



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Academy of Collaborative Education

Public School 344

**222 West 134th Street
New York
NY 10030**

Principal: Yvonne El-Amin

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Reviewer: Judi Aronson

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Academy of Collaborative Education is a new school that opened in September 2006 with a total of 103 students. There are 44 students in 6th grade and 59 in 7th grade. In September 2007, the 7th grade will be promoted to the 8th grade and the school be complete with grades 6 through 8. The school's largest ethnic group, at 79%, is Black. The rest of the school's population comprises 19% Hispanic, 1% White and 1% Asian. Twelve percent of the enrollment are special education students and 2% are English language learners. The average daily student attendance, at 93% for the school's first 6 months, is higher than similar and City schools. The school receives Title 1 funding for 100% of the students, which is much higher than similar and City school averages. The school shares a building with two other schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is a highly motivated leader who is well respected by the entire school community.
- The school runs smoothly and procedures are followed by all.
- The school provides a caring environment in which the students, who show a great pride in the school, can thrive.
- The school uses data in mathematics to understand student performance.
- The plans for students in greatest need of improvement are frequently realigned to meet their learning needs.
- The whole school community shares high expectations of student achievement and progress.
- The needs of higher achieving students are met by offering more advanced opportunities in mathematics to challenge them to higher achievement.
- Attendance and punctuality are very high priorities.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve practices in the use of data to understand students' performance across all curriculum areas, just as it is done for mathematics.
- Develop information management systems so that regularly updated data is readily available to all who need access to it.
- Monitor student progress through frequently updated quantitative data and interim goals.
- Further develop the practice of teachers using data more precisely to differentiate instruction based on individual student needs.
- Identify professional development priorities based on a shared understanding of objectively measured student progress and achievement.
- Ensure scheduling is driven by the needs that emerge from student performance data.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

Although this school has yet to complete its first full year as the Academy of Collaborative Education, it has put a number of practices in place to secure a quality education for its students. The school's culture is positive and all staff believe that the team spirit supports a variety of efforts to address the social, emotional and academic needs of students. The focus of the school is on mathematics and technology, and the mission is to provide students with the leadership and academic skills needed for admission to specialized high schools. The first graduating class will be in 2008, so the school does not yet know if it will be successful in achieving this mission.

The school was planned to open with a 6th grade in September 2006, but the Region needed additional seats for 7th graders. In consequence, two 7th grade classes were added in the school's first year. The small size of the school, with 103 students and 12 faculty members has created a harmonious climate with a strong spirit of cooperation between teachers, administration, parents and students. The principal places great emphasis on knowing the whole child. The school has a strong foundation in effectively analyzing mathematics achievement data, and has begun to extend this to other academic areas. The school leadership team meets regularly to effectively discuss the direction of the school and decided to select empowerment status as their school support organization for the following year.

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

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient

The school routinely uses State tests and teachers' assessments to understand the achievement of students and grade levels. The school does a good job of collecting data in mathematics to understand how well each student is achieving. The students are given State sample tests that serve as baseline and as mid-point assessments to track progress. Teachers also assemble comprehensive portfolios in mathematics, and will use them to track progress. The principal maintains a school-wide assessment binder with a range of information in mathematics achievement and uses it to compare performance of each student and among the classes.

Teachers review student work and use a three-point rubric in writing to determine student needs. Based on data and the study of student writing samples, the faculty has decided to focus on grammar. Much of the information learned about student needs comes from reviewing student work informally. As the principal said, "We see it through their work." Teachers create end of unit assessment tests in science and social studies, although these are focused on content rather than skill development and the information is not organized in a way that makes it easy to track student progress, as it is in mathematics. The school uses a comprehensive range of data to understand the progress of special

education students, English language learners and students at risk of not meeting the standard. However, not all of this data is easily accessible to the academic intervention team. Presently, the academic intervention team is improving the system so that the data is easily accessible and can inform instruction.

As the school is only now completing its first year, it does not yet have data that can be used to analyze its work over time or in relation to similar schools in New York City. The school is aware of the relative progress of students in temporary housing, holdovers, students who have scored level 1 in past State assessments and students who are high achieving, but has not used this data to establish targets.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student’s next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student’s learning.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The school has a number of broad goals that focus on the mission of the school as a whole. They include meeting the social, emotional and academic needs of students, providing opportunities for leadership, creating a safe learning environment and preparing the students for specialized mathematics and science high schools. However, when planning for continuous improvement, the school does not include objective measures of success or timelines so that progress towards these goals is not monitored sufficiently. The school leadership team works collaboratively to improve the school, and as one parent said, “This is not a perfect school. We know what we need to do.”

The school uses a range of information about students for improving teaching and learning. The academic intervention services coordinator and literacy consultant meet with the English language arts teachers to look at student work and plan instruction to meet student needs. Mathematics teachers also meet to revise instructional plans. The school has targeted prior holdovers and students who scored a level 1 on State tests in 2005-2006, as well as students recommended by classroom teachers, as those most in need of improvement. A wide range of data and assessments are used to better understand these students’ needs. Intervention is provided in a push-in or pull-out model or on a voluntary basis during lunch or after school. However, the school does not use data to routinely set predictive or interim targets for all individuals, classes or relevant subgroups. The school relies on State tests to determine the effectiveness of the interventions. For example, the school said that interventions were effective for special education students because they made good progress in English language arts, as evidenced by State test results for 2007.

Parents are given good information about how well their children are doing in school with progress reports, phone calls and report cards. Parents of students identified as being in need greatest need of improvement receive intervention packets. Parents say that the work is challenging and the school sets high expectations, which is communicated to both the parents and students through frequent teacher-parent interactions. As one parent explained, “Teachers give up lunch time to give my child the attention she needs.” Parents consider their relationships with teachers as excellent

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The school supplements the mandated curriculum with other resources by looking at data and student work. For example, when the school noticed that student writing evidenced poor grammatical structure, a supplementary writing program was implemented to enhance the balanced literacy curriculum. Teachers supplement mathematics instruction and effectively use open ended questioning for the higher achieving students. Teachers work with consultants to refine the balanced literacy curriculum based on needs revealed by studying student work. The quality of student learning is assessed after each unit in all curriculum areas. Content and skills that are not mastered are re-taught. The academic intervention coordinator meets with teachers to review individual student progress.

Improving the progress of individual students is made possible through the school’s thoughtful use of its resources. For example, the principal has made strategic decisions about what staff to hire based on needs identified by classroom observations and student data. In addition, she has designed the daily schedule so that students can receive additional academic support and teachers can meet and reflect on and plan their work.

The school motivates students to learn. Students report, “Teachers care and try to make sure we learn what we have to.” Students are able to apply what they learn to real life situations and talk about being able to make sense of previously difficult coursework. Teachers provide a variety of engaging learning activities. Students report that learning mathematics is interesting because games are used to reinforce skills and concepts. Social studies lessons effectively use real life situations and role plays to illustrate difficult concepts. However, the principal has noted that students are less engaged in English language arts classes.

The school has built a culture of respect where students can seek out help whenever they need it. Students feel the staff is easy to talk to and confide in. The school has well established procedures for promoting good attendance and punctuality, including awards, an attendance board, phone calls and home visits.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The principal looks for teachers who are passionate about teaching, have high expectations for student learning and value the use of data to inform instruction. The principal visits classrooms regularly and has a good understanding of each teacher’s strengths and weaknesses and has plans for improving the quality of teaching. Professional development decisions are based on these observations, as well as on school goals. For example, the principal noticed that the students were not engaged during English language arts classes, so assigned a staff developer to work with the teachers. However, the principal is not yet basing professional development decisions on student performance data.

Teachers do not routinely visit each other, but have visited other schools to inform their own practice. Departmental teams meet weekly, as does the 6th grade team. The mathematics and English language arts teachers maintain consistency in what is taught, how it is taught and the level of student work expected in each course by developing common assessments and lessons. The instructional support team meets bi-monthly to determine the support services needed to meet the academic, social and emotional needs of individual students referred to the team by teachers. All teachers use tests at the end of each unit to assess what has been taught and to re-teach what the students have not mastered. Teachers look at student work to inform lesson revisions. However, this is not formalized or centered on protocols, and has not been used to understand student performance or progress.

The mission of the school is centered on student leadership. A community based organization has been involved in the creation of this school and has provided professional development to staff on the use of a student empowerment model. Teachers are confident about the progress the school has made. The principal is respected highly by the entire school community, one teacher said, "She removes walls and finds the way." The principal knows each student and member of the staff well and as one parent said, "The principal understands the whole child and knows them well." The school has established routines that are understood by students and staff, and consequently the school runs smoothly.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This area of the school's work is undeveloped.

The principal is very clear about the direction she wants the school to develop in and what needs to be done to get there but there is no statement to this effect. As a new school, it has a concept paper that lays out the broad goals of the school. This plan has not been revised yet. The staff meets twice a month and evaluates the school's first year of operation and make changes based on what they identify as needing improvement. For example, the principal has decided to hire a coach for literacy and mathematics to support teachers.

Within classrooms, teachers use their own tests and quizzes to monitor progress and reteach skills that have not been mastered. The principal has a binder showing student performance in mathematics based on the 2006-2007 State mathematics assessment and baseline and mid point assessments. The information regarding student performance and progress in other subjects is not organized in a way that allows for monitoring of student progress or comparisons among groups of students or grades. Performance of students are compared among the classes, however individual student progress is not rigorously monitored. The absence of frequently updated quantitative data and interim goals limits the school's capacity to review and revise goals and plans, and to monitor student progress. This means that the school is not always able to focus sharply enough upon emerging trends and patterns in student progress and respond in a proactive way to further accelerate progress.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Academy of Collaborative Education (PS 344)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score		X	

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> each student, classroom, grade level, 		X	
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students* 		X	
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> all other categories of interest to the school* 		X	
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1		X	

* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.	X		
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject, and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area.		X	
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			X
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.			X
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2		X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.		X	
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.	X		
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.		X	
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3		X	
Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.		X	
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.		X	
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.		X	
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.		X	
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4		X	
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.	X		
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.		X	
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.	X		
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.	X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 5	X		