



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The School for International Studies

Middle and High School 497

**284 Baltic Street
Brooklyn
NY 11201**

Principal: Fred Walsh

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Reviewer: Bruce Berry

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The School for International Studies is a middle and high school with 471 students on roll, covering age ranges from grade 6 to grade 12. The school has an ethnic breakdown of 46.5% Black, 33.5% Hispanic, 15.9% White, 3.6% Asian and 0.5% Native American students. There are 13% English language learners and 18% special education students.

The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 73% eligible students in 2006/07. The attendance figure in 2005 was 85.5%, lower than for similar schools and City schools. The attendance figure for this academic year is 88% to date.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal's high quality strategic leadership and management are having a significant impact on the organization, overall achievement and culture of the school.
- The cabinet and teachers are a united team and share a vision for continuous school improvement.
- There are very good and consistent procedures for planning, instruction, assessment and goal setting.
- The school has outstanding assessment, goal setting and evaluation practice in mathematics which has an excellent impact on achievement levels of students.
- There are good integrated programs for monitoring and evaluating the progress of special education students and English language learners which is raising achievement.
- Effective team structures and communication procedures create a consistent approach to planning, instruction, assessment and goal setting.
- The school is an orderly community with a caring family culture.
- The school regularly celebrates student success with activities which motivate students to aspire to higher achievement levels.
- Students and parents are very supportive of the school and of the education and care the children receive.
- The school has an effective after school enrichment program which promotes students' academic and social wellbeing.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to develop the good programs for raising achievement by collecting and analyzing data to have equal impact in subjects across the curriculum.
- Continue to develop instructional practice in those subjects where the use of data has only marginal impact on raising achievement.
- Continue to monitor and evaluate the use of data in subjects and grade levels where achievement is rising at a slower rate.
- Continue to provide opportunities for curriculum teams in all subject areas to observe and discuss good practice within and outside the school.
- Fine tune planning, goal setting and progress monitoring, particularly in grades 6 to 8, at individual, class, grade and whole school level to achieve consistent achievement growth.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The principal has transformed the school, over the past three years, into an improvement focused organization, with an orderly and caring family culture. The teachers work together as a united team, which constantly strives to raise the achievement of all students. There are good assessment and goal setting structures in place, which, when combined with good instructional practice, are beginning to result in substantial gains in achievement in some grades and subjects across the school. Teachers and teams regularly monitor student progress through the analysis of internal and external data and plan intervention strategies when appropriate. Significant improvements have been achieved in graduation rates and in external tests in some grades and subjects. That improvement, however, is happening at a slower rate in some curriculum areas.

The parents and students have a high regard for the school and for the education and care that the students receive. There are reward and enrichment programs, which provide experiences and opportunities for the students to widen their academic and social skills.

The principal knows the needs of the school well and has accurately demonstrated the strategic requirements to take the school to the next stage of the improvement cycle.

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 generates its own data and uses external data to track the progress of individual students, classes, grades and the whole school. In grades 6 to 8, a combination of running records for reading and conferencing for writing form the basis of progress monitoring and intervention in English language arts. In grades 9 to 12, graduation credit accumulation and progress in Regents' scores are used for tracking across all subjects. Princeton tests provide regular individualized information to plan intervention. The school has outstanding assessment, goal setting and evaluation practice in mathematics which has resulted in a substantial rise in Regents, State and City test results. Procedures exist for all other subjects as part of the school's assessment procedures. At present however, the impact of the procedures varies between subjects and grades and, although achievement is improving, the rate of improvement is slower in some areas.

There are good integrated programs for monitoring and evaluating progress for special education students and English language learners which is raising achievement levels of the students. Special education students are assessed regularly through the targets in their individualized education programs. Some students are taught in a self contained class and others in collaborative team teaching classes, with full integration into general education classes as the goal. English language students have intervention time, push-in and pull-out support, intensive instruction, native language support and their progress is monitored and reviewed regularly by a committee of staff. The school also tracks the performance of ethnic groups and plans to refine their analysis to include different nationalities. Gifted and talented students are placed in honors classes for accelerating

their progress in Regents. Children in care are monitored, with all staff made aware of the circumstances of all groups of children.

The school compares its performance with other schools and with its own past performance in State tests, Regents tests and graduation rates. The school has had some major successes in raising graduation rates and Regents test results in English language arts, mathematics, science and US history. The school has also reduced the proportion of level 1 students in grades 6 to 8 in some subjects although less progress is being made in raising achievement in English language arts.

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, with well developed features.

The school has good procedures for goal setting at all levels which is beginning to be very successful as a central strategy in raising achievement. In grades 6 to 8, goals are set for reading, writing, mathematics and other subjects and in grades 9 to 12 graduation credit accumulations and Regents success is the focus for all members of the school community. Students are set and understand short term goals for units of work and they also know their long term goals in respect of graduation. Progress is monitored at classroom, grade, subject and whole school level. Some significant gains have been made in graduation rates, Regents test results and State test results in some subjects and grades.

Goals and plans focus on graduation rates, Regents and State exam performance. Goals are more finely tuned at grade and classroom level in grades 9 to 12, with student goals integrated into units of study. In grades 6 to 8 the school focus is on reducing level 1 and increasing levels 3 and 4 scores, but there is not consistency in goal setting at this level. Students in greatest need of improvement are monitored regularly and the pupil personnel committee oversees those students most at risk and initiates external support services when needed. As a result students are making good progress.

High expectations are generated by all of the school community. There is a ‘can do’ culture at all levels, from students, teachers, cabinet and parents. Students are effectively encouraged to aspire to higher goals as demonstrated by the honors board which celebrates success. Teachers regularly update parents on progress, formally with the report card, informally by personal contact and there is an open door policy for parents to see teachers at any time.

Goals and plans to raise achievement are the central driving force of all the activities in the school and at all levels. As a result, there has been some significant improvement in achievement in some key indicators, but slower rates of improvement in English language arts. There is not enough consistency in grades 6 to 8 in fine tuning goal setting and progress monitoring at individual, class, grade and whole school level to achieve consistent achievement growth.

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 well developed.

The school plans its curriculum based on the outcomes of analysis of data and the goals achieved. The curriculum planning is undertaken using a technique where the school focuses on what it wants to achieve and works backwards from that in creating the curriculum plans and maps. A variety of curriculum delivery approaches are used from the workshop approach in English language arts to the mini-lesson in most other curriculum areas. The curriculum is adjusted according to the outcomes of regular data reviews. Teachers are fully accountable for student outcomes and the quality of their instruction. Teachers differentiate by a variety of strategies, from intervention to task based activities. In social studies, for example, work packages are designed with text for different reading levels and in mathematics students are grouped based on outcomes of analysis of test data. Teachers continually assess and adjust their instruction based on the data outcomes. However, this good instructional practice, together with fully integrated assessment and goal setting procedures are not, as yet, creating consistent improvement rates in some subjects and grades.

The school uses its budget creatively to maximize impact on student achievement. The priority is to keep class sizes low, provide flexibility in the allocation of teachers and to provide support from coaches and professional development. In mathematics, the school has taken on a part-time consultant, which has resulted in a substantial rise in achievement levels.

Instruction in the school is well planned, has pace and energy, actively engages students and incorporates assessment and goal setting practices with which to track student progress. The use of the workshop approach and mini-lessons provides good pace and clear expectations for the students. The respect and care that the students receive from the staff is enhancing their academic and social wellbeing. All students are able to approach any adult in the school. There are very good procedures for monitoring and intervention for attendance. First day calls home for absence and tardiness help to keep students and parents focused on the importance of attendance. An attendance team monitors students across the school and a monthly reward activity is given to those students with no absence or tardiness that month.

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 with well developed features.

The school has good procedures for the selection of teachers, which is undertaken by a committee from the staff. The process includes interviews and model lessons. Interviews explore planning, progress monitoring, applicants' portfolios of planning materials and their interest in working in an urban environment.

The effective professional development program is enhancing teachers' skills and is contributing to raising students' achievement levels. The program is driven by the outcomes of data and its impact on raising achievement. The Teachers College supports the school in leading reading and writing workshops, with a staff developer working with the staff one day a week. Consultants are employed in mathematics and social studies, with science supported by a regional specialist. The school use 'Lesson Lab' techniques where subject teachers plan instruction activities together, half the staff deliver and the others observe. They then review all aspects of the instruction together.

The very effective processes for cabinet and peer group lesson observations are contributing significantly to improving instruction. The principal and assistant principals undertake lesson observations. Teachers receive constructive feedback in a consistent format, which is focused on improving practice. The 'Lesson Lab' activity gives teachers the opportunity to observe one another and to discuss best practice in instruction. Many different teams of staff work well together and have an impact on raising achievement. Grade and subject teams focus on instruction, data analysis of student performance and intervention at classroom, grade and subject level. The attendance, guidance and intervention teams consider the impact of academic and social issues, and are supported by the pupil personnel committee.

The principal has the total confidence and respect of the students, parents and teachers. He has made a major impact in the transformation of the school into an orderly community with a caring family culture. He has the capacity to make the changes needed in the next phase of improvement. The school has partnerships with many academic and community-based organizations which enrich the academic and social wellbeing of the students. There are college programs, culinary arts, attendance rewards activities, a full range of extra curricula activities and many more on offer to the students. The school has a program called 'no place for hate' where students sign a pledge and wear a wrist band to keep hatred out of the school.

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 proficient.

The school has effective whole school plans, as set out in the Comprehensive Education Plan, which are reviewed weekly at cabinet meetings. The school sets appropriate and challenging plans and goals at the start of each year and through regular analysis of data is able to plan interventions when needed. The implementation of plans and goals are not, as yet, leading to achievement being raised consistently in some subjects and particularly in English language arts in grades 6 to 8.

The school has robust systems for making decisions based on the analysis of student progress at classroom, grade, subject and individual levels, which in turn lead to intervention strategies being triggered and plans and goals modified to address identified issues.

The school has a cycle of planning, goal setting, monitoring and evaluation at all levels which is focused on raising achievement for all students. Reviews of plans and progress towards goals happen regularly, with a renewed planning cycle starting at the end of the academic year with a starting position being the outcomes of the previous year's plans and goals.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The School for International Studies (MS/HS 497)	∅	✓	+
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.	∅	✓	+
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.	∅	✓	+
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.	∅	✓	+
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	