



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Information Technology High School

High School 502

21-16 44th Road

Queens

NY 11101

Principal: Nancy Casella

Dates of review: June 2 - 3, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Bruce Berry

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Information Technology High school has 973 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 18.5% Black, 51% Hispanic, 12% White, 16% Asian and 2.5% other students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 60% of the students enrolled and girls account for 40%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 - 2007 was 83.2%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

The school has an acting interim principal who has been working in the school for four weeks. The school shares the building with a District 75 school.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The acting principal has changed the school culture significantly by creating clear structures and expectations in her short time in school.
- The excellent support and instruction is leading to English language learners making very good progress in their achievement levels.
- The curriculum provides good opportunities for developing the students' skills and knowledge in information technology.
- The majority of students have high levels of trust and respect for their teachers and demonstrate good levels of self-discipline.
- The parents give praise for the educational support and social care their children receive in the school.
- The school is now a well-ordered environment, where students feel safe and learning can take place.
- There is an effective after-school program, including arts and sports, which provides engagement and interest for students beyond the school day.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop a strategic vision for the school, which is supported by rigorous plans and measurable goals for improving student and teacher outcomes.
- Strengthen the strategic monitoring procedures by creating interim checkpoints in all plans in order to measure the progress made in reaching long-term goals.
- Provide more consistency in the application and monitoring of the use of the school's grading policy within and across subjects.
- Further develop instructional strategies and practices by creating more opportunities for student-centered learning to take place.
- Improve the use of data to differentiate instruction to ensure that activities are fully matched to the students' identified learning needs.
- Develop partnerships with external organizations to provide a wider range of opportunities for students to extend and enrich their academic and social development.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

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

Overall Evaluation

This school is underdeveloped with proficient features.

Since the last school Quality Review, there has been little progress in addressing the areas identified as being in need of improvement. There has been a lack of leadership and direction for a long period and the process has started to appoint a new principal. The school has no strategic vision, plans or goals for improving student achievement. This has led to very little strategic monitoring of the impact of initiatives and instruction on learning. This lack of rigor is detrimental to school improvement being maintained. There is inconsistency in the use of data in instructional practices to differentiate activities to match them to the learning needs of the students. There are no sustained partnerships for extending and enriching the students' academic development.

The acting principal, who has been in post for only four weeks, has made a significant impact on improving the culture by creating clear structures and expectations. This change has been widely welcomed by all members of the school community. As one student said, "the school environment is stricter and I now feel safer". Good provision is made for supporting English language learners and there is good use of technology in some instruction to provide engagement and interest for student learning. This is further supported by an effective after school program to support the students' interests. The inquiry team is focusing its research and activities on grades 9 and 10 students who are struggling to achieve ten credits in the school year. The focus of their instructional activities is to raise the reading skills of this group of students.

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 uses a variety of data to monitor the progress of students in their achievement levels. STAR diagnostic tests are used well to identify the reading levels of incoming grade 9 students. These are then used regularly to track the progress students are making in their reading levels. Marking period grades, credit accumulation and progress in Regents courses are used as the basis for tracking the progress of students, classrooms, grades and subjects. However, the grading policy is not sufficiently focused on the skills development of the students and it is inconsistently applied within and across subject areas. The teachers have received inadequate

training in the use of data to inform their instruction and to meet the identified needs of the students. The school monitors progress of all ethnic and gender groups on an annual basis. They identify some differences in performance of different subgroups, but do not consistently review their curriculum and instructional practices to address the identified issues. At present, there is insufficient use of in year data to monitor the progress of each subgroup in the school. The school compares its graduation rates and Regents test results with those of similar schools, but has not yet developed links with other schools in order to share and improve their instructional practices.

Special education students receive good support and make adequate progress in their achievement levels. The students are grouped based on their levels in reading, writing and math and receive their instruction in self-contained classes. Other special education students receive good support in collaborative team teaching classes, with one class at each grade level. Further valuable support is provided through academic intervention services, resource room and small group instruction. The programs used for raising the achievement of English language learners are leading to the students making very good progress in their achievement levels. The use of computers is playing a significant role in the instructional activities for the students. The system is also accessible on-line from home for students to continue with their studies beyond school day.

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 school does not have whole school goals for improving student achievement levels. The setting of student learning goals is practiced by some teachers, but is not consistent in each classroom and across subjects. Some students are able to articulate their next steps of learning, but others are unable or unsure how they can improve their achievements in some subjects. Senior leaders monitor the impact of instructional practices in each classroom using the marking period grades. However, there is ineffective action taken when high numbers of students are failing in specific classes. The learning requirements of students in greatest need of improvement are regularly discussed at weekly meetings of teachers and other service providers. Decisions are made on the level of classroom and other interventions needed to improve each student’s achievement levels. At present, however, there is insufficient structure to the support these students receive, although many teachers provide valuable tutoring when students are in need of extra help. Although the school does not have identified goals for improving student outcomes, all members of the school community share a long-term goal of graduation and a college place for each student.

There is inconsistency in the expectations of student achievement across the classrooms. Some teachers generate very high expectations by engaging students as active learners and making instruction interesting and challenging. In other classrooms, however, students are passive learners. Low passing rates are often blamed on the students’ lack of effort. At present, there are no strategies in place for creating a shared responsibility for success between the student and the teacher. The parents express their praise for the interest, care and educational support their children receive in the school. The parents receive regular feedback through the record card and are able to contact teachers if they have any concerns. They are also very positive about the

school website that allows them to view their children's homework and progress. However, they express concern that the website is not consistently updated.

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 aligned to State standards and provides useful data to monitor the progress in achievement levels. It also creates good opportunities for developing the students' skills and knowledge in information technology, which is a major focus of the school. These courses enable them to learn about the operation and application of computer technology in a range of different activities. For example, some write interesting programs using official computer language, while others use the technology to successfully create video productions. There is a limited arts program where students have the opportunity to take art and vocal music. They can also study advanced-placement courses and electives, but the number and range of these are extremely limited.

Some of the instruction in the school is highly effective in creating student-centered learning opportunities in which they are fully engaged, enthused and effectively challenged by the activities. However, some instruction is teacher directed, students are passive learners and there is no clear indication that they are effectively learning. There is evidence of some teachers differentiating their instruction to match their classroom activities to the students' learning needs. However, this practice is not in evidence in some of the classrooms and teachers are not making the best use of data to create learning activities appropriate for the students' recognized needs.

The school uses the budget well to support the curriculum and instruction. It funds a literacy program to further enhance reading and writing skills. It also provides engagement and interest for students in the effective after-school academic and sports programs. The school has created high levels of trust and respect between all members of the school community. The students are confident in approaching most adults to discuss academic or social areas of concern. For their part, many teachers offer help and tutoring for the students to improve their academic levels. The school has appropriate measures for improving attendance, but these are not yet successful in raising the low attendance levels in the school.

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.

In the past few years, there has been inappropriate and limited monitoring of teachers' accountability for making instruction engaging and effective in improving student outcomes. The interim acting principal has recently introduced a more rigorous process of observations and classroom walkthroughs by the school leaders. At present, however, there is inconsistency in the follow-up procedures when areas of improvement

are identified. The teachers have good opportunities for engaging in professional development activities outside the school and through the in-house teachers' training center. However, the absence of a strategic plan for improving student achievement is detrimental in linking training activities to the key objectives of the school's development. Teachers are able to meet together in departments on a monthly basis to discuss the curriculum and instruction. However, they do not have regular opportunities to work together, since common planning time is not scheduled. Inter-visitations do take place on occasions, but are not regularly planned activities in the school.

The guidance counselors in each grade provide appropriate support for students' academic and social development. The incoming freshmen begin the summer by taking part in guidance sessions to help ease their induction into the school. There are also useful sessions to discuss social issues appropriate for the student's age group. The clear structures and procedures introduced recently have significantly contributed to the school becoming a well-ordered environment, where students feel safe and learning can take place. As one parent said of the acting interim principal, "she has changed the atmosphere in the school since she came here". The school has little in the way of partnerships with external organizations to provide opportunities for students to extend and enrich their academic and social development.

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 no plans or goals in place for improving achievement and this has been the case since 2005. There has been little in the way of effective leadership and management during that period to provide any consistency in school procedures or in the rigor required to improve student and teacher outcomes. Monitoring of the impact of instruction in raising student achievement is ineffective due to the absence of any strategic plans and improvement goals. The inconsistency of the application of the grading policy and the lack of professional development in the use of data to inform instruction are detrimental in measuring the effectiveness of the curriculum plans and interventions. Although teachers often meet to discuss individual and groups of students when there are concerns about their achievement levels, there is not always enough clarity in the actions to be taken and in the responsibilities of individuals in making those actions successful.

School leaders are now beginning to take effective strategic decisions in modifying actions in order to improve the social and academic environment in the school. The immediate impact of these actions can be seen in the positive and self-disciplined way students conduct themselves in classrooms and around the school. The lack of strategic planning and goals is a barrier to the school's ability to review the impact of their activities and to plan effectively for the future. There is not, at present, a clear vision for how the school can improve in the future, but the seeds are now being sown to provide some clarity of the direction being taken to improve the work of the school.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Information Technology High School	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