

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

The Aerospace and Science Academy

Elementary-Middle School 127

98-01 25 Avenue

Queens

NY 11369

Principal: Evita Sanabria

Dates of review: April 1 - 3, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Philip A. Composto

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Aerospace and Science Academy is an elementary-middle school with 1159 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 27% Black, 62% Hispanic, 2% White, and 9% Asian students. The student body includes 27% English language learners and 5% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 93%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 92% eligibility.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The Aerospace and Science Academy is a positive learning environment with high expectations for students' personal and academic success. As a result, students are interested in their learning and want to succeed. Middle school students are very articulate about their goals to be a professional.

As a first year principal, the school leader has been able to sustain the cooperative culture within the school, which has been a strong component for many years, and has moved the school forward.

The school collects and analyzes a wide range of data to understand the needs of students. As a result, it has effective systems in place to support and guide students and their families. However, it has yet to extend current good assessment practice in math, English language arts and social studies, to ensure student goals are rigorous, measurable and monitored throughout the year in all core subjects.

The school is not always as explicit with students and their families about the Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely (SMART) short-term goals in all core subjects needed to achieve the long-term school or grade goals. Consequently, students are unsure of the next steps needed to achieve success or of their long-term goals.

The school offers a strong curriculum including art and music. School leaders use a wide range of data successfully to understand the needs of each student and to track student progress throughout the school. The work of the Inquiry Team has been instrumental in raising teacher understanding and use of data, particularly with low-achieving students. However, not all lessons are sufficiently differentiated to meet the needs of learners and results in some students making little progress in their learning and some lessons lacking pace and rigor.

The school does not have in place interim checkpoints and ways to monitor them throughout the year to ensure that each student achieves maximum learning outcomes in all core subjects.

Teachers are encouraged to be reflective about their teaching. This year, a data specialist was assigned to confer with teachers on the utilization of data to differentiate instruction.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school collects, analyzes and uses a wide range of data to create a picture of the individual students' strengths and areas of need.
- The school communicates high expectations for both behavior and academic study effectively to parents and students, who are able to articulate what these are and how they can be achieved.
- The school provides a very safe, nurturing environment in which every student is encouraged to grow both academically and as an individual, and where they feel respected by fellow students and adults alike.
- The outcome of the school's well-established Inquiry Team has been successfully integrated into the school's curriculum.
- The schools' professional development structures and supportive climate enable teachers to work successfully and collaboratively, reflecting upon improving instructional practices and learning outcomes.
- The cooperative culture within the school is a major strength for moving the school forward, in keeping with this well-understood mission to create life-long learners.

What the school needs to improve

- Align elementary teachers' use of data to set student goals in all core subjects with specific timeframes and benchmarks to that of the middle school teachers.
- Work with students and their families to develop Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely (SMART) short-term goals in all core subjects so that they are able to assess their own progress and articulate their next learning steps.
- Ensure all teachers plan and use a repertoire of differentiated instructional strategies to enable them to match more precisely the learning activities to students' specific needs in all core subjects.
- Establish interim checkpoints and monitor them throughout the year to achieve maximum learning outcomes in all core subjects to meet the needs of individual and groups of students.

Part 3: Main Finding

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 collects and analyzes a wide range of data regularly to create a clear picture of students' strengths and individual needs. The vast amount of data generated includes, attendance, summative and formative assessments and student work in English language arts, math and social studies. In the other core subjects, the school is beginning to generate its own assessments to monitor learning outcomes for individual and small groups of students. The school is currently developing a more consistent assessment program to track student progress in all core subjects. This year, the school funded a data specialist whose support has ensured all teachers use data more effectively to set student goals and monitor student progress.

The school's careful study of the progress report indicated that the performance of English language learners and special education students in English language arts was significantly lower than that of other groups. A careful analysis of data also indicated that female students in social studies and science outperformed male students. To resolve this discrepancy, the school purchased graphic novels, multi-test level books and trade books for social studies and science in order to support the learning needs of male students. In addition, the school is revisiting a past practice of grouping students by gender for social studies and science instruction.

The school engages in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes. Teachers meet with parents to share student goals and benchmarks at the end of each marking period. Some teachers provide parents with a copy of their child's personal learning contract that outlines students' goals and benchmarks in English language arts, math, social studies and science. An attendance committee was formed this year to create a plan to improve student attendance. The school's staff contact parents by phone and sends a letter when a child is late or absent five or more days to improve the school's attendance rate.

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 leaders have effectively involved the school community in each stage of school improvement cycles to ensure quality instructional programs. The leadership team's thorough evaluation has provided an accurate picture of the school's work, enabling them to identify, and share new goals. As a result, the school community honors and understands the rigorous goals for school improvement, through the newly published Comprehensive Educational Plan. This document has clear timeframes and action plans to achieve these goals.

The school uses collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable and actionable learning goals in English language arts, math and social studies for individual students and groups of students. Elementary teachers are less effective than their middle school colleagues in setting measurable goals for individual students and groups of students in all core subjects that build on what they know and can do. School leaders recognize that all teachers need to identify next steps to achieve these goals within a designated time.

At the beginning of the year, the school communicates to parents its high expectations of attendance, behavior and performance. Each teacher meets with parents and shares the academic and personal expectations for the year. Parent workshops and events are available for parents to help them support their children at home. In addition, the school provides parents with details of their child's goal in English language arts, writing, math and social studies, but goals are not as specific in other subject areas.

Teachers meet with parents to share student goals and benchmarks at the end of each making period. Middle school teachers use Teacher Ease, an online system, to provide parents and students with updated data to track student progress. School leaders are working with parents and staff to establish Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely (SMART) short-term goals in all core subjects so that they are able to assess their own progress and articulate their next learning steps.

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.

School leaders use the New York Accountability tools successfully to understand the needs of all students and to monitor student progress throughout the school.

Teachers follow curriculum maps that outline the units of study in all core subjects as well as the timeframes for assessing learning outcomes. Curriculum maps are developed collaboratively for all subject areas by grade at the end of the school year during vertical planning meetings. Teachers meet weekly during common preps to review curriculum and adjust timeframes to reach goals of all students.

Teachers have a range of assessment systems in place that they use to inform planning and differentiate instruction particularly in English language arts, social studies and math. However, this is not always used consistently across the school in all core subjects. School leaders and teachers recognize the need to enhance the use of differentiated instructional strategies to match learning activities to individual students' needs in all core subjects.

The instructional cabinet, in consultation with the leadership team, adopted two new literacy programs, Literacy by Design K-5 and McDougall Little 6-8, that are designed to support differentiated instruction. The school provides a visual arts program through a licensed art teacher and a music program that includes vocal and instrumental music instruction by two licensed music teachers.

The principal was appointed on August 25, 2008, and she has worked feverishly to maintain the cooperative culture within the school, which has been present during the last three years.

The staff has successfully created a safe, nurturing environment that encourages learners to succeed and do their best. As one student stated, "After we master a skill, our teacher challenges us to use it." The middle school students stated that their teachers helped them to be aware of steps necessary to be a doctor, a lawyer, actor or other professions.

Not all lessons are adequately differentiated to meet the needs of each student. This results in some students making fewer gains in their learning.

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 proficient.

The school leaders regularly monitor the effectiveness of instruction by formal and informal observations and walkthroughs. Armed with this information, the administration plans and provides a range of professional development to support teachers in improving their instruction. These include grade level meetings, faculty conferences and common planning periods to provide a structure for teachers to analyze student data collaboratively, share resources and best practices, and engage in the inquiry process. Teachers continue to receive professional development in the effective use of balanced literacy and differentiated instruction to improve instructional practice. Using the Professional Learning Standards Continuum, teachers assess themselves and support supervisors in evaluating their classroom practices and learning environment.

The positive work of the Inquiry Team has spread to other groups across the school. As a result, teachers are eager to participate in action research in order to enhance their data skills and to find out more about student learning. Members of the team have expanded inquiry teamwork through the development of three smaller departmentalized teams, including an eighth grade math team, English language learners team and second grade English language arts team.

The school uses academic support services and guidance effectively in meeting the needs of low performing students, students with special needs and English language learners. In addition to pull-out and push-in programs, small groups of students receive services during the extended day to accelerate their learning. The administration monitors the different services and resources consistently. As a result, these groups of students have explicit goals and targets to work towards and, therefore, demonstrate good progress in their learning. The school implements an internal and external support service plan collaboratively. The plan connects with students and their families to enhance students' personal and academic growth through programs such as Public Color Leadership Program, Big Buddy Program and outside art organizations. The School Based Support Team works with families and students to provide additional support in student learning and personal growth. These various beneficial services enhance students' academic, social and personal development.

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 proficient.

Teachers assess students at regular intervals, monitor their progress and set measurable goals for their learning in English language arts, math and social studies. School leaders and faculty use curriculum maps, State standards, Acuity predictive assessments, running records, Developmental Reading Assessments and conference notes to evaluate and adjust instruction.

The school does not consistently set interim checkpoints to regularly monitor student-learning outcomes for all subgroups and individual students in all core subjects.

The school leaders' thorough analysis of the Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey and other external data ensure they evaluate the school's effectiveness and modify as required. Accurate self-evaluation, which is beginning to be an essential part of the school's culture for improvement, gives the school a precise reflection of its practices. The Comprehensive Educational Plan identifies clearly priorities for improving the quality of teaching and learning with achievable timeframes and success criteria.

Teachers keep a close track of their students' progress and are quick to note those that are struggling or at risk of not making expected progress. They work closely with the various support services in school to amend programs and interventions and to ensure that the students get the well-targeted help that they require. The on-going professional dialogue between the teachers, administrators and intervention staff ensures that responses to identified needs are timely and flexible. The principal and staff are continually looking for ways to improve outcomes for all students. There is a clear determination to build on current successes.

The cooperative culture within the school moves the school forward. Under the direction of the new principal, the entire school community is collaborating in the creation of the new school vision and mission.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: The Aerospace and Science Academy	△	➤	✓	+
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>				
	△	➤	✓	+
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>				
	△	➤	✓	+
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