

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

Academy of Public Relations

**Middle School 298
778 Forest Avenue
Bronx
10456**

Principal: Amy Andino

Dates of review: November 8-9, 2010

Reviewer: Yolanda Torres

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Academy for Public Relations is a middle school with 223 students from sixth through grade 8. The student population comprises 21% Black, 78% Hispanic, and 1% other. The student body includes 36% English language learners and 27% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 89.3%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has a vested commitment in the professional growth of all teachers by providing ongoing feedback and opportunities to further their professional learning.
 - Since the introduction of Professional Learning Communities and teacher teams in 2008, there is evidence of the school's commitment to teacher learning and collaborative support. As teachers meet, they come prepared to engage in text-based discussions and to share their experiences with the strategy they agreed to focus on for the week. Teachers see this process as an effective collaboration that opens up the lines of communication amongst colleagues to build capacity and coherence amongst grades.
 - The Bilingual unit of teachers meets to discuss the use of vocabulary across content areas for English language learners. Teachers use a month-by-month Bilingual Interdisciplinary Curriculum designed by them during the summer before school opening. This curriculum presents a variety of techniques to increase students' vocabulary and ensure that students understand and use them in context through writing, conferrals, and in conversations. The collaboration amongst all teachers, inclusive of new teachers, has resulted in grand conversations around teaching practice and strategy implementation via colleague-to-colleague feedback and next steps.
- Parents appreciate the clear communication of school-wide expectations and the extracurricular partnerships in place for their children to learn and grow socially, emotionally, and physically.
 - Parents are aware of the implementation of new State standards. They understand that the academic demands are higher and that their children are academically preparing for the future. Their children are motivated and want to learn. Parents see the school as "the right place for their children" because of the sense of order, the academic focus, and the staff knowing how to address their children. As a result, parents see that the academic as well as the social emotional well-being of their children are of utmost importance to the school staff. They feel confident that the school's positive and nurturing environment is an important contributor to their children's academic focus and success.
 - Parents participate in a variety of activities and informational meetings where they learn about the extracurricular activities available for their children. In addition, they appreciate the luncheons with the principal where there is an opportunity to share ideas and academic expectations. The School Leadership Team meetings are highly informative with discussions around budget, the school-wide educational plan, and the importance of parental involvement. Parents feel well supported by their parent coordinator. As parents attend the different meetings and activities, they acknowledge the importance of their role in this partnership with the school in support of their children's growth.
- The implementation of the Common Formative Assessments and Data folios provide teachers with important pre- and post- data to identify students' areas of success and those in need of attention for effective classroom instruction.
 - Teams of teachers use the Common Formative Assessments to discuss the progress of students to leverage effectiveness of classroom instruction.

- Teachers provide evidence of the strategies implemented in classrooms, analyze together their success, and plan next steps to meet the individual needs of students discussed at these meetings. These discussions serve as learning milestones and motivators for teachers to continue to build capacity and a sense of leadership.
- The units of study reflect key standards and focused curricula to address the academic needs of students. As teachers implement these lessons, they share feedback on the outcomes to get a sense of the successes as well as the instructional adjustments needed for improvement. As a result, teacher conversations are inclusive of reflection on effective teaching practices, students' learning styles and focused next steps for the improvement of student outcomes.
 - The “Public Relations” focus of the school contributes to a positive learning environment where staff and students develop respectful relationships and learn from each other.
 - Selected teachers have the responsibility of creating Public Relations lessons that give students opportunities to discuss current issues and engage in debates. Students “turn and talk” to share their perspectives and then write their individual pieces on the topic for discussion. As students share and discuss topics with teachers, there is a sense of respect towards each other. This interaction leads to an increased focus on oral communication and critical thinking development.
 - Students consider the school an important place to study and learn. They are motivated to learn thanks to their teachers who care, help them, and “keep them out of trouble.” There is a sense of pride when they highlight their school and share their own experiences with future incoming students. They also appreciate the extracurricular activities that motivate their interest in athletics, filming, and artistic presentations.
 - Collaborative teams of teachers engage in inquiry-based discussions and collegial inter-visitations resulting in the improvement of effective teaching practices and increased student academic progress.
 - Teacher teams see the inquiry process as a means to discuss a particular skill, dig deep into the skill set, and agree upon the actions to take in support of student progress. As they highlight the positives of their conversations with students, they are able to formulate their own theories on individual students' learning. This theory of action results in teachers taking notes for future implementation or follow-up questions to their colleagues. In addition, they present concerns to flush out and resolve as a group. Teachers are committed to unraveling the obstacles that pose a detriment to increased student achievement.
 - The discussion of strategies provides teachers with opportunities to reflect on their practice and engage in further data processes. Teachers are quick to state that, as they analyze the data and agree on classroom instructional adjustments, they are learning alongside their students. In addition, they are sure that, if they stay true to the curriculum maps they developed, they will see student academic growth.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that all students consistently articulate the “why” and “how” of learning via the use of rigorous academic discourse aligned to state standards that result in higher order thinking.
 - The school leaders have worked on a coherent set of beliefs that impact on student outcomes: engagement and application of learning to real life situations, the use of data as a means to assess students’ areas of need, and student-to-student learning. Although this set of beliefs is in place with pockets of sound instruction emerging, there is an inconsistency in students’ ability to articulate and connect their learning to daily experiences in order to meet the requirements of State standards.
 - With the introduction of the Common Core State Standards, teachers are beginning to challenge students’ thinking and vocabulary development. However, students are not yet engaged in consistent, rigorous academic discourse across all classrooms. Thus, limiting an increase in academic growth.
- Build on the beginning stages of teacher conversations on Common Formative Assessments to provide consistent differentiated instruction that meets the individual learning needs of students.
 - As per the principal, the data folio assessment is in its “baby” stages. Although teachers have embraced this process and are working on strategies to differentiate instruction and gauge students’ comprehension, there is limited evidence of its impact due to the newness of the Common Formative Assessment process. Consequently, teachers are beginning to articulate and show how this process can improve their delivery of instruction to positively impact on student performance.
- Ensure that teachers consistently engage in the evaluation and revision of their instructional delivery to support effective teaching strategies.
 - As teachers become more adept in the teacher team process, they begin to develop leadership qualities which support their professional growth. However, there is inconsistent evidence that shows that teacher self-evaluation and revision is embedded school-wide. Thus, the school’s ability to build effective teaching practices aligned to professional collaborations is limited.
- Promote greater consistency in the development of strategic goals to meet the academic needs of specific student subgroups.
 - English language learners and special education student subgroups are in need of more focused goals in vocabulary development and differentiated instruction. While the school is presently addressing the needs of these subgroups, there is a lack of consistent rigor in the goals to meet their needs in order to ensure solid language acquisition.
- Systematize the school’s ability to evaluate and sustain processes to measure student progress over time.
 - Although the school has overarching as well as grade-specific goals, there is a lack of a systemic structure that measures student progress across all grades. The school goals are aligned to quantifiable measures. However, there is little evidence to demonstrate that the school has triangulated the data to monitor school-wide progress. As a result, measuring student progress to meet school wide goals is inconsistent.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: X298 Academy of Public Relations	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score		X		
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?		X		
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?		X		
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?			X	
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			X	
2.2 Align assessments to curriculum and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends?			X	
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?			X	

Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.

<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X	
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?		X		
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			X	
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?				X

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?			X	
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			X	
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?		X		
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?			X	

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

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?		X		
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?		X		
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?		X		
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?		X		

Quality Review Scoring Key

UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed
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