



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Frank Sinatra School of the Arts

High School 501

**30-20 Thomson Avenue
Queens
NY 11101**

Principal: Donna Finn

Dates of review: February 5 - 6, 2007

Reviewer: Sheldon Berman

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 Frank Sinatra School for the Arts (FSSA) serves 611 students in grades 9 through 12. The student population is ethnically diverse with 40% White, 27% Hispanic, 22% Black, and 11% Asian and others. The proportion of less than 1% each of special education students and English language learners is considerably below those of similar and City schools. The attendance rate of 92% and student stability rate of 99% are higher than similar and City schools. The school is not eligible for Title 1 funding.

Students are accepted via an audition process in one of five arts programs (dance, drama, fine arts, vocal music and instrumental music), and must also have demonstrated good attendance and grades in their previous schools.

The school is temporarily housed on two floors of a building that it shares with a university and another high school. A purpose-built auditorium has been added to the site. There is no gymnasium but accommodations are made for physical education.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal, supported by two able assistant principals, provides attentive, effective and thoughtful management and leadership to the school community.
- The school clearly communicates high expectations through its culture for all students to challenge and develop themselves to their fullest potential in both their artistic and their academic pursuits.
- The teachers are capable, thoughtful and dedicated.
- The arts program is sharply focused to groom the talents and skills of the students and enable them to graduate in their chosen arts disciplines.
- The academic program supports students' intellectual growth by providing appropriately challenging courses up through the advanced placement level.
- The school has a well-developed network of professionals and organizations, most especially 'Exploring the Arts' that provide extensive support and professional opportunities for its students.
- The synergy of efforts by the administrators, a devoted staff and an active parent teacher association has fostered the development of an extensive roster of activities, programs and opportunities to engage students artistically, academically, culturally, physically and socially.
- The principal has utilized her resources very well to staff and resource the school to meet the school's goals outlined in the evolving Comprehensive Education Plan.
- A focus on clear, effective, and respectful communications among staff, students and parents adds significantly to everyone being well informed and having a sense of belonging within a caring community.
- The halls are alive with the sound of music, and art adds a creative energy that reflects the school's success in culminating a love of the arts.

What the school needs to improve

- Further develop the content, themes and instructional approaches to make connections across the arts and academics to help students to better integrate these separate facets of their school experience.
- Develop the use of differentiated and engaging instructional practices in the academic classes.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

The thoughtful and attentive staff at The Frank Sinatra School of the Arts creates an environment that exacts high levels of performance in both the arts and academic subjects. By sharing expectations of excellence and focusing upon developing the talents and intellect of every student the school achieves considerable success. The school is led by a strong, responsive principal and administrative team who support students, teachers, and parents, resulting in opportunities for participation and learning for all.

Data and feedback are used well to develop and adjust programs of study for individual students. The school is currently focused on developing more meaningful learning connections among and between the curriculum in the arts and academic subjects to increase student engagement and improve differentiated instruction in some classes.

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 use of performance data is well integrated into the routine practice of administrators and teachers. The school uses assessment data about the performance of incoming students and observes the quality of their work displayed in the summer program to gain a secure understanding of group and individual needs and to plan for instruction. Staff teams work together to analyze student performance data in a range of tests and cross-references it to students' performance in their academic classes. The school analyzes closely the performance of all student groups of interest to the school, including special education students, English language learners, and ethnic and gender groupings. All of this enables the school to effectively compare student performance and progress by class and grade.

The teachers and administrators routinely collect data to inform their daily understanding of the progress of their students. This is most clearly illustrated by the practices of the arts teachers, where performance and theory are evaluated and feedback given on a daily basis. Currently, new strategies for assessing performances in the arts are being explored that use sound and video recording. The Princeton Review assessments give the school an additional effective tool to analyze precisely where students have gaps in their knowledge, understanding and skills. In addition, many academic teachers maintain running notes on individual students in addition to carefully monitoring their performance on tests and quizzes.

The administration compares its own performance year-on-year and with that of similar schools, especially to maintain the excellence of the academic program in support of the goal of preparing students for competitive colleges.

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.

Data are used by the school to set focused goals in the Comprehensive Education Plan that are underpinned by detailed improvement planning. The guidance department uses data to program students to take the most rigorous course of study they can handle. Goals focus on students’ artistic and academic development.

Frequent and routine monitoring of student performance provides early identification of students who are struggling and whose performance is most in need of improvement. Once identified by any teacher, counselor or by parent request, a detailed report of the student’s current academic performance and progress is generated and used to guide intervention. Academic support is available via morning, after school and Saturday programs, as well as in-school tutoring and additional support through the resource room environment.

The school clearly communicates high expectations that all students reach their fullest potential in both their artistic and their academic pursuits. One result of the focused effort on communications is that parents are very aware of the choices available to their children. Parents are regularly encouraged to be an important part of the decision making process concerning their student’s rostering decisions.

There is a concerted drive from faculty, staff, students and parents to do the very best for students particularly nurturing their artistic talents. The school very effectively monitors and supports all students. Every effort is made to reach out especially to struggling students, including seeking directed services for students and their families. Students with exceptional talents are sought for apprenticeships and internships. The continuing dialogs among staff result in no student getting ‘lost in the shuffle’.

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.

There is a rigorous program in the arts and academics, fostering considerable success with college acceptance. The use of data and analysis importantly impacts the instructional program. Students are placed in appropriately challenging courses based on their performances on City and State tests and in past courses. Information from assessments and tests, and in the week-long freshman summer orientation, is used effectively to plan courses for incoming students. In response to data, the school has introduced courses in mathematics and science to provide more appropriate challenge, and a school-wide research writing ‘boot camp’ delivered through the librarian. An emphasis on meta-cognition in both the arts and academics is starting to link learning across these two aspects of the curriculum. For example, emphasizing the historical perspective in the Musicianship course, using historical contexts like the civil rights movement as the basis for art projects and the study of symmetry in art for mathematics.

Teachers are fully accountable for students' achievement. Classroom observations show a high degree of differentiated instruction and student engagement in the arts courses, but these are both much less evident in academic classes. Academic teachers know the importance of an on-going evaluation of student understanding, and these teachers are working to more effectively use discourse to monitor their pace, and purposely grouping students with similar difficulties or strengths to give targeted practice or challenges at appropriate levels. Regents tests results and past class performance are used to guide students into courses at the appropriate level of challenge.

Academic success is a requirement for participation in the arts performances and this reinforces motivation and holistic development of students and ensures engagement is acceptable. On the other hand, students are highly motivated and engaged in their art disciplines due to their interest, and that drives nearly all students to meet or exceed expected progress in these aspects.

All budgeting, scheduling and staffing decisions are founded by data. Students at Frank Sinatra School of the Arts are scheduled for three periods of instruction each day within their chosen art form. The school is well supported by the parents, who raise significant monies. In addition, the principal is very successful in developing additional resources and opportunities, including and beyond the school's connection to Exploring the Arts. Excellent use is made of staff and all available resources to ensure positive impact on student learning and performance.

The mutual respect and caring expressed by teachers, results in students feeling very supported and motivated to succeed. All feel confident to ask for help, advice and guidance should it be necessary.

The school puts great emphasis on encouraging good attendance and students getting to school on time. All absences are pursued rigorously and monitoring procedures are followed assiduously by staff responsible.

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

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The principal is highly respected and has brought about effective change and improvements in the school's work. The school functions very smoothly due to the effective use of clearly defined duties and responsibilities that are distributed among the staff. The routine of morning and afternoon check-in procedures and shared responsibility for departmental leadership maintain order and ensure good management of all resources.

The principal has recruited excellent assistant principals and creative and dynamic teachers to fill the rare openings that occur in the stable staff. Commitment to excellence, dedication to the students, an ability to use data effectively to support all students' learning and professional growth are values that are reflected in what the staff say and do, and are expected in all teachers. This has resulted in the development of a very focused staff that devotes many hours beyond the school day to helping individual students and support professional productions and performances.

On-going professional development is well integrated through content area, grade and studio meetings, as well as in the whole school group via faculty meetings. With support

from Exploring The Arts, professional development in *Understanding By Design* was provided for all staff, and is used in the design and revision of curriculum school-wide. The teachers in the dance, drama and fine arts studios have had training for certification in 'Career and Technical Education', resulting in the development of curricula in those areas. Collegial sharing is extended by the use of walk-throughs and intra-visitations. These professional development efforts result in a sharp focus on instructional practice and curriculum design. In addition, observations by administrators lead to suggested improvements for individual teachers, and are used to identify goals and to create specific implementation plans and timelines for professional development.

Frequent discussions in grade level, departmental and administrative meetings focus on identifying and putting programs and interventions in place to support students having difficulty. An assistant principal coordinates the efforts of the wide range of staff involved. Community based organizations, including numerous museums, artists' groups and local colleges provide very good support and opportunities for staff and students, especially to the school's many artistic productions.

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.

Well-established processes are in place for evaluating progress of the school relative to planning at all levels. At the school level, members of the school leadership team reflect on and evaluate the successful action so far against that identified in the Comprehensive Education Plan. At the end of the year, the school uses outcomes from the many team discussions, monitoring activities and an overall review of its work to inform the planning for the following year.

The administration and various departments use results from Regents and other assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum and instruction. The administrative team meets once or twice daily to keep focused on developing issues requiring attention, and meet weekly with the cabinet to revise plans for supporting grade, content area, and studio teams, as well as individual teachers. The administrators conduct frequent informal observations, and compare notes to target support. The report card grades are examined for trends concerning grade levels, classes, teachers and at-risk students, resulting in adjustments to supports and plans.

Data from many sources contribute to the routine assessment of the progress of individual students, classes, and groups, resulting in timely revisions and interventions as needed. The cabinet, guidance department and programming staff meet at the end of each marking period to assess progress of seniors. The academic intervention team meets weekly to monitor progress of at-risk students. All of these frequently focus on changes needed to respond more effectively to individual student's needs, be it classroom level changes such as in groupings, or more personally targeted additional psychological or social services.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Frank Sinatra School of the Arts (HS 501)	∅	✓	+
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