



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**High School for Dual Languages and Asian Studies**

**High School 545  
350 Grand Street  
Fifth Floor  
New York  
NY 10002**

**Principal: Li Yan**

**Dates of review: April 24 - 25, 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

The High School for Dual Languages and Asian Studies, HS545, serves 271 students from grades 9 through 12. The school opened in 2003 and will have its first graduating class this year. It is a small school with no plans for expansion. The student population comprises 85.2% Asian, 5.2% Hispanic, 3.7% Black, 2.2% White and 1.5% from other ethnic backgrounds. The school has a much higher proportion of recent immigrants than similar and City schools with almost all coming from China.

The school's mission is to admit equal numbers of students who are either English or Mandarin proficient. Currently, 60% of students are Mandarin proficient and 40% are English proficient. The school has a very high number of English language learners at 53%. There are few special education students, accounting for less than 1.5% of enrollment.

The school is Title 1 eligible with 79.9% of students qualifying. This is a much higher proportion than in similar and City schools. Attendance rates are very high. They currently stand at 95% which compares very favorably with both 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.

The principal opened the new school, initially in another building. The school is located on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor and currently shares the building with four other small high schools. The schools share facilities, such as the cafeteria and some laboratories, which demands good communication and flexibility in scheduling. This is helped by the fact that the assistant principal works 50% of the time in HS 545 and the rest between two other schools in the building.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal has successfully empowered staff and students to play a full part in the development of the school and their own learning.
- High levels of flexibility in staffing and scheduling and creative use of the budget in response to a wide range of information enable the school to respond very effectively in providing the right level of challenge for each student.
- The curriculum is evolving under constant scrutiny and provides both Mandarin proficient and English proficient students with a wide range of interesting and pertinent opportunities to achieve their long-term goals.
- There is a high degree of collegiality and collaboration which is focused on analyzing data to achieve the best possible outcomes for every student, whatever their level of performance.
- Staff and students are constantly evaluating the effectiveness of instruction in order to ensure that goals, groupings and programs are well matched to individual need.
- Students are eager to learn and attest to the peaceful atmosphere and strong connections between students from different backgrounds and grades.
- Teachers are highly committed and constantly go above and beyond what is expected to meet the particular needs and interests of students.
- The school has developed effective strategies to reach out to parents in order to improve their own skills and to improve communication about their child's progress.
- Professional development is carefully differentiated and tightly focused on providing instruction that takes account of how students learn best.
- The school has developed highly beneficial partnerships with colleges, corporations and community organizations to make learning come alive and to provide high quality enrichment and support.

### What the school needs to improve

- Continue to pursue the identification of similar schools to enable the valid comparison of the performance and progress of groups relevant to the school, including boys and girls and different ethnic groups.
- Further improve communication with parents so that they all have a clear understanding of the school's mission, goals and plans for improvement and make greater use of them as a resource for learning.
- Realize the plans to establish "Design Your Own" (DYO) assessments in order to refine ways of measuring and tracking the progress of Mandarin proficient students in the early stages of learning English.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

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

The school is well on the way to achieving its ambitious mission. Many students who entered the school speaking little English four years ago will have made exceptional progress by the time they graduate this year. In addition, most English proficient seniors are expected to pass Regents in Mandarin. The school anticipates a graduation rate of more than 80% with 35% of graduates receiving an Advanced Regents Diploma with Honors. Students from different cultural backgrounds are quite clear about what they have gained from working alongside each other. Asian students have had a strong influence on the establishment of a peaceful community and Black, White and Hispanic students are instrumental in promoting thinking skills and showing that learning can be fun.

These impressive outcomes are the direct result of the principal's quiet and firm leadership which recognizes the high degree of professionalism of his staff and entrusts them to do their very best for each and every student. All members of the administration and faculty, have the highest expectations of their students and give them the tools to be responsible for their own learning. The school has developed into a highly evaluative learning community where staff and students have a voice in determining how teaching and learning can become ever more effective. The one missing piece in the jigsaw is a strong parents' voice. The school recognizes that, although much has been achieved in involving parents in their child's learning, more needs to be done to enable them to play a full and active part in the school's future development.

The school's use of data is extremely purposeful and informs all meetings and discussions. The principal is committed to acting on valid information to instigate new groupings and programs to meet an identified need in a timely and creative fashion. In-depth evaluation of the relevance of the school's chosen periodic assessments has led the school to work in partnership with New York University and other partners to develop DY0 assessments that enable the school to better measure and track the progress of the large number of students who are at an early stage of learning English.

#### **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 not only makes highly effective use of a wide range of external and internal data but is constantly evaluating the data's validity in seeking to develop the most accurate ways of assessing progress and performance. The administration and faculty exploit every advantage of a small school in their shared knowledge of each student and in their flexible response to sharply identified need. Because each student follows a program that becomes increasingly individualized, and almost all classes contain students from at least two grade levels, much of the school's efforts are focused on tracking the individual progress and ensuring that each program provides the right level of challenge. English

language learners account for the majority and their progress is monitored very closely. The school really understands how students acquire another language and ensures that a solid base is built to facilitate rapid progress after the first year. The significant number taking advanced placement papers is testament to this. The school has a very small number of special education students who also follow individual programs that are well matched to their level of performance and specific need and lead to very good progress and, in most cases, the opportunity to graduate.

The school is uncompromising in its high expectations for all students and has been highly successful in meeting the needs of its high achieving students, through accurate assessments, advanced level programs and every opportunity for students study in groups above their grade level. The school also knows from scrutiny of data that its advanced curriculum does not serve English proficient students as well as its Mandarin proficient students and has well-advanced plans to remedy this imbalance in the coming year. The school is acutely aware of how the progress and performance of its students compares with similar and City schools. However, it is eager to make valid comparison with schools that reflect a similar population and mission. Although there is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls, the principal recognizes that there is more to be done to ensure that each subject takes full account of different learning styles.

**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.**

Over four years, school leaders and faculty have evolved democratic structures, clear purposes for learning and strongly evaluative processes to identify goals, demanding success criteria and enabling strategies to secure continuous improvement. Although the content of the curriculum and high quality instructional practices are driven by a wide range of constantly updated information, every member of faculty is constantly focused on the performance and progress of each student they teach. Timely and responsive adjustments are made to programs, schedules and interventions to provide the best possible match to students’ needs, interests and learning styles. The school is continually fine tuning the curriculum for its English language learners and English proficient students in the light of both quantitative and qualitative data, to build their confidence and accelerate their competence in language acquisition and progress in other content areas. Grade 9 proficient students who are learning Chinese are now taught by two different teachers to provide a variety of approaches. English language learners who pass proficiency exams will still have ESL class if need for extra support. Student evaluation indicates that this has been successful for the vast majority of students. The school does its very best to keep every student on track and continues to seek new ways to enable every student to graduate.

Parents welcome the school’s academic rigor, high quality care and guidance and the wide range of opportunities available to their children. The school has been thoughtful in its response to the needs of parents who are recent immigrants. English language sessions are held on Saturdays and this also provides a good forum to talk about their child’s progress. The school recognizes that while the administration, faculty and students are all working to the same end and are clear about everything they do, it has not been so effective at communicating with parents so that they all have a clear understanding of the school’s mission and goals and greater use is made of them as a resource for learning.

**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’s curriculum not only takes full account of the mandated curriculum but, because of its mission and its exceptionally high aspirations for students, goes far above and beyond in providing an exceptionally wide range of opportunities for students to achieve their goals and ambitions. Being a small school has not been an impediment in any way in providing tailor-made programs for each one of its students. Creative partnerships and scheduling enable students to take advanced placement courses at other schools in the building, to study alongside students at colleges or for college professors to lead courses in the building. Teachers hold themselves accountable to their students and to themselves and make regular and accurate formative assessments to ensure that each student is working at the right level. Where additional support or challenge is pinpointed, this is either provided within the current program, the student is reassigned to a different class or a new class, however small, is created to meet a specific need.

The principal is adept at securing funding to translate his mission and goals into reality and had encouraged his staff to be equally creative in finding ways to maximize the potential of the school’s budget, scheduling and assignment of staff. No idea is considered off limits and new ways are constantly sought to enliven and accelerate learning. Not surprisingly, this leads to classes where students are eager to learn, apply themselves outstandingly well, evaluate their own progress honestly and do their utmost to excel at whatever they have undertaken. All relationships are based on mutual respect and support and high degrees of trust. Attendance is high, not only because students and parents understand the principal’s high expectations, but because they enjoy learning and understand the importance of regular attendance if they are to succeed.

**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.**

This is a school where the principal quietly leads by example, while at the same time treating his staff as equal partners in setting the agenda for the school’s development and sharing in the responsibility for the students in their care. He is respected by staff for the trust he places in them to do their best, by students who, to a person, believe he has their best interests at heart and by parents who speak very highly of the care, understanding and academic rigor that he has brought to the school. This school is a joyful place to learn and unobtrusive systems support a community of learners who get along really well together and where potentially difficult situations are resolved with humor and compassion.

As the school has grown, the principal has increasingly been able to hire staff who have the capacity and capability to enable the school to achieve its mission. In such a small high school, it has been critical to balance subject expertise, dual language proficiency and the ability to wear several hats at once. Equally important has been the insistence of hiring staff who are fully accountable to each other and their students and who make use of a wide variety of information to know their students very well.

The reflective practice and willingness to learn from each other has been instrumental in driving forward the professional development agenda. The principal knows his staff very well and is adept at monitoring outcomes through a wide range of strategies, including classroom observation and scrutiny of student work, and in encouraging faculty to be highly proactive in examining their own practice and establishing the most effective strategies in maximizing opportunities for students to reach their potential. At all levels, there is a high degree of professionalism and a great willingness to objectively evaluate their own practice. The school has well embedded processes whereby teachers learn from observing each other and by taking account of constructive feedback from peers and, equally importantly, from the students they teach.

Genuine empowerment has led to highly effective team work where the contribution of each member is valued, where high levels of expertise and a willingness to learn from each other leads to decision making of the highest order and where clear mechanisms for evaluating new initiatives are built into every stage of the planning process. The principal has been adept at forging strong partnerships with colleges who provide programs to challenge the highest achieving students, with community organizations who provide support for those in greatest need and with businesses inject the curriculum with real life situations that are highly motivating for students.

**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.**

Administration and faculty have developed highly effective systems of improvement planning that are clearly understood and underpin planning cycles at every level. Goals are few in number and relate closely to the school's central mission. Each goal is translated into objectives with measurable success criteria that are challenging but achievable and relate directly to improved student outcomes for target groups. Regular evaluations are programmed into departmental meetings and lead to fine tuning of instruction and the curriculum, alongside the realignment of scheduling and flexible adjustment of individual programs for each student.

Professional development goals are closely aligned to school goals and promote a high degree of accountability. In the current year, the focus is on developing increased capacity to implement the instructional program to increase student English language proficiency. Strategies are clearly defined and relate closely to the backward design model that teachers use effectively for curriculum planning. Specific measures are identified that relate to student performance. In addition, observable changes in teaching and learning processes are identified as a further way of evaluating the effectiveness of professional development strategies and of identifying pointers for further improvement.

The principal has created a democratic structure where every member is empowered to play a full part in monitoring, reviewing and revising collaboratively established goals. Because the process is based on honestly constructive evaluation, the school has achieved a degree of synergy in whole school planning where each cycle feeds into the next and time is used effectively so that creative energies can be directed on making the greatest impact in the classroom.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: High School for Dual Languages and Asian Studies (HS 545)	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>			<b>X</b>
<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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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.

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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