

High School for Arts, Imagination and Inquiry

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High School 299

**122, Amsterdam Avenue
Manhattan
NY 10023**

Principal: Mr. Stephen M Noonan

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Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

The High School for Arts Imagination and Inquiry opened in July 2005 and there are now 105 students on roll, all of whom are in 9th Grade. Students travel from all over New York to attend the school. It is expected that the school will double in size in September 2006, with 9th and 10th grade students attending. Around 15% of students have special educational needs or are English language learners and require additional support. The school draws inspiration for the curriculum from the arts and it has a close working relationship with Lincoln Center.

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Part 1: Overview

What the school does well

- Since opening in 2005, the school has developed a strong and effective culture of continuous improvement.
- Teachers keep careful, relevant and well focused records of individual student progress.
- There is a strong and effective link between the school and Lincoln Center; this enhances the school's work in developing the arts.
- The school provides many exciting opportunities for students to broaden their understanding and knowledge of the arts.
- Some aspects of teaching are well-developed. In good lessons, teachers engage students effectively. There is good evidence of inquiry and imaginative approaches in use in these lessons.
- Attendance is improving and the school is determined to improve it further.
- The support and guidance, which students receive through the advisory program is well-developed.
- Students have positive views of the school.
- Relationships between staff and many students are supportive and very positive. Teaching and support for students with special educational needs and English Language Learners is effective.
- The Principal empowers students and staff and all opinions are valued. There is good teamwork and a shared commitment to improve.

What the school needs to improve

- To develop and implement plans which will enable the school to accommodate the incoming 9th grade in the fall of 2006.
- Develop the use of data through the development of information technology based systems. Relevant and useful information could then be readily accessed and used to improve planning and the quality of teaching and learning.
- Continue to develop and implement strategies to improve attendance.
- Match work more closely to the differing performances of students during the individual work phase of lessons in order to accelerate students' progress.
- Continue to cultivate positive attitudes to school and work in all students, by the continued development of a culture of high expectations and the greater use of rewards.

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Part 3: Main Findings

Overall Evaluation

This is an overall proficient school.

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria.

Quality Statement 1: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor and facilitate the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school opened in September 2005 and at the time of the review, it was not able to provide data and/or information about students' attainment and progress over time. To date, the administration has not been in a position to compare results with past performance. However, the records currently available do already indicate that students are making satisfactory progress. When a comparison is made between what students could do on entry to the school and the work they are now able to do, their progress is clearly visible. This is particularly significant, especially given the low starting point of many students.

The school collects data about students' progress and attainments thoroughly. Daily and weekly records are used effectively to identify the students' specific needs within subjects and to follow their progress over the short time they have been in school.

The school is becoming increasingly analytical and responsive. For example, teachers noticed a drop in test grades recently and set about finding out why this had happened. The main reason for the drop was that students did not hand some of their work in on time and were not therefore graded for it. As a result, teachers have resolved to checking that students hand their work in on time more rigorously. Each student now has a personal intervention plan. A good start has been made and it is recognized that there is more to do in order to use data effectively to inform teaching and learning.

Students' attendance records are monitored closely. The Principal has a chart on his wall, which is updated regularly and general patterns are noted. The goal for attendance is 90% this year and the school is close to achieving it. The school has not had an opportunity to analyze all the students' academic and attendance records for patterns relating to gender and ethnic group. However, teachers compare the performances of classes in all subjects and make changes to their teaching as a result. This is a very useful starting point for further development as the school grows and it collects more data over time.

Those students who need additional support to improve their English or who need extra help with written English receive small group work and extra attention in class lessons. Students are identified effectively from the school's data and their progress is accelerated as a result. Further differentiation of teaching, well-matched tasks to students' needs, is also likely to be beneficial in accelerating the rate of progress all students.

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Quality Statement 2: 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.

All students are new to the school this academic year. Some are still settling in and adjusting to the school's expectations. Teachers are well aware of the need to accelerate students' progress and are developing and implementing strategies to realize this goal. In the well-developed lessons, students do inquiry from first hand sources of information and this practical emphasis aids their understanding. Although as has already been mentioned, there is more work to do on matching tasks to the individual learning needs of the students.

The school is working towards the goal of every student passing 9th grade and then moving on to 10th grade in the following academic year, teachers have high expectations of the standards required to achieve this goal. Systems for monitoring students' progress towards their individual goals are clear and reasonable and the data currently available is used well. Proper attention is given to the most vulnerable students; they make proficient progress through the small teaching groups provided for them.

Although staff share common perceptions and expectations, there are times when these are not always fully realized in practice. This is most clearly demonstrated in students' attitudes to work, when not enough attention is given to rewarding students who perform well or who make their best efforts in lessons. Ways of offering feedback which is positive and constructive and which recognizes their individual efforts could be a powerful way of influencing students' attitudes and increasing motivation in classes.

There is well-developed personal support for students, for example, through the advisory program. Students are keen to stress that they find this aspect of school life valuable and helpful. Those who are at risk of falling behind in their work are provided with support and this is particularly effective for students with emotional needs. Students expressed positive views about the school and the advisory program.

The Principal keeps parents and the community well informed about the school's work. Regular reports on their children's standards and progress are sent to parents. They appreciate the school's efforts to share information and the particular goals set for their children.

Quality Statement 3: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school's work is proficient overall with some well-developed features.

Although the school is at an early stage in its development, it has established a clear focus on developing the whole student. Students have an adult to turn to whom they can trust. Attendance is regarded as a very important factor for student success. Most students enjoy school and respond well to the challenges of the art and inquiry based curriculum.

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Students' benefit from the strong link with Lincoln Center. For example, during the review, they saw an excellent flamenco dance performed especially for them, the majority responded to this experience very well and were able to use it to extend their learning. Such experiences are of value both as a stimulus for artistic development and also for building social skills. For example, students worked in pairs co-operatively, to develop their own dance.

The school is realizing its plans to draw inspiration for lessons from the arts. Preceding and following the performance, students studied some of the meanings of the flamenco. They soon grasped the performance story line - a love triangle – and gained good insights into how body movements and expressions can tell a story, they considered ways in which space is used by drawing the patterns of the dance on paper. Generally they made good progress with the follow-up work to the performance, demonstrating how well this stimulus helped their understanding and appreciation.

Teaching is proficient overall with some well-developed features. Teachers plan ahead with students how they are going to achieve their goals. The plans are often reviewed. However, they do not always ensure that the work set after introductions to lessons is well matched and suitably adapted to each student's ability and needs. This has an impact on some students' progress because they rarely finish their work because they have too much to do. This and the occasions when feedback is not positive and constructive would be areas, which could usefully be reviewed.

Each teacher has an area of expertise from which the students benefit. The school's culture is one of shared responsibility. Each adult takes responsibility for aspects of the school as a whole.

Quality Statement 4: 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 overall proficient with some well-developed features.

The school has a strong culture of trust between all adults on the staff. The Principal is very well respected by members of the school community; students, parents and teachers recognize his leadership qualities. He receives valuable additional support from his mentor, the Dean, the representative from the education department and the liaison representative from Lincoln Center. Many decisions are discussed openly and courses of action agreed, frequently with all adults participating. The shared vision drives expectations and this has helped the school make progress. Not all practices in classrooms are yet consistent, but there is a shared commitment to get all things right. Each teacher is reflective and keen to use his/her experiences of teaching for the benefit of others. All teaching plans and systems are regularly reviewed to see if lessons, time or subjects can be taught better. Teachers receive feedback on their teaching and they gain from this.

The school has a group of, like-minded, staff that has a commitment to this style of education. As a result, a group of well-qualified, highly committed teachers has been appointed. The school runs smoothly and the Principal is always available to offer help and support to staff. There is no complacency because a culture of continuous

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improvement has been established. The school is well placed to expand its staffing in the coming years in order to build capacity and meet the needs of a growing student population.

The school is working on a plan to integrate all the evaluative activities it undertakes and to build in those needed to properly evaluate the school's work in years to come.

Quality Statement 5: 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.

All school staff have the necessary skills in assessing and evaluating students' progress. This information is gathered from a range of sources through the close collaboration of teachers and advisor. Students have time related goals and know what they need to do to gain each credit. However, teachers need to match work more closely to the differing performances of students during the individual work phases of lessons in order to accelerate students' progress.

Effective diagnostic assessments are in place for students with special educational needs and or English Language Learners. Students who are underperforming are quickly identified and individual programs are put in place for them. The school prepares students proficiently for entry in to Grade 10. Any student who may need extra time during the summer break to gain the necessary credits is known well in advance.

The school has regular discussions with students about their performance. In addition to the more formal assessments there are a number of ways in which additional information on performance is gathered. There are regular meetings between students and their Advisor to review the data provided by subject teachers. All parents also receive progress reports, which along with parent teacher conferences give opportunities to enlist their help in tackling any underperformance.

Other key observations

Plans are underway to increase the size of the building, but in the meantime, the school makes good use of the existing facility, despite some major drawbacks, such as the absence of natural light. They also maximize some of the advantages, such as the very large theater and gymnasium.

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Part 4: Evaluation Criteria Grade Summary

Quality Statement 1: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor and facilitate the student's progress over time.	o	✓	+
<p>1.1 The school uses available data (e.g., diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments, students work products, standards-based portfolios, attendance, descriptive review, security data, etc.) and generates its own to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of how well each student, classroom, grade level, and other important categories of students and the school are:</p> <p>(1) currently performing, and (2) progressing over time, on English Language Arts, mathematics, and other important academic subjects.</p> <p>Criteria for measuring student progress are “objective” when they are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • standards-based, • consistent across students, • capable of revealing progress or a lack of it over time and ways to close the gap between current and expected practice, <p>and when they allow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the performance of different students to be compared, and • learning activity to be broken down into component parts so strengths and weaknesses on each sub-activity may be identified. 		X	
<p>1.2 The school makes effective use of the data to assess the performance and progress of students by racial and ethnic groups, English Language Learners and special education students, and all other categories of interest to the school.</p> <p>{This criterion and the next are partially aspirational as of now. City and State Report Cards and Division of Accountability and Assessment reports provide only some of the necessary data. The NYC DOE will soon provide schools with fuller access to better data.}</p>		X	
<p>1.1 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, racial and ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.</p>		X	
Quality Statement 2: 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.	o	✓	+
<p>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 it develops plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.</p>		X	
<p>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 warranting attention.</p>		X	
<p>2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.</p>		X	
<p>2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. That information is central to setting reasonably challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.</p>			X
<p>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.</p>		X	

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Quality Statement 3: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	o	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with the school's high expectations and improvement plans and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals.		X	
3.2 Decisions about the use of teacher and student time are based on the organization of the day and week needed to inform teachers about each student's performance and next learning steps, set goals and plans for improved student learning, and implement and continuously improve plans for reaching stated goals.		X	
3.3 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.		X	
3.4 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.		X	
3.5 Teachers are accountable for student outcomes. 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	
3.6 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	
3.7 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.		X	
3.8 Instructional programs actively engage students.		X	
3.9 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X
Quality Statement 4: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	0	✓	+
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 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 Leaders, faculty, and staff share the same goals and frequently evaluate themselves, their interventions and each other's plans and interventions, including, when possible, by comparing outcomes across classrooms and schools. The school monitors its performance and tackles weaknesses. Even in areas where the school is successful, leadership is not complacent, but aims to improve further. The goal in all cases is to improve student and school performance and progress.		X	
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results and revision of plans takes place in teams.		X	
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.		X	
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear and are generally followed.			X
Quality Statement 5: 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.	o	✓	+
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 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 interim 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 each successive phase of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve students' academic outcomes.		X	