



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Academy of Public Relations

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

Principal: Amy Andino

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Reviewer: Mike Doran

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Middle School 298, The Academy of Public Relations, is located in District 7, a multicultural area of the south Bronx. It is one of four schools occupying a building with shared facilities that include the gymnasium, the auditorium, the cafeteria and the school yard. As a new community school it took its first sixth grade intake in September 2005. Now in its second year, the school has a grade six and seven student population with an expectation of growing to 325 students in September 2007 with the addition of an eighth grade. Students are admitted through the district's choice process and for the majority of students the school, as yet new to the community, has not been their first choice. Its current population of 203 students is predominantly Hispanic (76%) and Black (23%), with less than 1% of students coming from White and other backgrounds. The school has a high proportion of special education students at around 10% and English language learners at 32%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding.

The attendance level is rising and is currently at 91%, in line with that of City and similar schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal provides good leadership through her openness and visibility around the school, her clarity of vision and direction and her hands-on style.
- The principal is well supported by professional and committed administrator and teaching teams.
- The students and staff are committed to the vision of the school and are fully involved in its realization.
- As a new school with a distinctive ethos and sense of identity, it has established an ambitious student recruitment campaign reaching out into the community and its feeder schools.
- The parents hold the school and its staff in high regard.
- The school provides an orderly, calm and safe environment to which students respond with behavior and attitudes to learning that are good.
- An effective, incentivized attendance system is in place.
- The workshop model of teaching has been introduced across the school to provide the basis for differentiated lesson planning informed by the gathering of student assessment data.
- The school's budget management, staff selection and resource deployment are closely aligned to the needs of the school.
- The school pupil personnel committee provides effective monitoring and support for students causing concern.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop systematic and consistent formative assessment and recording across all grades and subjects
- Extend the depth and use of student performance data in setting goals, monitoring the progress of school's Comprehensive Education Plan and in informing the timely revision of plans at the whole school level.
- Develop and establish systems to track individual student progress and support planning.
- Further develop the use of computer technology to support teaching and learning and the analysis and use of student performance data.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

With a new school in its second year, and yet to add another grade, the principal and her administrative team have already been successful in establishing a distinctive culture and a sense of direction for the school. They have rapidly put structures and procedures into place to establish a purposeful and supportive environment for students and staff. A standards-based professional development plan is beginning to impact on instructional delivery, and students are responding positively to better planned, structured and engaging teaching, informed by the developing use of performance data. Areas for improvement are essentially concerned with the need for differentiated lesson planning linked to the effective gathering, recording, analysis and use of student performance data. This is intended to be used to inform planning, share goal setting and monitor progress at the classroom and whole school level. This process has begun, driven by a committed, determined and energetic principal, and needs to continue at a growing pace, supported by appropriate resourcing and professional development.

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 collects and analyzes a wide range of data, both academic and behavioral, relating to the progress of individuals and groups of students. This includes information from standardized tests, tests produced by teachers to monitor learning in subject areas of the curriculum, continuous assessment during lessons, attendance and behavior. The monitoring of classes and individual students causing concern on a day-to-day basis is particularly systematic using a combined daily class 'section' and student behavior management sheet. This provides homeroom teachers and leadership teams with a daily overview in terms of attendance, behavior, and student application. The monitoring process is underpinned by a range of student and class incentives celebrated through morning 'press briefings' for the whole school, and this promotes a positive self-affirming climate throughout the school. However, at an academic level there still some variation between teachers and subject areas in both the collection and use of performance data to inform lesson planning and the differentiation of instructional delivery. The principal has put in place professional development programs and collaborative grade and subject level meeting arrangements in common preparation time to address this issue and to develop the skills of teachers in making effective use of data. The school has a clear policy for monitoring the progress of every student throughout the year and timely contact is made with parents during each marking period to address any concerns. Students near level boundaries are identified for additional support, for example through extended day and Saturday tutoring. Performance data, together with information about individual students' personal development, is scrutinized by grade and subject teams working in collaboration to monitor the progress of each student. Where necessary, referral is made to the pupil

personnel committee for more detailed monitoring and support. At the whole school level, the monitoring of performance data has been largely focused on the overall and most recent standardized test result levels compared grade by grade with the previous year. Subject teams are beginning to carry out item analysis of tests to inform their planning. The school is now using data to compare the performance of specific student groups, such as special education students, English language learners. It is also looking at gender differences in performance and is beginning to take account of the starting levels of students on entry to each grade.

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.

Teachers are now beginning to collect, record and use student performance data in a systematic and consistent way that will effectively inform their planning for student’s next steps, for setting challenging goals, and for monitoring their progress. The principal has established collaborative working in subject and grade teams, well supported by the literacy and mathematics coaches, to develop the curriculum, instructional programs and assessment. Teachers are not afraid to reflect on and share their practice to make improvements. Those new to teaching are well supported by the more experienced members of staff. The literacy and mathematics coaches play a valuable role in ensuring that school’s programs for literacy and mathematics link with learning objectives in other subjects. The two coaches are increasingly working in collaboration and their understanding of how their subject responsibilities interrelate is beginning to contribute to the school’s efforts in accelerating each student’s learning. The pupil personnel committee provides effective support for students causing concern, with rigorous monitoring and support for those in greatest need. The school has recently appointed a director of adolescent development, who has been particularly effective in overseeing the school’s behavior management program and the Friday ‘advisory class’ program where all students can reflect and be supported in their personal and academic progress. The school communicates clearly with parents and makes considerable efforts to involve them from the start in their child’s learning. The school provides a range of curriculum events for parents to share approaches to teaching adopted in the classroom and linked strategies that parents can use to support their child’s learning at home. However, a large proportion of parents have yet to take advantage of these opportunities to support the school. Parents appreciate the ready access they have to staff and the timeliness with which teachers let them know of any concerns.

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 engagement of students through instructional programs is still variable across subjects, classes and grades. Accordingly, the principal is placing considerable emphasis on differentiated lesson planning and has introduced the workshop model to bring structure to lessons and data-led differentiation to the instructional delivery. Most

development in this respect has taken place in English language arts where mini-lesson and small group work is under development, supported by the Teachers' College. This offers the potential for closer and more focused assessment and support for students in the classroom that can be extended across all subjects. The use of computer technology is recognized as a powerful learning tool and the school is aware that many teachers require sustained professional development support in order to implement these approaches more fully and consistently. Student attendance is monitored closely and is pro-actively pursued through incentivized support systems. As a result, attendance levels have improved significantly and are now in line with those of City and similar schools. Students are very appreciative of the principal's zero-tolerance stance that has established the school as a safe and orderly environment in which to learn. They also appreciate the openness and approachability of staff with whom they can discuss matters of personal concern. Teachers know and respect their students. Better use of data about student performance is now beginning to drive key decisions about the budget, resources, staffing and scheduling. The principal, working closely with her cabinet team, is rightly focusing the school's funding on support for individual students, the professional development of staff, and on the school improvements strategies and goals identified in the Comprehensive Education Plan. The cabinet recognizes the need for more in-depth analysis of data, taking a longitudinal perspective to further develop their decision making about the adaptation of the curriculum and the selection and deployment of the resources of the school to best meet the needs of the students.

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 carefully selects staff using a range of criteria and procedures, such as modelling a lesson, and involves administrators and lead staff in a rigorous interview process that is aligned to the needs of the school. Professional development is high on the principal's agenda to improve instructional planning and delivery. It is well managed by the principal in consultation with staff and is informed by the school's performance data. Newly qualified teachers and teachers new to the school confirm that the school provides a supportive professional environment. Conferencing in subject and grade teams provides forums for planning interventions, collaborative teaching and the revision of decisions in the light of new information. The Teachers' College has been supporting teachers in the development of formative assessment in reading and writing, and similar professional development needs to focus on mathematics and the other areas of the curriculum. An important step forward will be the establishment of agreed and consistently implemented school-wide systems and procedures for assessment and recording in the classroom. This is needed to more effectively inform the adaptation of lesson plans to meet the needs of individual students and specific student groups, and to plan appropriate intervention support. The use of technology to support teachers in their management and analysis of assessment data is an area of development for the school.

The school is a calm and orderly place, welcoming to students, parents and visitors. The principal and lead staff are well respected. They provide a model not only of their high expectations but also of their care and commitment to students and their families. The principal regularly and systematically observes instructional practice and provides feedback to teachers. This informs planning for professional development which is overseen by the cabinet. The coaches follow through with professional support as

appropriate. Each teacher annually agrees three professional goals with the principal, and these are monitored through the year. The school has successfully established a wide range of community links to enrich the curriculum, to provide additional support for students, and to raise funds for school development. These include the READ Foundation, the Young Athletes Program, and 'Pros for Kids', 'Community Works', 'Success Tutoring' and the Public Relations Society

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.

Some good practice in lesson planning is evident in English language arts and in planning support for students causing concern. However, the school recognizes that the extent of data gathering and the depth of analysis is not yet sufficient, nor consistently carried out, to fully inform planning at school and classroom levels. Systematic diagnostic measures and assessment procedures are not yet sufficiently place across subjects, classes and grades. As a result, the setting of goals and the monitoring of progress towards them have been constrained. Students selected for the school's 'Ambassador Program' join the student recruitment team visiting feeder schools, and assist with parent-teacher conferences and other school events. They provide a voice for the student body in the school's decision making processes and have a direct involvement in the development of the school. The Comprehensive Education Plan is emerging as a working document, regularly reviewed through cabinet meetings and in the principal's discussions with particular school constituencies. The cabinet recognizes that the effectiveness of such planning will be greatly enhanced by future improvements to the gathering, recording and analysis of data. Parents are generally satisfied with their role in the decision-making processes of the school through their parent-teachers' association and the school leadership team. They are fully informed and consulted by the principal, but recognize that they need to take a more pro-active role in taking account of the school's performance data when considering options and strategies for taking the school forward.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Academy of Public Relations (MS 298)	∅	✓	+
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.	∅	✓	+
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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.		Ø	✓ +
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.		Ø	✓ +
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	