



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

International Arts Business High School

High School 544

**600 Kingston Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11203**

Principal: Leonard Trerotola

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Reviewer: Maggie Hollingsworth

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The International Arts Business School is a high school of 371 students in grades 9 through 12, 95% of whom are Black and 4.5% Hispanic and a very small number of students from other ethnic groups. The school is located in the Wingate area of Brooklyn but it draws many of its students from a much wider area. Females make up a larger proportion of the enrolment than is the case in similar and City schools. About 8% are special education students, and less than 2% are English language learners. Sixty percent of students are Title 1 eligible which is less than previous years but above the average both for similar schools and for City schools. At almost 88%, attendance is above the average for similar and City schools.

This is an Empowerment School. These schools have more flexibility to make key decisions and control their resources and are free to purchase or develop professional development services, choose with which schools to affiliate. They also benefit from reduced reporting and paperwork requirements.

The school shares the building with four other schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Under the principal's exemplary leadership the school has improved rapidly and is now highly effective in several aspects of its work.
- The school makes very good use of a wide range of data to analyze and assess the students' progress and decide where and how to focus support.
- Students benefit from an extensive range of supplementary classes which help them achieve their academic goals.
- The students are proud of their school, work hard and are determined to do well.
- Most students are making very good progress; their test and examination results are rising rapidly.
- Students appreciate the way staff take a personal interest in them, watch over their progress and support them in achieving their goals.
- Classroom observations are rigorous, timely and well focused and improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- Teaching engages the students' interest and, in the best lessons, challenges students to think and learn for themselves.
- The curriculum includes a wide range of imaginative and unusual courses which motivate and engage the students and offer them new ways to succeed.
- Close links with arts and business oriented partner organizations enrich the students' experience, expand their horizons and fuel their ambition.

What the school needs to improve

- Delegate greater responsibility to faculty in planning, monitoring and reviewing the school's goals for improvement.
- Increase teachers' ability to review data and set clear and pertinent goals.
- Continue the drive to improve punctuality at the start of each day and increase attendance.
- Further involve the students in recording their own progress so that they can take more responsibility for deciding their next steps.
- Extend the use of the computerized tracking system for students' achievement to provide more consistency in day to day record keeping and facilitate the analysis of data across and between subjects.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school with well-developed features.

Under the principal's exemplary leadership the school has improved rapidly; it is now highly effective in several aspects of its work and its results are rising faster than in many other schools. It uses the wealth of data it collects very well to plan the next steps in the students' learning. The students feel safe, enjoy lessons and are determined to succeed. Of those who have graduated, many will go to college, the first to do so in their family. They are proud of what they have achieved.

The school is not, however, complacent. It has detailed plans to make pass rates even higher and to extend its arts based curriculum, which includes courses as diverse as photography, drama and culinary arts to motivate and engage students further. It also plans to continue its vigorous pursuit of poor attendance and lateness to lessons which impede the students' learning.

This review has pointed out three other areas which the school recognizes it needs to tackle. Not all staff are confident enough to use the school's computerized data base to record students' progress; classroom displays could do more to point out how work could be improved and students could be more active in recording how well they are doing and setting out the next steps.

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 well developed.

The school gathers a wealth of data on the students' achievement in external tests and examinations and on their attendance, which it updates regularly and organizes highly effectively. A systematic and well developed analysis enables the school to compare the students' progress towards graduation between marking periods, to highlight which subjects, cohorts, classes or individual students are performing well, which are falling behind and how this links with the students' attendance. Color coded graphs highlight which groups and individuals are on track to achieve success in Regents tests or to graduate and where support needs to be focused. The system has enabled the school to track the progress of particular groups, such as those in special education or with English language learners, and to target initiatives where they are needed, for example on students with poor attendance and juniors at high risk of failing. The school is seeing improvements as a result. The students are, however, not fully involved in recording their own progress in class and rely too heavily on teachers and guidance counselors to tell them when they fall behind.

All staff collect the required data regularly but there are inconsistencies in the methods teachers use to record it. At present there are insufficient staff who are confident enough

to use the new computerized system which would address this. This is hampering the school's capacity to undertake more complex analysis.

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.

The school makes timely and effective use of information about students. The principal drives the detailed review and interpretation of the data in order to align support for students with different levels of need, and to prioritize actions. However, not all staff are confident to undertake this process for themselves. Goals are set for improvement based on the teachers' and counselors' detailed knowledge of the students' current achievement, their transcript, their attendance and attitude to work and their ultimate goal. The school's recent analysis of the data for sophomore students, for example, was used very effectively to place them on suitable courses to ensure that they graduated on time.

Curriculum planning is done in collaborative teams where this is advantageous, for example, where a project involves both specialist arts professionals and subject teachers. This collaboration, which is new to many staff, is being underpinned by effective professional development which gives teachers confidence to work alongside other professionals. Parents value the school because it gives children opportunities such as drama and dance that are rare in other schools.

Staff expect the best from students and do their utmost to help them achieve their goals. The staff monitor closely students who need extra help or those whose attendance is poor. There is a wide range of additional support for academic subjects that enables the school to meet the students' academic needs. When data analysis predicted that lower achieving students would not be ready to pass their Regents test, the school's counselors guided them towards a mix of tutoring, review classes and Saturday school. As a result, the majority are back on target for the examination.

The school involves parents in its plans for the students by canvassing their interests and providing regular workshops and meetings relating to their suggestions. Parents are kept well informed about their students' progress through a detailed report three times each semester. Nevertheless, the school is disappointed by the low turnout at school events and continues to see increasing parental involvement as a priority.

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 curriculum focuses strongly on the arts and on arts related business enterprises. While fulfilling mandatory requirements it also includes a wide range of imaginative and unusual courses which motivate and engage the students. Courses in performing and visual arts, French and Spanish, for example, provide students with new ways to increase their credits and encourage good attendance. Students' self esteem has benefited from lessons which challenge them to learn new skills to a high standard, such as playing a

musical instrument. A student who has successfully mastered the guitar, for example, has his own band and is teaching younger students; he also has aspirations for college entry. Students are enthusiastic to take up internships which are offered by the school's partners in arts related businesses and projects.

The academic curriculum is also creatively adjusted to meet the students' different needs and levels of performance. For example, the need to improve students' basic skills has led to the decision to provide courses in mathematics and science over four years rather than three and a seven hour instructional day for ninth graders. Guidance sessions focus on shortfalls in credits and in low test grades. The school provides, within its budget, a wide range of credited courses that help students make up any shortfalls. For students who have fallen a semester behind with credits, additional counseling identifies the barriers to their success and a range of remediation strategies, such as alternative text books and extra coaching and mentoring put in place. The most able mathematicians in grade 9 were identified by the school's tracking data and targeted with additional classes some of which were double staffed. When entered a year early for their Regents examination they achieved 85% success rate. Students appreciate the fact that the school will take significant time and trouble to help them succeed.

In classrooms teachers adjust the pacing calendar and amend their lesson plans to take account of the range of student needs. Classroom displays often exemplify good work but rarely provide enough information about how the work could be improved to bring it up to to a higher standard. The principal encourages teachers to introduce collaborative working and group activities into their lessons. Where this is done well, the teaching engages the students' interest and challenges them to think and learn for themselves.

Despite being above the average for City schools, improving attendance is one of the school's highest priorities. While appropriate and timely steps are taken to encourage good attendance and punctuality both remain a concern because of their impact on the students' achievement.

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 well developed.

The principal actively selects staff with an interest or experience in arts or business as well as their subject expertise and makes good use of their skills within the curriculum. Professionals in the arts bring additional expertise to the workforce. The staff is well qualified and committed to the students' personal, social and academic development.

The assistant principal provides excellent support for the principal and shows the same high level of commitment to the school's goals. Each makes classroom observations that are rigorous, timely and well focused on the school's priorities. There is excellent written feedback to staff which highlights strengths and gives pointers for development and improves the quality of teaching and learning. The program of professional development is aligned to meet the teachers' needs. Staff benefit from very good opportunities to observe each other's teaching, visit other schools, attend workshops with guest facilitators and organizations or receive coaching from an administrator within the school. As a result, most staff have been willing to engage with new ideas and incorporate new strategies in their lessons.

Lesson planning and review is often done in teams, sometimes involving arts professionals alongside teachers. Senior leaders meet together frequently, for example to discuss the data on students' latest achievements or to assess progress towards the school's goals to improve attendance.

The school runs very smoothly and efficiently. The principal is highly respected by the whole community. Through his strong links to arts organizations he has encouraged productive and vibrant partnerships with arts and business oriented organizations. Young Audiences New York, for example partners to develop credited courses, workshops and internships. These close links enrich the students' experience, expand their horizons and fuel their ambition.

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 Comprehensive Education Plan provides an accurate assessment of the school's needs and identifies three appropriate priorities which have clearly driven the school's improvements this year. Detailed action plans and quantifiable indicators for action are included and enable the senior leadership to review progress. The plan is devised collaboratively and this year was the result of a residential conference between members of the school community. The principal is steering the improvement process but not all staff are equally involved or accountable.

The school's effective systems for analyzing and evaluating data and for setting targets for improvement are well established, understood by all staff and lead to improvement. In addition to standardized tests, regular interim assessments take place across all subjects and performance comparisons are made routinely. At the classroom level, teachers use the on-line report card to identify strengths and weaknesses and, in consultation with the principal or assistant principal, amend their plans as required. Senior managers use this information to amend the short and medium term goals for cohorts and individuals.

The principal takes a hands-on approach to management and knows each student by name and the progress they are making. He has set up management structures and systems that capitalize on the strengths of staff but keep him informed about decisions. His tough approach to tackling failure has led to rapid improvement in results and a turn around in the school's reputation in the community.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: International Arts Business School (HS 544)	∅	✓	+
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	