



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**Business, Computer Application and
Entrepreneurship High School**

**High School 496
207 - 01 116th Avenue
Queens
NY 11411**

Principal: Raymond H. Warmsley

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Reviewer: Pam Taylor

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The school is one of four themed magnet schools, set up in 1995 and sharing the same site and building. There are 570 enrolled students from grades 9 through 12. This student population is predominantly Black (86.9%), with small percentages of White (3.1%), Hispanic (6.9%), Asian or other students (3.1%). Special education students account for 13.5% of the student population and English language learners just over 3%. The school is not Title 1 eligible.

Attendance is 85.2% which is higher than the average for similar and City-wide schools.

The principal is in his fourth year in the school. The mission of this school is to provide all students with the essential skills for future academic, business and professional endeavors. The mission statement states that the school emphasizes 'application of critical thinking and problem-solving skills'.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school gathers data well and keeps effective records.
- There is careful analysis of the data collected to inform the monitoring of student development.
- The principal and assistant principals conduct an array of lesson observations, and feed back helpfully to teachers.
- The school sets clear goals in order to measure achievement.
- The school works hard and effectively to align the curriculum to the needs of individual students.
- The school has made a concerted and successful effort to raise students' achievement, becoming a school of good standing by firm and consistently applied leadership.
- Professional development has been successful in improving the school's instruction.
- The school is well integrated into the local community and has links with commerce and business, in support of its mission.
- Teachers are committed to the school and its students and take steps to maximize students' progress in the light of the all available data.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop the practice whereby teachers observe each other's work more fully and regularly so as to make them aware of best practices in the school.
- Ensure that all students benefit from a curriculum that motivates them and responds to their individual developmental needs.
- Explore strategies to introduce greater differentiation in class activities.
- Continue to sustain improvement in English language arts, mathematics and science.
- Develop effective strategies to deal with pockets of disruption or lateness to class.
- Continue to develop the strongest possible links with the business world to support the focus of the school's curriculum and extend opportunities for students' learning.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The overall quality of students' achievement is sound. It is supported by the hard work and conscientious approach of the staff, which has enabled the school to make good strides in recent times. The principal and the assistant principals have set clear goals which are backed up by thorough use and analysis of data. Teachers are committed to the school and are developing an awareness of how such data can inform their instruction and assessment, but not all apply individual student data effectively to their planning. The incorporation of the school as part of a four-school magnet site has provided a compact environment for learning which can respond to individual students' needs and offer a curriculum designed to encourage enterprise and business awareness. There has been a determined and successful effort to raise the level of student achievement and it has become a school of good standing by firm and consistently applied leadership. However, student achievement in English language arts, mathematics and science is still not high enough.

Some promising initiatives, point the way to further desirable expansion of vocationally-related activities. However, students do not always have sufficient access to a commercially-oriented curriculum that would give them a fuller appreciation of future college and career pathways. The school has established valuable links with the community, including local businesses. Students valued these and expressed their interest in extending their contact with the wider world. At its best, the instruction engages students' full attention and motivates them to want to succeed. Some teaching, however, gives less scope for differentiated activities and collaborative learning, and there remain pockets of disruptive behavior around the school in communal areas.

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

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school gathers a very wide range of data well and keeps effective records, with helpful systems in place. This is shared with staff and the information is then applied to support an understanding of the progress of particular groups of students, such as special education students or English language learners.

Careful analysis of the data informs the monitoring of students' development, and the principal has made good use of faculty conferences to explore and analyze data. Planning for academic intervention services is based on frequently updated student records, and careful monitoring ensures suitable programs of study for those with particular needs. A tutoring program is available for those identified as requiring additional support. Analysis

in the June preceding the 12th grade enables the school to identify those who might fail to graduate, in order to devise and inform strategies to increase the graduation rate and enable students to fulfill their potential. The school utilizes data very well to track students progress over different grades in order to pinpoint where there may be a need for intervention or increased levels of challenge. Administrators also evaluate data to compare outcomes across grades, subjects and groups. Overall, the school's use of data is proficient in relation to issues affecting students' progress, but the analysis is not always completely effective in securing the desired improvements for every student.

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.

All faculties embrace successfully the need to plan and set goals in order to measure achievement. The principal believes in fostering a climate where students are encouraged to raise their sights and believe that they can, and will, achieve. This has beneficial effects on students' attitudes. Timeframes for targets are kept firmly in mind to move students on to the next stage. Conversations with teachers enable there to be a close focus on those who are most in need, with involvement of the guidance counselor, opportunities for tutoring, PM school and independent study projects. Regular reference is made to the goals in the school's Comprehensive Plan to ensure that there is reasonable consistency in progress relative to classes and grades.

The school is reasonably successful in involving students and their parents or caregivers. It does this by making them aware of the mission statement, and through report cards, scholarships and entrepreneurial opportunities. These are displayed on boards in the hallways to celebrate success, and through the work of the parent teacher association and steering committee. Use is also made of documented phone calls, letters and special conferences when parents are called in. Although parent involvement in the parent teacher association and attendance at open school twice a year are limited, every effort is being made to increase the profile of such events. The effective parent coordinator has a pivotal role in fostering links, and there are two regular parent volunteers. All members of the school community, including two community-based organizations, work appropriately towards the single aim of raising the student achievement.

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 proficient.

The school has set in motion many initiatives to align the curriculum, instruction and resources to students' needs, following the mandated curriculum with the themed business and computer focus, yet allowing some customization. However, as was evident from some comments from students and one lesson observed, the school does not always ensure that every student benefits fully from a curriculum that motivates them and responds to their individual developmental needs. Teachers' use of data to differentiate learning is work in progress. Some teachers are producing their own worksheets and

many are developing strong strategies which are gradually leading to the improvement of student outcomes. However, others do not always consider fully the potential for differentiated tasks and collaborative work. The school has had some good successes with its sizeable group of special education students.

The assistant principal in charge of the budget reacts quickly to prioritize resources needed in the light of evaluation. One example is the purchase of two wireless laboratories on carts for flexible usage in classrooms. These provide a springboard for the school to develop greater use of technology in the classroom. New computer equipment is also made available and textbooks have been updated. Staffing decisions support student needs, through the joint planning of the principal and assistant principals.

Teachers are committed to working with and for the students to maximize their progress and achievement. The best lessons observed fully engaged the students with high expectations of achievement, but in a few lessons tasks were set that were less open and challenging, and did not offer sufficient differentiation. In these cases, students were not always fully engaged with their learning. Student/teacher relationships are generally good, with staff being approachable and supportive. The administrative team operates an effective 'open door' policy. The students appreciate and trust the guidance counselor.

Student attendance is closely monitored on a daily basis, with teachers in each class having a late log to be signed by students with their reasons for lateness. There is a designated attendance coordinator who arranges contact with parents about absences. Classes cut by students are also monitored. This has improved attendance, which is now moving closer towards the principal's goal of 90%.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

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

Professional development and staff stability are central to the vision of the school and the leadership has succeeded in improving the quality of the school's instruction. The principal and assistant principals now select new staff by interview, choosing appropriate candidates based on the strength of their credentials, high expectations and goals, as well as on their ability to be receptive to new ideas for improving classroom practice and student motivation. Staff development days and faculty days, such as one on critical thinking, are used well for professional development. Faculty conferences are held every two weeks and departmental meetings every month. Despite a cut, the best possible use is made of the time now available. Staff are pleased with the professional development offered and have implemented new ideas. Because of the use of written memoranda, more time can be given to faculty communication and collaboration

The principal and assistant principals are involved in a strong schedule of teacher observations, concentrating on whether objectives were reached by every student. Formal and informal observations, with pre- and post- discussions, are carried out, with many walk-throughs and much use of constructive feedback and suggestions for improved practice. These help to give rigor and consistency to the evaluative process. The practice of teachers visiting each other's classrooms to observe good practice is less well developed.

Teamwork among staff is apparent, with frequent discussions and use of conferencing. The small number of staff makes it comparatively easy to arrange professional discussions which have led to useful developments. The principal is well respected and very visible around the school. He is supportive and fair, with an aim to instill the desire for change and success. Clear routines have been established, with many initiatives aimed at encouraging purposeful movement and order in the hallways, an area of ongoing concern because of occasional disruptions and lateness by students. The school has significant shared areas with the other schools within its confines, including the gymnasium and swimming pools. This adds to congestion and requires close supervision between classes. The school acknowledges that there is a major priority for seeking improvement in discipline, behavior management and the reduction of noise levels.

Establishing partnerships is integral to this business school. Not only do 'Plays for Living', an after school program, and 'Aspects 27', an all day program, support attendance, but they also promote academic goals through study skills for preparation especially for the two linked colleges. The school is well integrated into the local community and has links with commerce and business in support of its mission. By far the most successful partnerships are those with Virtual Enterprise, promoting all-round business skills, and the Making Opportunities for Upgrading Schools & Education Program (MOUSE) – ventures which were spoken of enthusiastically by students. Although there are also partnerships with local businesses, some of these have lapsed, and opportunities to undertake internships or other such business-related exercises are currently not fully developed. The recent grade 12 pilot 'Dress for Success', initiated by students, shows how much they wish to broaden links and prepare themselves for a work environment.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school staff and leaders show reasonable ability to reflect on and learn from experience. Goals are kept under review, with the administrative team keeping an open mind about modifications, and is able to respond when there is recognition that change is needed. For example, analysis of recent test results indicated improvement in mathematics, but then suggested a need for a similar drive for improvement in English language arts. The Comprehensive Education Plan provides areas for continued development, and is kept under regular scrutiny. Students with problems are monitored bi-weekly, weekly or even daily. All students' progress is monitored at least six times a year, with attention drawn to those who are in danger of failing an assessment period. Administrators evaluate data to compare outcomes across grades, subjects and groups.

There are regular reviews of New York and internal academic results, together with attendance and discipline data. The assistant principal in charge of pupil personnel services has a central role in monitoring and revising actions and goals. She has detailed files to inform decisions, and personally studies every student's file six times a year. Other staff play some part in review and evaluation, but this is not fully developed.

The school has shown some flexibility in adapting to new situations, and it has laid sound foundations for a full realization of its ambitious vision for the future.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Business, Computer Applications and Entrepreneurship High School (HS 496)	∅	✓	+
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	