



# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**Fiorello H LaGuardia High School of Music and Art  
and Performing Arts**

**High School 485**

**100 Amsterdam Avenue  
New York  
NY 10023**

**Principal: Kim Bruno**

**Dates of review: May 1 - 3, 2007**

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# Content of the report

## **Part 1: The School Context**

Information about the school

## **Part 2: Overview**

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

## **Part 3: Main Findings**

Overall evaluation

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

## **Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music and Art and the Performing Arts is a dual-mission school located at the southern end of the Upper West Side, Manhattan. As a specialized High School for the artistically gifted, it draws its 2,500 students from all five boroughs. The school is ethnically and culturally diverse, with 44% of its students White, 17% Black, 20% Hispanic and 18% Asian or other. Female students outnumber males by around three to one. The numbers of special education students account for only around 0.7% of the enrolment. English Language Learners make up a very small percentage, about 0.3% of the students. Nineteen percent of students are Title 1 eligible which is much less than City schools and less than similar schools. At 93.4%, attendance is much higher than the average for similar and City schools.

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

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Under the principal's visionary and energetic leadership the school has moved from strength to strength.
- The school is a diverse and vibrant community which works together to produce confident, well rounded and multi-talented young adults.
- The school makes excellent use of a wide range of professional artists and performers to extend and enrich the curriculum.
- The school fosters mutual respect between students and adults that helps students thrive and encourages them to aim high.
- The school strikes a well-tuned balance between fostering students' academic mastery and their artistic skills.
- The school collects a wide range of data and analyses it rigorously to set exacting standards for the students' academic work and their chosen studio.
- The staff use their in-depth knowledge about the students' day to day achievement assiduously to track the students' progress over time and provide well focused, targeted and timely support.
- The school's goals are clearly understood by all members of the school community and are a driving force for change.
- Teachers work together to plan lessons that are lively, interesting and challenging so that students learn quickly and make very good progress.
- Students value and benefit from high levels of expertise among their teachers and from courses that are tailor made for their various talents

### What the school needs to improve

- Analyze more closely the achievement and progress of boys in classrooms and across the school.
- Seek further opportunities for teachers to observe and learn different techniques and approaches to instruction from each other.
- Make better use of students' portfolios of written work in different subjects when monitoring the impact of strategies to raise achievement.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a well-developed school.**

LaGuardia Arts is an extraordinarily good school. It takes in talented students with potential and turns out confident, well rounded and highly successful young adults. Students enjoy school because, within its dual mission, the curriculum plays to their strengths and gives them numerous opportunities to show off their talents and develop new interests. Parents appreciate the renewed focus on improving academic standards alongside excellence in the arts. The principal leads the school with vision and energy. She combines the staff's separate passions for the arts and for academic excellence with alacrity, mobilizing them into a forceful team to focus on common goals. The school is extremely well served by its alumni and by the many organizations, within and beyond the world of arts, with whom it partners. The staff care a great deal for the success of all of the students and track their progress carefully. They are acutely aware when students are not reaching their potential and will go the extra mile to help make up the shortfall. Teaching is always engaging and often inspiring, whether it be by the school's own staff or by the many visiting professionals. While the school knows that it is doing well it is not complacent. It understands that, to continue to raise achievement, it needs to analyze boys' achievement more closely and to monitor and compare the quality of students' work across subjects. Staff recognize also that they have a lot they can learn from each other.

### 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 places high priority on data analysis and has effective systems to manage this. Teachers collect and update frequently a wide range of detailed information about the students' achievements within their faculty, studio or conservatory. In English and drawing classes, for example, the teachers' detailed observational notes on the students' work are a key element in the lesson, showing students clearly what has improved from their previous work and what they need to do next. Regents and other standardized tests, mock examinations, quizzes and classroom observations provide a wealth of information which is carefully and regularly analyzed in departmental meetings and by senior managers. Faculty teams compare students' progress between and within grades to check if students are being left behind and to fine tune the targets that they set for recovery. The staff make particularly good use of data to track students who are at risk of failing, logging their attendance and progress across all studio and academic classes and ensuring that they are caught early in the school's extensive network of support. Regular meetings with guidance counselors keep all staff fully informed about progress of the small number of special needs students and English Language learners so that appropriate support can be provided and challenging targets set for them. Counselors also keep a database of students' college applications, decisions and scholarship offers so that they can be suitably advised on their chosen pathway.

Detailed analysis of its figures has enabled the school to compare its performance with similar schools and to identify patterns, trends and differences. Comparisons have also been made between studios to identify whether students achieve differentially. Senior managers have used this information wisely to press for better progress across all departments, but especially in the departments where the data shows it is most needed. The school also has data on the ethnic composition of studios and class groups and has recognized that there are anomalies in the proportion of boys and of White and Asian students in advanced classes. While it has made a close analysis of issues related to ethnicity, the analysis of boys' achievement has lagged behind.

**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 well developed.**

Using the three year trends as a guide, the principal, cabinet and staff have collaborated to set precise and challenging empowerment goals to raise the scholarship report grades, particularly mastery pass rates, for each academic subject and for identified groups. Instructional staff have been coached to understand the figures and their implications for individuals and groups of students. Each department has, with its associated assistant principal, developed a detailed action plan with short and long term goals and timelines to achieve the expected increase. The staff use their in-depth knowledge about the students' day to day achievement carefully to track the students' progress over time and provide well focused, timely support. The school has devised its own examinations for entering freshmen to ensure that they are placed correctly when they start school; those who are the highest achievers enter into the Da Vinci program of honors courses which accelerates their learning. Once established in the school, underachieving students are identified quickly before they fall too far behind and are given extra help in a variety of ways. In science, for example, teachers track students' progress from module to module and, where the data shows students have struggled, revisit a topic and provide clarification. Additional reading and writing workshops, carefully scheduled to fit in with their other studies, are given to students whose English proficiency is holding them back. Students receive additional studio instruction to make sure they achieve the required level of mastery. The school's goals for students in the greatest need, and its well-conceived interventions, such as reduced class sizes and dedicated guidance counselors, focus on accelerating their progress.

The school fosters mutual respect between students and adults that helps students thrive and encourages them to aim high. They learn to strike a good balance between their academic and studio work, applying the discipline of the studio to their academic work. Many students excel at both, ensuring them a place, and often a scholarship at a prestigious college. Students often rise to the challenge to participate in and master art forms beyond their chosen studio. Some who began with little expertise have become accomplished instrumentalists, singers, dancers and painters. Parents are involved in the school at several levels, for example, representation on the school leadership team, managing the schools website, and producing the school's annual 'Rising Stars' talent contest. Communication between school and home well established. The 'yellow sheet' newsletter keeps parents and students informed about, for example, planned and forthcoming events, test dates and examination and studio requirements. Parents are enthusiastic supporters of the school's high quality productions and gallery shows and value highly the unique blend of academic and arts education it provides.

**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.**

LaGuardia’s unique and distinctive curriculum singles it out from other schools. It is rich and varied, offering a wide range of academic courses alongside separate arts endorsed diplomas and striking a well-tuned balance between promoting students’ academic mastery and their artistic skills. Its eclectic list of enrichment activities includes debate, sports, languages, film and fashion. Through judicious use of the budget and by careful scheduling the school has been able to accommodate a growing student population, broaden the range of courses it offers and maintain its supportive culture. Students trust and respect teachers and feel comfortable confiding in staff who share their particular passion for the arts. Teachers work hard to give students instruction that meets their needs. Within departments, assistant principals and teachers discuss the students’ scholarship reports and decide how best to differentiate the work. The match of extra classes is extensive and well focused on ensuring that all students make the required progress. Lesson plans make the most of the students’ interest and talents and are the result of good teamwork between faculty members. Lessons in academic subjects often encourage the students to make an oral presentation to the class, debate ideas or solve problems in groups or pairs. Studio lessons sometimes make links with academic subjects, for example, when the students were asked to consider how characters might be influenced by history in a period drama. Students find these lessons interesting and challenging and learn quickly and securely when they make links between subjects. They value and benefit from high levels of expertise among their teachers and from courses that are tailor made for their various talents. Studio instruction is demanding of students and professionally rewarding. The students are proud of their growing mastery in their chosen studio and this fuels their enthusiasm for hard work. Such mastery is not easily won, and is not always within their reach in academic subjects. Nevertheless, most students transfer the discipline of the studio to their classroom learning and enjoy their lessons. The level of absence is low, and very few students choose to miss school; they know that if necessary, the school will take swift action to get them back on track. The school is on target to achieve its goal for 95.5% attendance this year.

**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 school has a highly qualified and committed staff. Studio instructors are acknowledged experts in their field; most academic staff also share their commitment to the arts which adds to the richness and relevance of their instruction. The school makes excellent use of a wide range of professional artists and performers to extend and enrich the curriculum and provide students with role models for the studios’ exacting standards. The students gain enormous benefit from LaGuardia’s many partnerships with prestigious arts organizations and from its proximity to the City’s premier arts venues. These partners provide both financial and curricular support and, together with the school’s close links with well known alumni, open doorways to further students’ future careers. The school has risen to the challenge of providing relevant professional development to such a broad mix of staff. Its program is well organized and provides a good mix of opportunities to attend

specialist courses and workshops outside the school as well as school based meetings. The school has made good use of monthly faculty meetings to give staff confidence to analyze data and this has helped to achieve empowerment goals. While the program has enabled teachers to observe each other's teaching and gain further expertise in their own subject, there has not been enough opportunity for staff from studios and academic subjects to observe and learn techniques and approaches from each other.

LaGuardia is a well managed school community which runs smoothly because the principal, staff and students support and respect each other. Each member of the cabinet has a clear role and well defined responsibilities which are delegated to them. The principal's energy provides the catalyst for change. Decision making is collegiate, although the principal does not shirk from making decisions when necessary or required. The principal devotes an hour each day to visiting classrooms and walking the hallways to make sure that the teaching is as good as it should be. She gives helpful and specific feedback to teachers and points them to areas where professional development is needed. Teachers are receptive to such constructive criticism and take account of the need for change.

**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 well developed.**

The school has a well developed system of improvement planning which centres on the school's four empowerment goals in its development plan. These goals are clearly understood by all members of the school community and are a driving force for improvement in the quality of instruction, student support and academic success rates. Each goal has measurable benchmarks and timelines that enable the school to judge whether it will be achieved within the deadline set. The program of professional development aligns closely with the school's goals. In providing teachers with increased capacity to understand and interpret data it has assured teachers' accountability for accelerating students' achievement. Departmental action plans relate closely to the whole-school plan and have similarly measurable success criteria. Administration and faculty exchange information about achievement in classes, groups and grades regularly, reviewing progress and flexibly adjusting the curriculum, scheduling or instructional methods to ensure that the goals are achieved for each student. When, for example, colleges began to demand proficiency in science for incoming freshmen the school instigated a forensic science program to increase student achievement. The program has proved so popular that it now accommodates seven groups, ensuring that more students secure the college places to which they aspire. While the staff are very good at looking at work across their own specialist areas, there has been too little scrutiny of a wider spectrum of the students' work to monitor the impact of whole school strategies to raise achievement. Despite its size, LaGuardia remains flexible and responsive to students' needs. The principal orchestrates the combination of teachers' talents and temperaments skilfully, whether by persuading studio staff to agree to a blackout for arts events during mid- or end-term examinations or urging subject staff to accept the suspension of the academic schedule during major performances. The school's dual focus is a significant strength because all staff work together towards the same collegiate goal: to raise the students' achievement.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Fiorello H LaGuardia High School of Music and Arts and Performing Arts (HS 545)	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>			<b>X</b>
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"> <li>each student, classroom, grade level,</li> </ul>			<b>X</b>
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"> <li>ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students*</li> </ul>			<b>X</b>
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"> <li>all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>		<b>X</b>	
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.			<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			<b>X</b>

\* 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.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			<b>X</b>

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X
<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			X
<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X