



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Academy of Public Relations

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

Principal: Amy Andino

Dates of review: November 15 - 16, 2007

Lead Reviewer: Denis Pittman

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Academy of Public Relations is a middle school with 304 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 23% Black, 76% Hispanic and 1% White students. The student body includes 28% English language learners and 26% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 91.6%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 93% eligibility.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has clear, well-communicated goals for the school and works tirelessly in the interests of students and the community.
- The school is very effective in collecting and utilizing information about students' achievement at classroom and grade levels.
- The support and monitoring of improvements for special education students is detailed and comprehensive.
- The school community has high expectations of what students can achieve complemented by a climate of care and support for the individual.
- Teachers offer engaging instruction, which enables most students to make good progress.
- Communication and relationships with parents have improved, promoting a stronger community atmosphere and parents' better understanding of the progress of their children.
- Systematic and structured support is provided for teachers, particularly those new to the profession, which enables them to continually improve their instruction.
- The principal and staff have engendered a strong family atmosphere in the school which promotes a climate of mutual respect between students and teachers.
- The school runs smoothly on a daily basis with clear and effective procedures that have been introduced to provide a safer environment for students.
- Creative use of the budget provides resources for professional development and after school programs which contribute to students' learning and development.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to develop strategies for improving the English competencies, particularly in reading and writing, for lower-achieving students and English language learners.
- Ensure that teacher planning and activities match the learning needs of different ranges of ability in their classes.
- Continue to develop strategies and support of teachers in use of data to inform their instructional planning.
- Continue to develop strategies for encouraging parental involvement in their child's education.
- Provide professional development to staff in order to support their use of periodic and predictive assessments to inform the modification of short-term and long-term instructional goals.

Part 3: Main findings

Progress made since the last review

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

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The school is in its third year, having originally been established through a proposal made by the principal. It is now fully established with each of the grade levels from 6 to 8. The addition of the last grade level has brought a greater stability to the school. This coherence is reflected in a more calm and effectively organized learning environment. The size of the school enables each student to be well-known and have adults to whom they relate.

The school has made significant innovations in its collection and use of data. A tracking sheet identifies the performance and progress of individual students. This data enables teachers to identify specific areas of need for individual students and to plan lessons accordingly.

The vision of the principal, which is increasingly espoused by the entire faculty, has been established through hard work and collaboration. This is reflected in the many discussions that take place among staff, between staff and students and with those parents who become closely involved in their child's progress.

Initiatives and developments are well planned and are being monitored through targets. These initiatives relate to more effective use of data, enhancing curriculum programs such as in science and improving instruction. These are well supported with a strong professional development program and the close involvement of external consultants. Improving progress for most students is one clear outcome of this investment. Those with learning difficulties receive appropriately planned interventions, though budget constraints are a factor that the school must continually address.

There have been significant improvements since the previous Quality Review. The recording of assessment through the tracking sheet enables the systematic monitoring of progress. Measurable targets are now discussed with every teacher. Classroom teachers have developed competencies in the use of technology and computers in their classes.

This is a school that has developed quickly and continues to improve. Some staff need support to ensure that their instruction accommodates all learning levels and to be guided in the way data can be used to achieve this objective.

The work of the inquiry team has been impressive in a short time. It has identified a group of English language learners whose proficiency in reading and writing is low. Each member of the team has a smaller group of students with whom they will work and monitor progress over the coming year. Imaginatively, the team has given a presentation to the faculty to keep everyone in the school informed of their objectives.

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's knowledge and understanding of every student and each class has significantly improved as a result of the introduction of tracking sheets which delineate students' past performance and goals for sustaining progress. The administration use examination results and external records of progress to assist discussions with teachers. These discussions, combined with the formative data, enable each class teacher to identify measurable targets for each student. This process provides an effective procedure for establishing initial learning steps for students. The school has used its data analysis of English language arts performance to identify improvement goals in relation to reading and writing. The focus of the recently formulated inquiry team is on improving the achievement of English language learners in these areas. The team is collaborating with teachers in the collection of data for this cohort of students.

Not all faculty members are equally conversant with how to use the information to plan and improve their instruction. The administration plans for staff to receive training, particularly in relation to the new citywide assessment systems that are being implemented. Staff have an increasingly better understanding of the needs and capabilities of special education students whose performance improves accordingly. The specialists' guidance in relation to diagnostic assessment is of particular benefit in helping the students make progress, although funding constraints have an impact on this process.

The emerging comprehensive nature of the school's data files enables the progress and performance of ethnic groups to be analyzed and gender comparisons to be made. As this is a new school, it has limited past performance data to use as the basis for analyzing trends in performance for these cohorts. Equally, the quantitative analysis of data in relation to similar schools is at an early stage. However, the principal keeps a close eye on current performance data to ensure that standards are firmly established.

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 principal and staff seek to encourage students to work at their fullest potential. These expectations are clearly expressed at the regular "press briefing" held by the principal every morning for the whole school, and within scheduled advisory classes. Regular reports to parents and the clear identification of goals for students further support these expectations. The principal's initial discussions with the faculty are the first of a number of collaborations that make effective use of student data to identify whole-school goals. These goals are effectively related to the outcomes of the school's Progress Report and focus upon performance of cohorts of students in English language arts.

Grade-level instructional teams receive full sets of results on the performance of students and these provide the basis of discussion and planning during common preparation times. The same applies to the latest attendance figures, which are discussed in detail. Teachers

also often exchange views informally to solve a classroom problem or move a student on. Those students who give the greatest cause for concern receive prompt attention in the form of academic intervention, counseling and guidance. The pupil personnel team conducts ongoing analysis and tracking of identified students who are in need of additional emotional, social and academic support. Formal and informal data is effectively collected from subject teachers to assist in creating an individualized plan for the students. Students with learning difficulties and bilingual students are supported well in self-contained classes. The progress of the students is carefully monitored.

In addition to the quantitative data from examinations, staff are also good at collecting formative data from classroom observations and student work. Regular conferencing in all classes allows for concerns to be shared and targets set together. Teachers also use the wide range of data to assist parents in supporting the academic, behavior and attendance goals that have been set. Parents value this openness and feel there is an increasing level of trust between school and home. The school is working hard to encourage parents to take a more participative role in the education of their children.

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 core curriculum is effectively mapped so that it provides detailed information about the progress and achievement of students. Programs are aligned with the mandated curriculum standards. The systematic use of running records and Teachers College check lists, supplemented by portfolios, help drive literacy instruction. The emphasis on reading and writing within the curriculum is continually reinforced through the planning meetings of subject staff. Technology is being effectively integrated into the social studies program and is therefore enhancing the competences of students. The pilot science program is being introduced into the school to increase opportunities for scientific experimentation and inquiry. Students also enjoy innovative additions to the curriculum such as projects related to ancient civilizations. A variety of after-school clubs in art and music extend the creative learning experiences of students. Teachers respond well to their responsibility to make lessons interesting. The literacy and math coaches routinely provide supplementary programs and information to support teachers in their instruction. However some staff do not consistently align their instruction so that it matches up with the different learning needs of the students in the class.

The administration continually searches to be creative and efficient in utilizing a small budget. Inevitably there is a constraint upon the diversity of programs that can be offered which leads to pressure in relation to the funding for support services, adequate library facilities and the purchase of technology. Nevertheless, the development of literacy across the curriculum has been well supported by a professional development program for teachers. There is a high level of mutual trust and respect shown in the interactions around the school. The relationships between students and adults are very positive and supportive. Students get along well with each other. Parents talk about the high expectations for students to behave well in the classroom and in other areas of the school. They say that there are fewer incidents of unacceptable behavior, and that "it is a safe school." Students are also aware of the high expectations that are placed upon them, particularly in relation to attendance. The systems for monitoring this are well organized and complemented by motivational rewards for students who attend regularly.

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 well developed.

The school aligns its capacity well to fulfill its vision. It has developed more clear procedures to ensure an environment conducive to learning. Staff supervise arrivals and departures in a systematic way. This commitment, along with the daily assembly conducted by the principal, sets a tone of order and security that provides a good backdrop to the students' day. Other daily procedures are equally clear and consistent.

An increasing number of partnerships significantly add to the learning experiences of students. The "Success Tutoring" program provides students with personalized instruction in a small group setting. The Read initiative provides students with leadership roles while also polishing their reading skills as they read to elementary school students. Professional development work with the Teachers College and the school's support network add to an effective mentoring and professional development program. The main source of staff accountability derives from structured classroom observations by senior staff. There is a clear focus in each observation and teachers receive prompt and detailed feedback outlining their strengths and areas for development. Intervisitations between teachers are more limited. However there is a strong culture of mutual support and sharing between staff. New staff are supported well and quickly become full and active members of the school community. With a quarter of the school having special education status and with many additional personal and academic problems arising on a day-to-day basis, the school uses its guidance resources well. Problems are identified early through the work of the pupil personnel team. School specialists are quickly involved and outside agencies contacted as soon as possible.

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 proficient.

The quality of whole school strategic planning is good. All staff are clear regarding the main areas for development. The principal's strategies for responding to accountability issues related to the Progress Report and proposed instructional initiatives provide a sound basis for the year's planning. There are clear goals related to performance in English language arts and targets to be achieved. All of these procedures ensure a common purpose, consistency of response to students and a careful oversight of how initiatives are to be developed. This effective model of goal-based planning, with clear review cycles, is being promoted with all teaching staff through case conferencing and data tracking sheets. Thus, each teacher now has measurable goals which form the basis of discussions with the administration. The challenge is to support staff in order to achieve consistency in practice. The first round of predictive assessment results are being used effectively to review targets, adapt classroom practice and seek professional development where that is appropriate. The principal's vision for the school now has a more firmly established coherence. The improved organization of data means that remedial action is more prompt and relevant to students and subgroups within the school. Resources, such as the greater use of interactive whiteboards and technology, are combining to provide a better environment in which the vision can be realized.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Academy of Public Relations	△	▶	✓	+	◇
Quality Score			X		

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 . . .	△	▶	✓	+	◇
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 . . .	△	▶	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set demanding, 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?				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?				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 make 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		