction. New teachers receive considerable support and appreciate the encouragement their colleagues provide for them. A strength of the school is the valuable assistance teachers have from a very active group of support staff. This provides students with highly specialized additional help to deal with their learning, social and emotional needs. Systems in place to reduce incidents of poor behavior are proving very effective. The number of suspensions has clearly fallen and the school environment is conducive to learning. A number of outside organizations provide comprehensive support for students, by providing additional counselors to help students with personal problems and funding after school programs that over two hundred students regularly attend.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school's work is underdeveloped with proficient features.

The monitoring and revision of goals is not a well-developed area of the school's work. Currently the school uses mid-term reports and end of semester tests to chart student progress. This process is valuable but is not yet rigorous enough to ensure each student is making sufficient progress in meeting his or her targets. However, some staff are starting to learn how to use the Acuity system as a means of providing the school with more diagnostic information. In addition, there is no significant data to show how teachers reach their interim targets using clear benchmarks and timeframes. The scholarship reports do provide the principal with data, but this approach is not rigorous so he does not have a clear picture of the school's overall progress.

While the current system of assessing student progress is not methodical, some revision does take place. This may be in terms of re-scheduling of either teacher or student programs. The principal does use data from the marking periods and semester report cards to highlight specifically those students who appear to be failing in their courses and are likely holdovers with the view to re-organize schedules and provide additional services. The school does realize the value of being reflective in analyzing the data from the current year before setting new goals. The principal sees this as an essential component of moving the school forward. Providing staff with an opportunity to be part of the planning process, he seeks their views on what each saw as being successful in improving student performance and what was unsuccessful.

The principal has a very clear vision of school development over the next three years. He has an appropriate focus on improving student learning and preparation for college and the world of work. He shares this vision with teachers, students and parents who all applaud its worthiness and support the efforts he is making to achieve it.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Monroe Academy for Business and Law	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