



**Department of
Education**

Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

Monroe Academy for Business and Law

High School 690

1300 Boynton Avenue

Bronx

New York 10472

Principal: Kabaya Mbuyi

Dates of review: March 11-12, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Jennie Garrison

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Monroe Academy for Business and Law is a high school with 528 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises of 31% Black and 68% Hispanic 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 for 48%. The average attendance rate for the 2007-2008 was 80%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

Overall Evaluation

This school is underdeveloped.

There is very little evidence that the school has used baseline data to track student progress over time. This means that teachers and administrators do not have a good understanding of what students know and can do when they start out in their classes at the beginning and throughout the school year. As the school does not collect and analyze many forms of data they cannot provide sufficient information to the teachers, and students. The data is in many separate places and is not organized into coherent, user-friendly systems. Consequently, teachers are not able to access sufficient data to plan to differentiate their instruction to raise student achievement. Those teachers who do differentiate instruction are more effective in addressing the individual needs of their students but this is not a systemic practice throughout.

Due to the paucity of data information the school does not communicate adequately with students and their families about the learning targets and student goals. Consequently students cannot articulate what their goals or learning targets are and both students and their families are unsure of the next steps needed to achieve success. Teachers have not established helpful interim checkpoints in core subjects to achieve maximum learning outcomes for all students.

The principal has not shared a clear vision with the school community for the future development of the school. Staff members do not currently take every opportunity available to discuss student progress. The school administration does not recognize the importance of formal opportunities for staff to share expertise and review student data as an essential element of student success.

The preliminary work of the inquiry team indicates that administration has both the skill and the capacity to analyze data and to use that information to take decisive action in their efforts to raise student achievement levels. The inquiry initiative is focused on increasing the progress of a narrowly targeted group of special education students. However, the school does not implement any similar initiatives or a clear plan of action to provide professional development support to teachers with a focus on differentiated instruction within cohort groups. Moreover, there is no firm evidence that there is support for teams of teachers and staff to adequately assess functional baseline assessments that might serve as starting points for organized instructional interventions.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has created a learning climate with a level of trust, respect and cooperation between adults and students and amongst students themselves that is calm and respectful with high expectations for good behavior.
- Students are enabled to develop high levels of personal maturity and respond very positively to their teachers.
- Teachers, who have good subject knowledge, cooperate well as a team and are supportive of the personal development of their students.
- The inquiry team is contributing well to the school's knowledge of data, particularly in the focus group to which leaders and staff contribute to provide effective support to the special education students.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop the school's vision and mission and create systems of communication to ensure that all stakeholders have a clear understanding of the school's targets and direction.
- Improve the quality of data and develop a system for its analysis so that the school and the teachers are better able to set priorities and track progress over time and set targets.
- Strengthen the criteria for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning so it is focused precisely on the immediate priorities for improvement.
- Develop goal-setting procedures throughout the school to enable all teachers and students to know what they need to do next to improve as well as to share personal goals with students and parents.
- Provide better and more frequent opportunities for teachers to plan collaboratively, share best practices and participate in action research.
- Develop a systematic program of professional development that meets the needs of the school, as identified by the data, and reflects the personal and professional needs of the staff.

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 to do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is underdeveloped

The school collects a small range of student performance data and some other forms of quantitative and qualitative information. The school utilizes data analysis from grade 8 assessment promotion tests and from its analyses students are placed in a single or double period of math and English language arts. There is little analysis of other data by school leaders or faculty which makes it difficult for staff or faculty members to use it to identify subgroups of students in individual classes, grades or school wide. Some teachers have begun using ACUITY data to reveal the overall performance of students, yet there is little evidence that this data is consistently analyzed either longitudinally, by current class or grade or longer term, either by grade or by student cohort. The current school model attempts to log high school data through the use of available student transcripts, but it is rare for administration to look at teachers' current year tracking of student performance. The consequence of this is that in too many areas of the instructional program there is no data analysis performed that could result in the identification of patterns or trends in the performance assessments of groups of students either by class or grade. Unfortunately, there are no strategies at all that are currently utilized to identify problematic trends or to remedy critical learning deficits before it is too late to implement any form of meaningful intervention.

There is very little open exchange of information between administration and faculty about students learning goals. Therefore, neither administrators nor class teachers and advisory teachers have sufficient background information on the performance and progress of students to ensure that every student understands their next learning steps in all subjects. Too often the goals are little more than a list of the next content areas to be covered.

While some parents are content with the amount and quality of information they receive from the school about their child's performance and progress, there is a significant proportion that remains dissatisfied. Parents do know how to contact teachers directly, via e-mail or by telephone and such communications are well received and valued, but formal structures for communication vary considerably between grades.

Generally, the school does not design, use or adapt tools to provide school leaders with good quality information to lead discussions with teachers or grades about the quality of teaching and effectiveness of students' learning. Where this occurs, it is much more by chance due to the individual skills of some teachers in their statistical analysis of their own students' data.

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

The school does not use student data as the basis for setting measurable goals and developing effective plans and timeframes to reach those goals. It does not meet collaboratively or have scheduled common planning time to examine the available student data as a whole school. This impedes its ability to break down the information into results for each classroom, grade, subject area, group of students and individual students. Teachers do not plan short- and long-term lessons with the guidance of the school’s administration and support staff. At present, there is no ongoing effort to have frequent conversations concerning the progress of all students among teachers, administrators and support staff. The absence of common planning time prevents grade teachers from preparing together. As a result, collaboration at this level is weak and prevents rigorous and objectively measurable goal setting. The absence of goals in other subjects, other than English language arts that focuses on raising academic achievement, is a serious weakness stemming from administration’s lack of baseline assessment data about what students know and can do.

The systems and structures for setting goals, measuring their progress and setting new targets have yet to occur at all levels from the strategic whole school goals through to those for individual students. The processes used to compile the Comprehensive Educational Plan is not yet a routine part of a continuous cycle of improvement and the belief that every student is “college bound”. The administration and staff are not identifying trends and, in particular, those related to students in greatest need of improvement. Communication about what students need to do to raise their achievement in the core subjects is poor. Students are not currently aware of their progress and achievement and parents are not involved as partners in supporting their children. The staff does not measure accelerated learning over established timeframes with period assessments and then encourage students to do their best by goals, measuring the progress towards them and setting new targets does not occur at any level from the strategic whole school goals through to those for individual students. They do not include a broad range of interventions and extended-day activities that support struggling students to achieve academic goals.

The school is successful in conveying high expectations to students and their parents and caregivers about student behavior and the importance of keeping on track to secure the credits required to graduate.

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 underdeveloped

Staff and students work well together and the tone of the building is 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 an appropriate professional manner. Students and teachers say they feel connected to one another in their level of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes that support the personal growth and learning of students and adults.

The school does not yet hold teachers accountable for providing students with engaging and interesting lessons. There continues to be a visible lack of technology to support student learning. Many students are compliant learners who make progress over time, but are not fully challenged. The school does not provide a high quality, cutting-edge program that prepares the students well for their future especially within its specialized area of business and law. In too many classes teachers are not ensuring that high performing students are constantly challenged, or that low performing students are not left behind. Although the principal continues to work towards developing a school-wide policy for the implementation of differentiated instruction the practice is not evident in all classrooms. Throughout, there is a lack of consistency among teachers to use a variety of approaches as a means of developing each student's intellectual capacity.

Attendance continues to be low despite it being a goal for this year. A large proportion of students do not attend school regularly, despite the school's very best efforts to systematically contact parents and reach out to individual students. The attendance committee does analyze daily and weekly data collected. As a result the school has a good overview and understanding of attendance fluctuations by student ethnicity, gender, and or socio-economic status. 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 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

Administration has not planned professional development based on data analysis. Teachers speak with administration informally, which leads to the identification of individual teacher professional development needs. There is no formal structure in place to identify teachers' professional development needs through student data analysis.

The principal does not conduct formal and informal classroom observations with feedback and a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of teaching. Administration does not always focus sharply enough on the connection between instruction and learning when conducting their observations. Consequently, feedback to teachers is not consistently detailed enough to best help them improve their instruction. The Administration does not work with teachers in their subject areas to ensure that professional development meets the needs of each individual as well as contributing to department and whole school goals.

The main subgroup identified by the inquiry team is special education students. The team has identified their needs of the group and has developed strategies for improvement to enable them to reach the next level of their individual education plans. In addition, there are some examples of evaluating student performance by subject and class but this uncommon across the school.

Individualized goals are based on evidence from observations, student performance in exams, student work and teacher reflection. There is no shared understanding of the

importance of differentiation, group work, planning based on learning outcomes and activities to engage students. There is some variation in practice but because the school does not have common planning, instructional practices are unable to be implemented to drive forward initiatives and ensure professional learning for faculty. Teachers are using the State standards and core curriculum to plan their instruction. Although teachers set professional goals at the beginning of the academic year and feel the school encourages professional development, there is no formal system to analyze its effectiveness and teachers suggest the quality of training is variable. Teachers have insufficient time to work together as a team in order to build supportive camaraderie and improve their own practices. Inter-visitation is not an established and valued feature of school-life. Systems to support new teachers are in place and appreciated. The principal has also tried to set up a mentoring system but there is no system or structure for monitoring the effectiveness of this work.

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

The school has not developed sufficient procedures that enable administrators and faculty to effectively chart the progress that it is making towards achieving its goals at all levels. There are no benchmark systems that cover goals for individual staff and students, classes, subgroups, grades, departments and all core subject areas. The school has not made the gathering and analysis of data a priority for the professional development of administrators, coaches and staff. The principal and school community do not have a clear vision for the school's future and staff members do not have a shared visualization of the importance of timelines, strategies and resources required for the school to accomplish all its goals.

The school fails to analyze both hard and soft data at regular points throughout the year and to check that it's progress remains on track, through meetings of the various constituencies within the school, such as departmental staff or the inquiry team. The inquiry team does not suggest different strategies to address any goals that are proving problematical. A substantial amount of work remains to be done to implement functional and fully functioning assessment models to track long-term progress as well as short-term performance of individual students and teachers throughout the year. Clearly, without the means to effectively evaluate the success of any modification to classroom and individual instructional strategies, it is very difficult to plan for future progress and completion of important goals

Based upon current assessment models this school has not yet identified students in need of individual academic support, based upon performance deficits, nor have they provided academic intervention services to identified student groups within classrooms. Students who are doing poorly are not all comfortable in contacting a teacher for individual support at any time despite the fact that many teachers are available before school, during their lunch or after school. Intervention strategies lack effectiveness without a clearly defined focus and identified sub-skills to be directly addressed. Small communities of students such as the AVID freshmen group, freshmen in the lowest third in ELA. Students in the attendance outreach program and ELL students in math and science are provided with additional support

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: Monroe Academy for Business and Law	△	▷	✓	+
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, 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.

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