



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The School for International Studies

Middle - High School 497

**284 Baltic Street
Brooklyn
NY 11201**

Principal: Fred Walsh

Dates of review: March 31 - April 1, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Richard Woolf

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The School for International Studies is a middle-high school with 467 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 45% Black, 36% Hispanic, 15% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 11% English language learners and 19% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 86.8%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 76% eligibility.

The school shares a campus with another high school. Both principals agree upon schedules for the sharing of facilities like the gymnasium, cafeteria and the soon to be opened reconstructed auditorium.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school is very well led and managed by a respected principal whose primary focus is preparing students for lifelong learning.
- The assistant principals and staff support the principal's vision and dedicate their efforts to achieving it.
- There is good use of data to inform the staff's understanding progress and performance, especially in respect of gender and ethnicity.
- The school has high expectations for all its students to succeed in their studies.
- The academic and arts curriculum meets the needs of the students across the entire school.
- The staff and students are respectful of each other and this aids student learning.
- The school services the professional development needs of its staff very well.
- The parents work well in partnership with the school in supporting their children's educational needs.
- The students enjoy school and appreciate the assistance they receive from staff, especially as they near graduation.
- The increase in attendance rates has resulted from better classroom engagement and systematic follow-up by support staff.

What the school needs to improve

- Implement a more rigorous goal-setting system that uses interim data to regularly monitor and revise progress.
- Share the many examples of good differentiated teaching so that the practice becomes consistent across the school.
- Raise the overall level of academic challenge for special education students and English language learners.
- Find ways of managing the limited budget strategically in order to maintain programs that are raising achievement
- Seek ways in which teachers new to the school continue to receive the same high level of support in their second year as in their first year.

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 currently comprises of two parts: middle grades and high school grades. Each part is making progress in improving student outcomes. The outcomes for students in grades 6 through 8 are better than for those students in grades 9 through 12. The school is seeking ways of closing the gap by extending differentiated instruction strategies that are consistent throughout many aspects of the middle school work. This is proving a challenge but one that the well respected principal sees as having positive outcomes. The school is undertaking a number of key initiatives to meet this challenge and raise its high expectations further in preparing students for lifelong learning.

The teachers' understanding and use of data to inform their instruction is helping them to challenge their students better and enable them to make advancements in their external examinations. The administration's strategic use of the data has led to an overall improvement in the performance of both gender and ethnic groups. However, the school does not challenge special education students and English language learners with the same intensity. The setting of whole school goals to improve academic achievement for all students takes place. However, the school does not yet use all the data at its disposal to set exceptionally challenging but realistic individual goals for staff and students.

Many of the school's recent improvements result from effective teaching although there is an inconsistency of practice. Teachers value the professional development they receive to improve their teaching. The school is facing a significant challenge as budgetary cuts take place over the next year and planning for this is likely to be critical in sustaining programs that are aiding all round school improvement. Parents value the efforts of the staff and the benefits the small size of the school offers.

Since last Quality Review, the school has undertaken a number of initiatives to improve upon the areas for improvement. These revolve around time for planning in grades 6 to 8, better sharing and observations of good practice in subject departments and using data for instructional purposes. The inquiry team meets regularly to monitor the identified group closely. Initial evidence of the group's progress is positive.

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 uses data in a proficient way to understand student performance and progress and to inform and guide teacher instruction. The teachers have State and City data available to them. They also collect an array of in-house data including baseline tests on each student at the commencement of the school year. Teachers are aware of the value data has in improving student performance and progress. This awareness plays a key part in the school's overall increase in performance at both the middle and high school level. The principal acknowledges this as a positive feature in challenging most groups of students. However, the school does not yet bring to bear all its data resources to understand and accelerate the progress of its special education students and English language learners. In dealing with both these groups of students, there is a greater reliance on the use of soft data, rather than hard test data. In relation to gender and ethnic groupings, the school's use of data is very proactive with programs in place to meet their specific educational needs.

The school has a great deal of data to demonstrate progress over time. This understanding is playing an important part in contributing to the increasing success of the school. Every teacher is able to effectively interrogate data and use it to demonstrate progress, drawing comparisons with previous class and grade level performances. Progress against other schools' data shows for the most part how effective the school's journey of improvement has been over the last three years. Staff feel justifiably proud of this improvement as the better use of data has led to most students making commendable progress

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.

Using the Comprehensive Education Plan format the school sets its goals. The senior leadership team, that includes parents, teachers and students, ascribe measurable percentage increases to a number of goals. The aim is for there to be significant improvement across the entire school. However, the school does not yet use all available data to make these goals realistic and challenging. This is particularly so in the case of the special education students and English language learners. From the departmental goals, teachers devise their own goals and in turn individual student goals. Currently, teachers do not set students' goals with sufficient rigor to improve their learning outcomes.

The principal takes advantage of a number of different forums to convey the school's goals. Parents hold the principal and staff in high esteem. Resulting from their endeavors, they see the improvements in the school as being good. Parents feel the growing strength of the school arises from the high expectations that emanate from the

staff. Their children feel safe, secure and happy. They rightly see this progress continuing through the development of even more academic rigor. Communication between staff and parents is very good. Parents feel able to have frank discussions with the staff and that they are in a partnership to assist in advancing the school's growth.

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 well developed.

The development of the curriculum is a major contributor to the school's success over the last three years. A series of innovations that include advisory and Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) programs help to challenge a larger number of students academically. The advisory program resulted from an analysis of data showing a need to teach students in grades 6 and 9 in single sex groups. The program has gone a long way in raising students' self-esteem, attendance and credit accumulation. The introduction of enrichment courses to challenge some of the higher achieving students is proving beneficial, especially for those pursuing entry into college programs. There is a good range of electives for the high school students to choose, including computer assisted design and culinary arts. For a small school, this choice adds value to the students' academic experience. The arts program that includes fine art, music and drama provides real breadth to the curriculum, and large numbers of students of all ages enjoy these programs during the school day and as part of after-school activities.

The school provides students with an exceptionally safe and secure haven in which to follow their studies. Parents greatly appreciate this and it is often the motivating factor for enrolling their children. The principal acknowledges this recent success in raised performance but accepts the importance of continually challenging his staff to improve and raise the level of academic rigor and for good practices in differentiating instruction to become consistent across the school. Joint planning in English language arts for essay writing, to establish a common school format for all grade levels, is a good example. However, the school does not have a similar consistent approach to the delivery of differentiated teaching to positively impact upon student learning.

The school faces a number of challenges, but none more challenging than large cuts in its funding. The principal is cognizant of this fact as he and his staff carefully analyze data to ensure programs that have brought recent success to the school remain intact. Attendance figures continue to rise due to careful monitoring but more importantly the delivery of more engaging and student-centered lessons.

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 administration undertakes both formal and informal observations. Staff appreciate these and find the feedback to be important in improving their teaching. They also welcome the support they receive from coaches and staff developers in enabling them to

provide opportunities to challenge students even further. The administration closely analyzes data to inform whole school professional development. This is focusing specifically on improving teachers' skill base and is equipping them to be more effective instructional leaders. Teachers have opportunities to choose professional programs to meet their personal as well as professional needs. The staff has numerous opportunities to meet and plan cooperatively, including grade level and departmental meetings. Staff are adept at using a broad range of data at these meetings to inform planning. New members of staff receive mentoring and induction programs that assist them in learning the school's "rules and regulations". However, the school does not yet extend such intensive support beyond their first year of teaching which would be welcomed.

The school has systems in place to ensure students behave well. Incidents of very poor behavior have shown a steady but significant decline at all grade levels over the last year. There is an expectation throughout the school that adults and students work together. A number of students undertake positions of responsibility. These include peer-mentoring, membership of the student council and, for the oldest students, the opportunity to become members of the senior leadership team and play a part in shaping the school's future. Students receive excellent support from the guidance department and intervention services. These services provide invaluable help for students in meeting their academic and social goals. A wide array of outside organizations supports the school in servicing the needs of the students. This includes Long Island College Hospital, Globe Kids and the National Honor Society.

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 school has systems, which support the monitoring and revision of plans during the school year. Adjustments take place at the end of marking periods when teachers discuss students' progress with the administration. A growing strength in this aspect of the school's work is the development of teacher-generated diagnostic assessments. Teachers are responsible for using diagnostic tests to demonstrate the extent to which their instruction helps students improve. Using these assessments, along with information from Acuity and ARIS, the principal has a better overview of student progress throughout the school.

Collating data from scholarship reports, the school can make immediate changes to rectify any shortcomings in student performance. By adopting female-only gym classes, passing rates are now increasing. Using a system of backward planning, the school reflects on its successes before planning for the new academic year. This involves all staff working in departments to re-visit curriculum plans. Formal discussions take place between staff and assistant principals with recommendations going to the senior leadership team for final confirmation. The school finds this a productive exercise as it provides an opportunity to review how to make better use of interim data to set goals.

The principal has a clear vision for the school's future development. This includes further developing and embedding many new initiatives. Parents and staff understand this vision and fully support the principal in his endeavors to provide a seamless education for students from grade level 6 to 12.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The School for International Studies	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
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 . . .	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