



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**The Academy of Business and Community
Development**

Middle School K336

**141 Macon Street
Brooklyn
NY 11216**

Principal: Clyde Cole

Dates of review: January 31 – February 1, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Peter Lewis

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Academy of Business and Community Development is a middle school with 151 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 91% Black, 8% Hispanic, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 13% special education students. This is a single gender school so that boys account for 100% of the students enrolled. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 - 2007 was 92%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 66% eligibility.

The school is in its third year of operation, and is planning expansion to include ninth grade students from the start of next academic year.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has a clear vision for the school's development which is well understood, particularly by senior staff.
- The performance of special education students is well understood so that interventions are planned effectively.
- The strong focus on the progress of the lowest-achieving students has successfully accelerated their learning.
- The principal monitors teaching carefully and, as a result, has a good understanding of aspects of instruction that require improvement.
- Good links have been established between students' academic and social development because of the focus on positive behavior and teamwork.
- Students' personal development is well supported and this has a positive impact on their learning.
- Attendance has improved as a result of the good systems that have been developed to monitor students' arrival and punctuality.

What the school needs to improve

- Provide teachers with more precise data in relation to student achievement to assist in' planning lessons which meet the needs of all students.
- Complete and implement the schedule of expected classroom practice and ensure that these features are consistently seen in practice.
- Improve particular features of teaching, particularly in relation to the development of students' skills in note taking, and teachers' management of discussion.
- Ensure that all lessons have a precise aim for what will be learned, and that this is used by teachers in assessing student progress.
- Refine strategic planning so that there is a clear understanding of the criteria for success and the timeframe within which change is expected to take place.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made some progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The school was last reviewed in May 2006. Since then, the school's collection and interpretation of student data has improved rapidly, and now provides effective support in helping leaders and teachers to understand student progress and to plan appropriate improvements. The cabinet and inquiry team have made satisfactory progress in using data to understand the achievement of students in its focus group. It has made a good start in supporting teachers in their understanding of data. Comprehensive plans are in place for improvements in the way that data is shared with teachers and is made accessible to students. The principal has a good understanding of the effectiveness of instruction following his careful monitoring. He has used this in identifying inconsistencies in teachers' use of data to plan lessons, and has begun to look at ways in which this might be improved. A particularly strong feature of this is the plan to identify and communicate expected features of classroom practice.

School planning is particularly successful in tracking the progress made by its lowest-achieving and special education students. As a result of this and the modifications that are collaboratively planned, they make good progress. The school has worked hard to build teachers' confidence in using data to plan lessons which fully challenge all students. However, it recognizes that there remain inconsistencies in this, which particularly affect the progress made by higher-achieving students. The principal acknowledges that greater precision in strategic planning, so that staff understand necessary changes, has the potential to allow more precise evaluation of the progress of whole school developments. Plans have yet to be developed to address this issue.

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 the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school has developed rapidly in its collection and analysis of data. Information relating to student achievement and personal development is comprehensive and is well understood, particularly by school leaders. Consequently, the school is able to compare the performance of students across grades and subjects and makes effective use of this information in identifying where interventions may be needed. The recent dip in math results, for example, has been carefully analyzed, probable causes identified, and action taken. This is as a result of improvements in data gathering and analysis from the time of the last review. Early data suggests that these interventions have been successful in

raising student achievement, largely as a result of work undertaken by the math coach, working closely with teachers. The school is committed to continuing development and has made a good start in analyzing patterns of performance between different classes in order to assess the impact of professional development initiatives on student learning. At the same time, the involvement of a broad range of staff in the inquiry team has raised the profile of data throughout the school, particularly in teachers' understanding of the potential for strand analysis to focus their planning for students' individual needs.

A strong focus has been placed on understanding the performance of special education and the very small number of English language learner students. Their progress is carefully monitored from identified starting points, and action identified and taken. The fact that all special education students have been promoted, demonstrates the impact of interventions that have been planned following the good analysis of their achievement. The school analyzes the development of skills well, particularly in English language arts and math, and uses this information well in identifying groups of students with similar needs. While this is particularly successful in accelerating the progress made by lower achieving students, the school knows that more needs to be done to identify the needs of higher achieving students. It has begun to address this through the establishment of achievement groups, although data is not yet available to demonstrate the impact of this initiative.

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 makes use of a wide range of information in measuring student progress. This is now used effectively by school leaders in setting whole-school goals for achievement, although the principal acknowledges that there is scope for improvement, for example, in relating targets more precisely to students' prior achievement and potential. Consequently, the school has begun to look at the degree to which more precise targets can be set that are based on individual students' prior performance.

There is a good focus on the performance of lower-achieving students that enables strengths and weaknesses in their learning to be identified and targets set for improvement. Individualized education plans set precise goals for the achievement of special education students, which has enabled the school to track their progress accurately and to plan appropriate interventions. Similarly, the school has analyzed the achievement of those students at the upper end of Level 2 and introduced 'skills groups' with the identified aim of increasing achievement to Level 3.

Through regular and well-managed discussion, the principal has ensured that there is a good degree of collaboration in interpreting data, and in using the resulting information in planning interventions to improve student learning. There is a good level of understanding of the changes that are planned in teaching and the curriculum, for example, in building towards the introduction of ninth grade next year. However, these are not recorded with sufficient precision in relation to success criteria or timescales for change. Consequently, it is difficult for the school to monitor the impact of changes other than in an informal way.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The curriculum is broad and aligned with required standards. The principal, well supported by senior staff, has ensured a good focus on the development of assessment data. This has had a positive impact on the degree to which teachers identify strengths and weaknesses in students' learning so that appropriate interventions can be planned. Despite staffing limitations that stem from its small size, the school nonetheless has ensured that good support is available for teachers in developing the English language arts and math curricula. As a result, teachers feel strongly accountable for their students' success. Links established between math and science are currently informing the review of potential links between English language arts and social studies. The school places a strong emphasis on raising students' aspirations by providing opportunities for them to experience high school and college courses at an earlier stage than would normally be the case. An equally strong focus is placed upon students' personal development. Regular house meetings contribute well to a clear sense of teamwork and mutual respect. This is modeled effectively by staff who create positive role models that the students respect. A good sense of personal responsibility is encouraged throughout the school and is reflected in the very clear systems that have been established to promote good attendance.

The good focus on the needs of lower-achieving students has been successful in raising their achievement. However, the school acknowledges that higher achieving students are frequently expected to undertake the same tasks as their peers, with the result that they do not always make the progress of which they are capable. While some teachers use a good understanding of student achievement in planning differentiated tasks that challenge their students, this is not yet consistent. This is partly as a result of differences in teachers' expectations of students, which is reflected in the lack of challenge in some classes. At the same time, the lack of precision in lesson aims hampers teachers and students in assessing when they have learned what was expected. The school has recognized this, as have students, and is focusing the efforts of lead math and English language arts teachers in seeking improvement.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

As the school is expanding by a grade each year, professional development has been given a high priority. The outcomes of this are carefully monitored, so that the school is increasingly able to identify where teachers require support, and where initiatives are achieving success. Regular observations undertaken by the principal are valued by staff because of the high quality of feedback that is provided. Additionally, the school has developed very good systems of communication which ensure that organization is smooth and well understood. Features of classroom practice, observed in monitoring, are recorded well, and so the school is able to track the outcomes of monitoring well. These records make some link between what teachers do and the impact of this on student learning, through the evaluation of student engagement, for example. There is,

however, too little emphasis on gains in students' knowledge, skills or understanding. The school has begun to address this, in conjunction with a recent initiative to identify and communicate a schedule of expected best practice.

The school is still growing towards its projected capacity. As a result, the principal does not benefit from the support of either an assistant principal or coaches. He has however, been proactive in ensuring staff development with skilled math and English teachers taking lead roles in promoting subject improvement and in providing well-focused support to teachers. Additionally, newly appointed staff are well supported by skilled and experienced colleagues. These features have ensured a high degree of collegiality and commitment to improvement across the school. There is a strong emphasis on the promotion of positive role models and on setting high expectations of demeanour, which students say have considerably improved the tone of the building, as well as establishing a strong school identity. Very good quality guidance services play a strong role in this.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for 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 with proficient features.

The principal has ensured that the school's focus on data has improved. Regular common planning time is led well by English and math leaders, with a good focus on data and its interpretation. The school has begun to make good use of newly available software in recording and tracking student achievement, which enables teachers to ascertain whether students are on track towards achieving grade and course goals. Item and strand analyses are used effectively in identifying gaps in student learning, which ensures that modifications and interventions can be put in place in a timely way. However, as student goals are set against curricular requirements, it is difficult for teachers to be certain whether students are progressing at an appropriate rate in relation to their past achievement. The school acknowledges that this has an impact particularly on the gains made by higher achieving students, and has begun to look at ways in which this issue might be addressed. In contrast, special education students have precise goals for improvement that they understand well. Their progress towards these goals is monitored carefully in relation to their past achievement. Consequently, a rapid response to any shortfall is assured through discussion between the special education teacher and class teachers. As a result, their progress is rapid.

At the whole-school level, goals for improvement are set, but lack clarity in defining the nature of planned change, how success will be identified, or the timeframe within which change will be secured. This makes it difficult for the school to monitor its progress in a sufficiently rigorous way. At the same time, despite the fact that the principal's strong vision for the school is clearly understood, particularly by senior staff, the lack of well defined goals means that other staff are less certain of the changes required in their practice to secure improvement.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Academy of Business and Community Development	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
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Quality Score			X		
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Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather and generate data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the students progress over time.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?			X		
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?				X	
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?			X		
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?			X		
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?			X		
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?			X		
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?			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 students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set rigorous, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?			X		
2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?				X	
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?			X		
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?			X		
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?			X		
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?			X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X		

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?			X		
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?			X		
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?			X		
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?		X			
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?			X		
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?				X	
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X		

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.					
To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?				X	
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?			X		
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?			X		
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?			X		
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?				X	
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning, and effectively address discipline related incidents?			X		
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?			X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 4					
			X		

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.					
To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?		X			
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?		X			
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?		X			
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?		X			
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?		X			
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?			X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 5					
		X			

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped