



**Department of
Education**

Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

**Quality Review Report
Office of Accountability
2008-2009**

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

**Academy for College Preparation and Career
Exploration**

Middle - High School 382

**911 Flatbush Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11226**

Principal: Ditta Korbeogo

Dates of review: December 3 - 4, 2008

Lead Reviewer: George Wallace

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Academy for College Preparation and Career Exploration is a middle and high school with 402 students from grade 6 through grade 11. The school population comprises 89% Black, 10% Hispanic, 0.5% White, and 0.5% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 5% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 94.2%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 66% eligibility.

Overall Evaluation

This school is underdeveloped with proficient features.

The school collects a wide range of useful data. Most middle school data is based on the use of ACUITY and that for the high school students is based on transcripts. The counselor and principal examine the latter in an ongoing fashion. The counselor uses data, especially for high school students, to interview those students whose progress is slower than expected. However, the records that show the nature of the findings from such conferencing are incomplete. The principal uses data to make effective organizational changes to enhance students' learning. There are examples of good data analysis, but there is no routine detailed drilling into data to explore the full extent of trends and patterns for all subgroups.

Teachers' assessment procedures vary considerably and sometimes provide too little information about the progress of students over time. However, teachers are open with students and inform them of their performance and progress. Students respond positively to the setting of long-term aspirational goals and are periodically reminded of these as the ultimate goal they are working towards. However, short-term learning goals are poorly developed and vary considerably throughout the school. Where they occur, students have few ideas as to the best strategies to employ to reach those short- and medium-term learning goals.

Student performance is currently high. Expectations are also high and the broad academic curriculum reflects the aim of the school to ensure that students gain sufficient qualifications to reach their goals. Parents value the school's mission and are kept well informed of their children's performance. Communication between the school and parents is good. However, in contrast to this, communication between the senior leaders and staff is insufficiently precise and, therefore, staff are not full partners in the growth and development of the school. Relationships in class are generally good, and teachers care for their students. Too frequently, however, the challenges presented to students are not great enough and fall short of the demands conveyed through the school mission statement. Differentiation is rare in both teachers' planning and the teaching of students to meet their needs. The work of the inquiry team is not providing developments in this or any other area since it has not yet started to function. Monitoring of the curriculum and teaching quality through formal and informal observations is underdeveloped, as is the overall meeting structure throughout the school. Staff are cooperative, but opportunities for teamwork are rare, though professional development has a high priority with the focus determined by the principal.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school collects, analyzes and uses a wide variety of performance data to ensure that students are on track to succeed.
- The school has high expectations of students' academic, personal and social growth by setting a positive tone and climate for learning that is valued by students and parents.
- Students enjoy life at their school and show interest in their learning because they want to succeed and performance shows that for the most part they do, a feature of the school that is highly valued by parents.
- Senior leaders ensure that the curriculum is broad and meets the needs of all students, enabling them to achieve success.
- The administration's tracking of student performance leads to strategic decisions to alter aspects of each student's curriculum to help ensure they reach their learning goals.

What the school needs to improve

- Devise systematic ways of ensuring that student performance data is analyzed consistently at class, grade and whole school level for trends and patterns so that subgroups of students with specific learning needs are identified.
- Develop systematic and consistent approaches to goal setting by ensuring that teachers are involved in setting school goals and students are involved in identifying their short and medium-term learning goals and know how they can achieve them.
- Improve teachers' use of performance and other data to ensure that differentiation in planning and teaching is commonplace.
- Improve ways in which staff share professional issues and ensure that a rigorous program of observations with agreed criteria is developed by senior leaders in order to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning effectively.
- Improve the research potential of the inquiry team by ensuring that the process starts earlier in the school year and encourages greater involvement of more teachers to discuss students' work and their assessment outcomes in teams.

Part 3: Main Findings

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

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school gathers a wide range of useful information. The focus is on the use of students' performance data, in particular, the New York State test results, ACUITY outcomes and Regents course outcomes. Many teachers use test outcomes, especially the predictive and formative aspects of ACUITY, to determine specific areas of the curriculum that require re-teaching. However, most often the whole class is re-taught the same topic. This is indicative of the lack of a differentiated curriculum throughout the school. Individual teachers use their own systems to keep a record of student performance over time. Therefore, there is no sharing of best practices in the school.

In the high school, the principal's knowledge of the assessment outcomes of students at the end of each marking period allows her to make strategic decisions to enhance the quality of the curriculum for underachieving students. For example, underperforming students in math receive additional support, which comes from extra staff as well as classes after school and on Saturday morning. Further effective support is offered through ACUITY programs, which are completed at home as well as at school. Such work is shared with parents who are part of an exchange of information between school and home, thereby helping to enhance their child's learning. The school counselor uses computer systems to set up priority lists of students to discuss their progress. The process is valuable. However, it is underdeveloped since there are no clear records showing outcomes of conversations with students together with their goals. Other forms of information, acquired from external sources, as well as internal surveys are available to senior leaders, but are rarely used. While there is no strong interrogation of data exposing several different types of subgroups, the school senior leaders mainly look at subject performance trends. Where appropriate, students are fast tracked into more demanding courses if they show the necessary skills and wherewithal to merit such a move. For example, some 9th grade students are moved into courses with 10th grade students. Across the school, there is an inconsistent approach to the way in which teachers use data to log performance and progress.

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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

Students use time in their advisory lessons to set aspirational goals and these are well known to parents as well as students. These goals relate specifically to students' college and career aspirations as well as knowledge of the Regents success required to secure them. However, the setting of subject-specific learning goals is inconsistent. Some students have clear goals related directly to their learning needs, while others have none. Even more rare are teachers' use of next steps or strategies to be employed

by students to aid their learning. There are no interim checkpoints to assess the effectiveness of differentiated instruction and therefore no common approach to ascertaining whether changes to approaches in teaching are required.

At a whole-school level, however, the principal has recognized that reading comprehension is a skill that runs through most subjects. Consequently, the development of students' reading skills is a whole-school goal with strategies identified to ensure that transferable skills between subjects are improved. At a whole-school level, annual school improvement goals exist. However, it is not evident that the faculty has been party to school self-evaluation and or shared in discussion about the core priorities for subsequent years. Hence, staff are sometimes unsure about whole-school goals.

The principal, together with the school's only guidance counselor, maintains an ongoing check on student performance at whole-school level. Consequently, priority lists of students are drawn up so that discussions are held with those in greatest need of improvement. Senior leaders meet with families to discuss student achievement and ensure that all interested parties understand what is required for students to reach their goals. Other staff meet weekly, but this is principally for professional development rather than communication about student performance and subsequent needs. However, throughout the school parents and students recognize that teachers care about them. Teachers communicate well their high expectations of performance. Attendance is good and monitored closely by the school. There are frequent conversations and exchanges of information between staff and students to ensure that students are on track for success in their testing subjects in the middle school and in their high school Regents courses.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students' learning goals.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school provides students with a broad range of courses. The curriculum, therefore, not only satisfies New York City and State requirements, but also offers high school students a wide choice of electives and advanced placement courses, including the visual arts and physical education. Technology and physical education, however, are subjects of low importance across the school. Students in the middle school have the opportunity to take Regents courses, and experience success, with one such example being Earth Science. Many of the advanced placement courses taken in high school are popular and therefore classes are large. This slightly reduces their opportunities to have one-on-one conversations with teachers. The scheduling of courses is highly accurate such that students are channeled into a wide range of courses that meets their needs for graduation.

Teachers use a wide range of assessments to track student progress. Common to all teachers of math, science and English is their use of ACUITY. Many other forms of assessment are used and most are devised, as are their recording systems, by individual teachers. This leads to a wide variety of tracking systems. The best procedures in the middle school ensure that there is alignment between the different forms of assessment and the New York State scale scores.

Throughout the school, teachers know their students well, but they rarely use data to differentiate activities to ensure that students are challenged. This means that although teachers are conscientious in their work, there are wide inconsistencies across the school in relation to the level of challenge many students receive. The general lack of differentiation in lessons means that the most able students often complete work early and have to wait for the next instruction rather than having open-ended tasks that allows them to extend their thinking and consolidate understanding. The principal and counselor monitor high school student progress using student transcript information, but the information kept on each student is incomplete.

School leaders take good account of data in using the budget wisely to reorganize different aspects of the curriculum to aid students' learning, especially for those who are finding their work difficult. All classes have adequate resources but there are few examples of teachers having resources that would encourage them to take innovative approaches to their teaching. In all classrooms during the Quality Review students behaved well and relationships were good, even though on occasions many students were in the hallways during lesson times. However, the Learning Environment Survey results suggest a more negative picture with regard to safety and respect. Even so, students show interest in their work, want to succeed and many of the older students show high levels of academic progress. They also have strong views about their life in school, but there are no comprehensive or whole-school ways for their feelings or opinions to be heard.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.

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

The inquiry team is small relative to the size of the school. At present, no research project is underway and therefore no target population identified. Communication between the principal, other senior leaders and faculty is poor. Apart from the whole school meeting together on almost every Monday afternoon for professional development, there are few other collaborative meetings. Teachers do not feel as if they are stakeholders in the development of the school. Levels of collaboration, even between teachers, are limited and meetings across the school at grade and subject levels are rare and inconsistent at best.

The principal manages professional development. The program reflects the needs identified by senior leaders. Teachers value professional development, but surveys and commentary indicate that it is not always matched to the needs of individual teachers. In addition, there are minimal opportunities for teachers to discuss practice and use student survey information about learning preferences and attitudes toward learning to drive up the quality of instruction. For example, teachers, including new teachers, have little opportunity for inter-visitation. Teaching is monitored, but this is infrequent and there are no agreed procedures or rubrics to assess teaching and learning. However, the principal has devised a useful template for informal observations. This allows users to focus on specific teaching and learning issues, the outcomes of which ensure good feedback to teachers. New teachers receive some mentor support, but there is no comprehensive program to aid their development.

The school has a suitable range of support services that connect with students and their families. These are used to support students' personal and academic development.

The strong link with the College Board is central to the aim of the school in supporting students in their quest to gain a college place on graduation.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and 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.

School leaders have in place an ongoing system to monitor the progress of students, especially through the transcripts of high school students. Consequently, those students who underperform are identified and targeted for one-to-one discussions and a program put in place to get them back on track for graduation. In addition, senior leaders' analysis of data allows for the identification of some subgroups. This sometimes leads to changes in the grouping of students and, on occasions, the placement of high-achieving students in groups above their chronological age. All students set aspirational goals in their advisory periods and these are monitored so that students are kept aware of exactly what they are aiming for. Goals are set in other subjects, but there are no whole-school procedures for setting and monitoring goals.

Senior leaders regularly use checkpoints to monitor student performance, especially for high school students. While such monitoring leads to discussions with students, it rarely results in any specific changes to teachers' planning or approaches to teaching. End of marking periods are special reference points for senior leaders to discuss student performance. In some instances, the principal's requirement for teachers to produce a written evaluation for the pattern of student performance is effective in sharpening teachers' thinking about their teaching, but this is not consistent.

The school's self-evaluation is insufficiently sharp. There is no whole-school staff involvement in evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the school or its performance in relation to the school mission. Communication between senior leaders and staff is generally weak. Teachers rarely participate in discussions about whole-school improvements. The principal is very clear about the school's core purpose and what it is aiming to achieve, both because of clear whole-school goals and through the message contained in the school's all-pervasive mission. However, the translation of this across the curriculum is inconsistent and significantly reduces teachers' involvement as stakeholders in the school's development.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: Academy for College Preparation and Career Exploration	Δ	➤	✓	+
Overall QR Score		X		
Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?			X	
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?		X		
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?			X	
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?			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 student’s learning.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?	X			
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?		X		
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?		X		
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2		X		

DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DYQ, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.							
<i>To what extent do ...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+			
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?			X				
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?		X					
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?			X				
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X				
Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.							
<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+			
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?		X					
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?	X						
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?		X					
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X				
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.							
<i>To what extent do...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+			
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?		X					
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?		X					
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?		X					
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?		X					
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
Δ	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed