



**Department of  
Education**

*Joel I. Klein, Chancellor*

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

# **Quality Review Report 2008-2009**

**Academy of the Arts**

**Elementary School 335**

**888 Reverend James Polite Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10459**

**Principal: Erik Wright**

**Dates of review: February 26 - 27, 2009**

**Lead Reviewer: Christina Lewis**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Academy of the Arts is an elementary school with 230 students from grade 4 through grade 5. The school population comprises 19% Black, 80% Hispanic, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 18% English language learners and 10% 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 91.2%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 94% eligibility.

The school is unique because it only has grades 4 through 5. It shares the building with another school.

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This school is proficient.**

The Academy of the Arts is a thriving learning community that has made good progress in raising student achievement and progress over the past few years. A thorough analysis of available data ensures that the school is very aware of the needs of its students and its own strengths and weaknesses. High expectations of behavior and academic success ensure that the school is a positive learning environment where students enjoy their learning and want to succeed. Parents are encouraged to play an active part in the work of the school. However, the school has yet to disaggregate the data successfully in order to monitor the progress and performance of gender and ethnic groups. Students are able to articulate their long- and short-term goals, and the steps needed to achieve them in some subjects, but this good practice is not established in all core subjects.

The work of the inquiry team has had a positive impact on the way teachers look at data and has encouraged teamwork and collaboration between staff. Strategies developed by the team have improved student learning across the school, in addition to improving the progress of the target group. Lessons are generally well planned and actively engage the learners. However, teachers have yet to use differentiation consistently in all subjects. As a result, some lessons do not always address the learning needs of lower- and higher-achieving students.

The school recognizes the importance of focusing on the social and emotional needs of the students. As a result, they have implemented very effective guidance programs both internally and with external community partnerships that enhance the work of the school. The school has yet to maximize student learning fully by establishing interim checkpoints in all core subjects for all subgroups, in order to monitor progress towards meeting goals.

The school is well led by the principal and his team. He has a strong vision for the future development of the school that is shared by the whole school community. He works hard to ensure that this vision of “personal and academic success for all” can become a reality in the near future.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school effectively collects, analyzes and uses a wide range of data to understand students' strengths and their areas of need.
- The school successfully communicates high expectations of personal and academic success to students and their families.
- Students show interest and engagement in their learning and high levels of mutual respect for peers and staff.
- The work of the inquiry teams has had a positive impact on improving student learning throughout the school as well as encouraging teamwork and collaboration between staff.
- The school uses a wide range of support services, including external partnerships that significantly enhance the academic and personal growth of students.
- The principal has a clear vision for the future development of the school that is shared and understood by the school community.

### What the school needs to improve

- Further analyze student data to include the learning outcomes and needs of ethnic and gender groups.
- Continue to develop teachers' practice of using student data to plan differentiated lessons that reflect all student needs, including lower and higher-achieving students.
- Use data-informed processes to set measurable learning goals for students in all core subjects.
- Establish interim checkpoints in all core subjects for all subgroups, which result in differentiated instruction and maximize students' learning outcomes.

## 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.**

School leaders effectively collect and analyze a wide range of data, including historical assessment results. As a result, when students enter the school at the beginning of grade 4, the faculty has a clear picture of individual strengths and needs. The school confirms this by carrying out further assessments and test simulations at the beginning of the school year. Because of this thorough analysis of students' achievement levels, in English language arts, math and social studies, teachers are able to start planning and grouping students from day one. As a member of staff said, this is "very important as the students are at the school for such a short time". The administration regularly monitors student progress and makes adjustments in the academic programs according to identified need.

The school closely monitors special education students to ensure that they are able to access learning through their individual education plans. Their progress is constantly tracked and, when suitable, they attend mainstream lessons with their peers. Close collaboration between staff on each grade level ensures that students are exposed to similar key skills and knowledge. English language learners are similarly monitored and have the opportunity to be in a bilingual class or to attend after-school language enrichment programs. As a result, these groups make good progress, which has improved significantly over the past few years. However, the school has not yet disaggregated data sufficiently well in order to monitor and compare the progress and performance of ethnic and gender subgroups throughout the school.

Parents are actively encouraged to participate in and support the school's work. They are regularly informed of their children's progress, through formal report cards, parent meetings and informal contact with their child's teacher. Positive news is always shared and parents are given many opportunities to celebrate the work of the school, in addition to increasing their own understanding of what is happening. As a result, parents are very aware of school goals and value what the school is doing for their children.

**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, parents and staff, in each stage of the school improvement cycle. The leadership team has evaluated the work of the school, and identified and shared new goals. As a result, the school community knows and understands the overarching goals for school improvement,

which are published in the Comprehensive Educational Plan. The school sets rigorous and measurable goals in English language arts, math and social studies for all classes. The leadership team monitors and revises these at regular intervals throughout the year. However, although the school sets individual goals for students in some areas, they have yet to formalize goal setting across all subjects for individual students to ensure that they make good progress.

Students are able to articulate their goals and the steps needed to achieve them. In some classes, students use self-assessment effectively to plan their next-step goals. For example, in visual arts students regularly assess their work. However, this good practice is not yet consistent throughout the school. Regular conferencing with students and rigorous school-wide assessments ensure that students are on track to achieve their goals. Where necessary, teachers revise plans and students are placed on intervention programs for additional support. For example, these include extended-day programs and academic intervention support in the classroom or in small, targeted groups.

The school has successfully established high expectations of behavior, attendance and performance that are communicated effectively to students and their families, promoting positive home-school partnerships. As a result, students and their families know exactly what they have to do to achieve success. As one parent said, "By working together we can make a real difference for our kids."

**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 and faculty have effectively aligned the curriculum in all core subjects to State standards. At the Academy of the Arts, there is a strong emphasis on writing skills, social studies and visual and performing arts. As a result, students are successfully encouraged to develop their writing skills in all curriculum areas. The school has developed good rubrics for assessing their work and to help students in self-assessment. They are able to articulate the different stages of writing. Specialists teach visual and performing arts. They collaborate with class teachers to provide content continuity. For example, in social studies, students are working on American Independence. This is followed up in performing arts, through drama about the early settlers, and in art, by looking at portraits of the famous people of the time.

Lessons, for the most part, are engaging and actively involve students in their learning. However, the school admits that the use of differentiation to maximize student outcomes still needs more work, particularly in using data to inform teachers' planning for individual need. Some lessons lack clear learning objectives. They are aimed at average learners and do not always support the low achievers or give sufficient challenge and extension to high achievers. As a result, not all students make progress towards achieving their goals and some find the work does not sufficiently extend their thinking.

The school has a very strong culture of respect and promotes positive attitudes towards learning. A very effective positive behavior incentive scheme encourages consistency and promotes good behavior throughout the school. Students are rewarded with "star bucks" that they can exchange for items in the school shop. As a result, the school has noticed a drop in incidents of unsociable behavior and has had no suspensions this year.

Adults and students show mutual respect, and students say they enjoy school and want to succeed. They are confident and articulate young people who are rightly proud of their school. This is further confirmed by positive responses in the learning environment survey.

**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 administration and professional development team provide individual professional development based on need. This is derived from a needs survey for teachers and formal and informal lesson observations. The literacy and math coaches, in addition to the principal and assistant principal, provide support and training for teachers by modeling lessons and providing professional development at weekly grade meetings. External courses and consultants are also used in ensuring high-quality professional development. As a result, teachers have targets for improving their practice. Many of them say the constructive feedback and opportunities to share effective practice have made them more reflective in their teaching. New teachers are assigned mentors to work with and, because of this, quickly become effective in their work.

The work of the inquiry team has successfully encouraged active teacher collaboration and teamwork across the school in using assessment outcomes to improve student learning. Members of the team developed successful strategies that have not only benefitted the target group, but have been effective for the student population as a whole. For example, the math coach shared a strategy he had found effective in the teaching of fractions and modeled this for all classes. As a result, the students' capabilities in working with fractions improved throughout the school. Teachers are actively encouraged to work together and share best practice through inter-visitations and reviewing students' work.

The school leaders, in collaboration with staff, have implemented a very effective guidance plan that includes a wide range of internal and external support, including community based Services that work with students and their families to enhance social and emotional growth and support for all students. Because of the high importance the school places on student well-being, staff are quick to identify students at risk and promptly put into place effective strategies to support them.

**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.**

School leaders meet regularly to examine individual student and class data in order to monitor the effectiveness of strategic decisions and ensure that the school is on track to achieve its goals. They make adjustments as necessary to improve outcomes for students. For example, the daily schedule was revised when teachers identified that students were more able to concentrate on math earlier in the day. This change led to noticeable improvements in concentration levels and student output.

Teachers regularly use a range of assessments and test simulations to monitor and track students' progress towards reaching short- and long-term goals. The academic intervention team identifies students at risk and, as a result, they are immediately placed in intervention and support programs to help accelerate their learning. The school has successfully established interim checkpoints in some subjects, but has yet to fully maximize student learning by developing checkpoints in all core subjects, and for all subgroups, with the aim of students' needs being met through differentiated instruction.

School leaders effectively use all available data to evaluate progress towards whole-school goals and improved learning outcomes. The school self-evaluation is accurate and determines the next steps for school improvements that are incorporated into the Comprehensive Educational Plan. The principal has a very strong vision for the future development of the school. He has successfully communicated this to the whole school community through regular newsletters and notice boards throughout the school. As a result, the community is united in its efforts to ensure that the school provides the best opportunities of academic success for all of its students.

# School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

|  |   |          |          |   |
|--|---|----------|----------|---|
| <b>School name: Academy for the Arts</b>   | △ | ▷        | ✓        | + |
| <b>Overall QR Score</b>  |   |          | <b>X</b> |   |
| <b>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.</b>      |   |          |          |   |
| <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?  |   |          | <b>X</b> |   |
| 1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?   |   | <b>X</b> |          |   |
| 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?  |   |          | <b>X</b> |   |
| 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? |   |          | <b>X</b> |   |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>   |   |          | <b>X</b> |   |
| <b>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.</b>  |   |          |          |   |
| <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?             |   |          | <b>X</b> |   |
| 2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?  |   |          | <b>X</b> |   |
| 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?  |   |          | <b>X</b> |   |
| 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?   |   |          | <b>X</b> |   |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>   |   |          | <b>X</b> |   |

## 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, DYO, 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.

| <b>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.</b>   |                |   |   |   |            |   |                |
|--|----------------|---|---|---|------------|---|----------------|
| <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 |            |   |                |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>   |                |   | X                                       |   |            |   |                |
| <b>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.</b>   |                |   |   |   |            |   |                |
| <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 |            |   |                |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>   |                |   | X                                       |   |            |   |                |
| <b>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.</b>  |                |   |   |   |            |   |                |
| <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 |            |   |                |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>   |                |   | X                                       |   |            |   |                |
| <b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>  |                |   |   |   |            |   |                |
| Δ  | Underdeveloped | ➤ | Underdeveloped with Proficient Features | ✓ | Proficient | + | Well Developed |