



# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**The Academy of Collaborative Education**

**Middle School 344**

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

**Principal: Yvonne El-Amin**

**Dates of review: April 3 - 4, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Eileen Hill**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Academy of Collaborative Education opened in September 2006. Its focus is math and technology and its mission is to provide students with the personal and academic skills required for admission to specialized high schools. It is a middle school with 218 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 74.8% Black, 22.5% Hispanic, 0.9% White, and 1.4% Asian students. The student body includes 3.7% English language learners and 11.9% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 - 2007 was 91%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 87.6% eligibility. Most teachers appointed to the school in the first year, left at the end of that year. In September 2007, all but two teachers were new to the school, including four teachers in their first year and two in their second year of teaching.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Math is well organized and students' progress is carefully monitored.
- Good quality display is evident around the school and in classrooms and this contributes to the improved learning climate.
- A balanced literacy program has been introduced and this has improved instruction in English language arts.
- Special education students and English language learners are supported well and as a result make good progress.
- Professional development is clearly focused on the needs of teachers and students as identified by the analysis of data.
- Procedures to address discipline related issues are now being implemented more consistently and as a result the school usually runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis.

### What the school needs to improve

- Further refine and develop the data available to teachers and ensure it is used consistently well across content areas and by individual teachers.
- Work collaboratively with teachers and other professionals to produce detailed planning, based on short term and strategic goals, to guide the work of the school in bringing about improvements.
- Continue to support teachers in their strategies for managing the behavior of students in order to build on the improvements made this year.
- Undertake the required number of formal observations for new teachers and ensure those new to the profession and to the school receive written feedback on their strengths and areas for development.
- Ensure all teachers are held accountable for the progress of students in their classes.
- Establish clear and transparent systems and procedures for monitoring, evaluating and revising goals and plans.

## 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 underdeveloped.**

The school is coming towards the end of its second year and has faced many challenges since it opened. Most of the teachers are new to the school and many of those are new teachers to the profession. There is currently no assistant principal and the monitoring and support required to induct new teachers is weak and has been a considerable challenge to the principal and to the school. Over this year student behavior has been a significant issue. This has improved, but students in all grades rightly believe their learning is affected by the poor behavior of other students. Math is well organized and students' progress is carefully monitored. Systems for the regular monitoring of students' progress in English language arts and other content areas are beginning to be established, but the school does not yet have an easily accessible overview of the progress of individual students or of groups. Strategic planning is not sufficiently well developed. The school has goals for improvement but these are not always written down and there is no detailed planning or time frames against which to evaluate their success. New teachers have not received their quota of formal observations and have not received written feedback to guide them in developing their skills and competences. Practices in planning, instruction and assessment across the school are improving slowly, although they are inconsistent. While some teachers respect and value the principal, others are unhappy with the perceived lack of focus and support.

The school has worked to address the areas for development in the previous report. Progress has been made in establishing a balanced literacy program and in the use of data for evaluating students' achievements in math and English language arts. Work is underway to further develop information management systems so that regularly updated data is available to all who need it. Progress has been hampered by the challenges of so many new teachers and by the absence of effective strategic planning. The school's inquiry team has focused on a small group of 15 students who are achieving at Level 2 and are considered capable of moving to Level 3. The inquiry team has met regularly since October 2007, but its members have not articulated clearly what they hope to achieve or how they intend to use the data generated to measure success.

### 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 underdeveloped with proficient features.**

The school has begun to develop a range of data to help it to track and monitor the progress of students in both math and English language arts. Over the course of this year, Acuity has been used twice to obtain a base-line analysis of students' skills and a further predictive analysis of the students' proficiency against the State standards. This

information has enabled the school to compare progress between classes, grades and subjects. Additional interim assessments are carried out by teachers, although the procedures for recording the progress of individual students in a way that makes comparisons clear between classes and students is not yet in place for English language arts or content areas other than math. A range of assessments are made on the progress of groups of students, such as special education and English language learners and both these groups make good progress. Black students do less well than Hispanic. Comparative data on these groups and individuals is not readily available to assist the school to target progress. Data is held on students' previous achievements in State tests, but since the school is only in its second year, this data is not always a reliable measure of past performance. All teachers have received training and support in the use of data to support planning and instruction, although the principal accurately reports some inconsistency in practice across the school.

**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 underdeveloped with proficient features.**

The principal sets a small number of goals for the school and some of these have measurable targets for improvement. These goals are not however sufficiently supported by detailed planning or time frames for achievement. The principal and teachers met to discuss, in general, the aims and direction of the school early in the school year and records of their discussions are posted in some classrooms and in the principal's office. The transition from this to formally recorded goals, with action plans and time frames has not yet been made.

Most students have made progress from their starting points and achieve Level 2 in State tests. The school has identified special education students, English language learners and those capable of achieving Level 3 as most in need of improvement. The school inquiry team focuses on a small number of students in this last group. Each member of the cabinet, including the principal, has taken responsibility for three students. Important background information about individual students has been gathered, but records of achievement and progress have not been collated for math and English language arts and lessons for future developments on goal setting and monitoring for groups and individuals have not been articulated.

The principal expresses high expectations for the school, for the students and for the quality of instruction in classrooms. However, the significant number of new teachers in the school and inconsistencies in the implementation of procedures for managing teachers and using data, means that relevant expectations for behavior and achievement have not been conveyed consistently to all students. There have been significant improvements over the course of this year but the principal acknowledges that they "are not there yet".

Teachers are expected to work with students on setting goals for improvement. This is a new initiative. A good start has been made, but goal setting for students is not undertaken consistently by all teachers. Parents receive information about their children's progress, particularly in State tests. An increasing number attend parent/teacher conferences to receive information about their children's progress and share information with the school. Few parents contribute to the work of the school in other ways, for example, by attending parent teacher association meetings.

**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 underdeveloped with proficient features.**

School leaders have worked hard this year to improve the quality of instruction, particularly for new teachers. The curriculum is mostly broad and balanced but there are few extra-curricular classes. Students complain that there are no sports activities after school. The core curriculum is aligned to State standards and is capable of generating meaningful data about students' progress. Math instruction is often challenging, creative and stimulating. The math display in the school is of high quality. English language arts instruction is more variable. The appointment of a coach for this content area has supported teachers in using balanced literacy strategies. However, students continue to find English language arts the least motivating content area. Teachers have been encouraged to develop portfolios of assessed work for individual students and to make regular ongoing assessments of class work. This is relatively new and its effectiveness not yet evaluated, but it does support the majority of teachers in planning and differentiating instruction for their classes.

Staffing has been a major challenge for the school this year and last. While the majority of teachers meet the expectations for planning and monitoring of students' progress, this is not consistent. In response to students' poor achievements in English language arts at Levels 3 and 4, the principal appointed a coach. This decision has helped the school to establish English language arts instruction. The leadership now intends to appoint an assistant principal to support the principal in monitoring and supporting teachers and ensuring all expectations for planning, instruction and assessment are met. For the most part, there is a climate of mutual trust and respect between students and staff, although problems with behavior have affected learning for students. Principal and superintendent suspensions have risen sharply since 2006-07 with almost 50 students suspended so far this year. While procedures for monitoring attendance are consistently applied, attendance has declined this year and is currently at 88.6%.

**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 underdeveloped with proficient features.**

The principal and others have spent considerable time this year training and supporting new teachers. New teachers have mentors and these usually work with them, observe their progress and provide informal feedback to help them improve. The principal conducts daily walk-throughs and knows the strengths and weaknesses of the teachers. Most new teachers have received one formal observation from the principal with verbal feedback. Formal written feedback has not been given and, therefore, has not been used to monitor progress against improvement goals. Most other teachers have not yet received a formal observation. Some of the new teachers have had limited opportunities to observe the classes of other teachers, including on some occasions, the classes of their mentors. However, the literacy coach and the AUSSIE consultant have worked extensively with new teachers, often teaching collaboratively with them. In addition, the principal has employed a consultant to work with one new teacher, particularly to support her management of behavior in the classroom.

The use and understanding of data, differentiating instruction, developing a balanced literacy program and improving behavior are priorities for the school and have been addressed over the year by professional development. Teachers work together in teams, for example, with common planning time in English language arts. This time is used for professional development, for assembling portfolios of students' work, for developing rubrics and for encouraging the mostly new teachers to share their experiences and ideas. As a result of improvements in behavior, the school now usually runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. The principal depends on lead teachers for support in managing the school. These teachers often give willingly of their time, for example, the AUSSIE consultant, who is assigned to the school for 25 days a year to support math instruction, but takes the lead on developing information systems for the use of data. The work of lead and support

teachers is not always sufficiently directed at what they should be doing or sufficiently monitored to ensure effectiveness. For example, the principal has specified that the literacy coach should monitor data on progress and achievement across grades and classes. This has not happened.

**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.**

The school has good structures for evaluating the progress of students in math. Outcomes of class tests are recorded and sometimes displayed in classrooms. This enables the math teachers to see clearly what progress has been made and where additional support is required. This does not happen in other subjects, although folders of assessment information have been recently compiled and should enable monitoring and evaluation of progress. The school adapts its plans for class organization where necessary. For example, there were behavior difficulties in grade 6 and in response to this the principal established a boys' class taught by a male teacher. This has been effective in improving the behavior of the boys. The principal's personal goals are relevant to the development of the school. Other goals for improvement, such as those for improving students' achievement in both math and English language arts are understood by most teachers.

There is no detailed written planning for how any goals are to be achieved. The principal meets regularly with the cabinet and with the school leadership team to monitor progress in the school, but procedures for monitoring the success of goals lack sufficient clarity and focus. At present, interim data is not available in an easily accessible form in most content areas to enable the leadership to regularly evaluate the progress of individuals, groups, classes or grades. As a result, it is not possible to adjust goals with any accuracy, to measure success or to hold teachers accountable for the achievement of students. The principal has a clear vision for the school and how she wants it to develop. She does not, however, engage with teachers and school leaders on the production of clear and transparent written plans to communicate her vision to others and establish criteria against which to evaluate success.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

|  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| <b>SCHOOL NAME: Academy of Collaborative Education</b> | Δ | ➤ | ✓ | + | ◇ |
| <b>Quality Score</b>                                   | 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 . . .  | 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 |   |   |   |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>  |   | 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 |   |   |   |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>  |   | 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 |   |   |   |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>   |   | 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 |   |   |   |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>   |   | 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 |   |   |   |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>  | X |   |   |   |   |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| ◇ | <b>Outstanding</b>                             |
| + | <b>Well Developed</b>                          |
| ✓ | <b>Proficient</b>                              |
| ➤ | <b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b> |
| Δ | <b>Underdeveloped</b>                          |