



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Business School for Entrepreneurship

Intermediate School 216

977 Fox Street, 3rd Floor

Bronx

NY 10459

Principal: Domingo Martinez

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Reviewer: Colin Henderson

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Business School for Entrepreneurship, Intermediate School 216, is a middle school that was established five years ago after the closure of a larger school on the site. It shares the building with two other schools. It has 445 students in grades 5 through 8. Most students are Hispanic (40%) or Black (33%); the remainder are 14% White and 13% Asian and others. Nearly 20% are special education students, most of whom are taught in self-contained classes. Over 26% are English language learners and 14% are bilingual students. The school is Title 1 eligible. The school has been restructured into two academies, each with two learning communities. It has had a high level of staff turnover. The number of students has decreased and this has resulted in fewer classes and two fewer teachers for this current school year.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The restructuring of the school into small learning communities helps teachers to know their students well and to check carefully on their progress.
- The strong direction given by the principal provides a calm and orderly working environment.
- Most students enjoy school; they identify strongly with their own learning community and are eager to learn.
- Student behavior has improved significantly and they now focus more consistently on their learning.
- Students and staff respect each other and students value the help given by staff.
- The principal works in an effective partnership with his two assistant principals to ensure that the school runs smoothly and efficiently.
- New procedures for checking and encouraging students to come to school are improving attendance levels.
- Most special education students and the increasing number of bilingual students benefit from working with specialist teachers in smaller classes.
- The school works well with consultants and support agencies to provide academic, recreational and social services to students and their parents.

What the school needs to improve

- Support teachers to use data more consistently to align their instruction to meet the needs of the different groups of students.
- Extend the effectiveness of the team meetings to set specific learning goals for students, shared with their parents, so that they know and understand how to improve their work.
- Develop the use of lesson observations and teacher support strategies to ensure that teachers have consistently high expectations for the quality of student work.
- Ensure that improvement planning focuses rigorously on clear, measurable goals in the short-, mid- and long-term with procedures to evaluate progress at regular intervals.
- Improve the use of technology to promote effective teaching and to extend students' skills and knowledge.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school overall with some undeveloped features.

Intermediate School 216 is an improving school. The principal, supported by two effective assistant principals, provided a strong lead on restructuring the school and this has had a very positive impact on student behavior and attitudes about school. Staff, students and parents enjoy the friendly, calm and orderly atmosphere of the four small learning communities. Staff know their individual students well and work closely with community support services and agencies to provide effective support, especially in their personal and social development. Staff work well together and are beginning to use data effectively to raise the proportion of students attaining the expected levels, although it is too early to see improvements in the results of City and State tests.

The support and intervention strategies for special education students, bilingual students and those working at Level 1 are good. They focus strongly on addressing students' weaknesses. The quality of instruction is improving through effective monitoring, although a high level of staff change has resulted in teachers' expectations for student work not being consistently high enough. Some teachers guide their students to improve the quality of their work, but this is not established in each class. The use of technology to support lively instruction and to extend students' learning is not developed enough.

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.

Teachers and instructional leaders use a good range of data to check on students' progress, including diagnostic tests, quizzes, practice tests, reading logs and the Princeton Review assessments. They use it as the basis of discussion during their weekly learning community meetings when they focus closely on the progress of individual students. They analyze the data carefully to identify students for intervention programs and to know what students have understood or failed to grasp securely. This helps to inform their instruction and to track students' progress, particularly in mathematics and English language arts.

Data for special education students is used effectively to inform the targets in their individual education plans and to guide their progress. The smaller class sizes enable teachers to monitor closely the progress of individual special education students and bilingual learners. Some teachers give a good indication in their assessments about why students gain a particular level, although this is not consistent across the grades. The weekly meeting with a Princeton Review consultant helps the principal and his assistants to check the progress of groups of students within the school and to compare it against a broader range of school data. This helps them to track progress over time and shows an increasing proportion of students attaining expected levels, particularly in grades 5 and 6. It is also used effectively to check the impact of high student mobility in a particular group of students.

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.

Teachers and instructional leaders in the learning communities work well together to check how students are progressing. They use data to focus on individual students, to evaluate the impact of their instruction and to revise their lesson plans if necessary. Collaborative planning and discussions between teachers, individual students and their parents help maintain a strong focus on helping the student to improve. Good use is made of coaches to improve instruction by supporting teachers, especially those new to the school, in addressing weaknesses in students’ skills and conceptual understanding that have been shown in the data.

Test data has been used to identify "slippables" (those students who may slip back a level if not targeted) and "pushables" (those capable of achieving a higher level). These students receive extra intervention and support strategies, such as the Saturday academy, which contribute significantly to their progress. Teachers pay close attention to improving the performance of special education students, providing them with effective individual support in small classes. There is regular review of progress towards their clear learning targets. However, the school is not making full use of the data to set challenging goals for individual students in general education classes, or for whole classes or grades. High expectations are conveyed to students and their parents. They know that they have to work hard and do well but are not always given the precise information to explain how they can do this.

Parents are encouraged to support their children working towards their learning goals. The school tries hard to engage parents in their children’s learning. For example, teachers use a points incentive from the school’s reward scheme for students who encourage their parents to attend parent-teacher conferences. Parents are kept informed through monthly newsletters and are encouraged to attend workshops to find out what their children are 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 proficient.

The curriculum has a clear focus on students’ literacy and mathematical skills. Along with the mandated curriculum, it is aligned to students’ needs and supported effectively by such programs as Wilson, Read 180, an extended period at the end of the day, the after-school program, and Saturday academy. Grade-level teams in each small learning community meet each week to discuss any weaknesses in students’ work and a strong focus is made on aligning instruction to meet these needs, for example, through promoting a ‘skill of the week’. Team leaders then support this through checking teaching plans, lesson observations and the use of coaches to improve instruction. Although some teachers provide a range of activities to match students’ different learning needs, this is not consistent. Teachers do not systematically use ongoing assessment data to ensure that their instruction matches the broad range of different learning needs in their class.

Students enjoy their classes, reporting that "most are fun!", particularly those that require them to use their technological skills when using laptops or Smartboards. They would welcome more opportunities to use technology as some have too few opportunities to use these skills and support their learning. Teachers manage their classes well to ensure that students stay focused on their learning task, although their expectations for student answers to oral questions and written tasks, especially for Level 3 and potential Level 4 students, are not always high enough.

Budget reductions and staffing changes have limited the consistent development of some aspects of instruction, for example, through larger class sizes and a more limited use of a specialist technology teacher. The principal makes staffing and scheduling decisions in response to students' learning needs, for example, by appointing specialist staff to meet the needs of the increasing number of bilingual students. As a result, these students make more progress.

The principal has taken a strong stand on attendance. He has introduced new and more rigorous procedures to check on absentees, supported successfully by a rewards scheme for good attendance. As a result, current attendance levels have improved to almost meet the City average. The improved attendance may have something to do with students' increasing enjoyment of school. They talk about feeling safe in school now and will confidently approach an adult if they have any concerns.

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.

The principal is respected by staff, students and parents. They value the way in which he has restructured the school to provide a calm and orderly learning environment in which staff and students respect each other and relationships are good. The partnership with the two assistant principals works well as they each take responsibility for one of the two academies. Their weekly meetings enable them all to keep fully informed about what is happening in school. They review the discussions at grade team meetings to check on students' progress and ensure that the school runs smoothly. Students value the opportunities to contribute to the smooth running of the school, for example, by compiling a daily news bulletin and reading it to the school through the intercom.

Members of the cabinet, particularly the assistant principals, observe lessons informally every day, as well as conducting formal observations, and provide detailed feedback to teachers. They include key points for development, although these are not consistently focused on the outcomes of student learning. Good support is given to new staff through professional development, the use of mentors, coaches and opportunities to observe other colleagues. Staff work well in teams and many would value further opportunities to observe each others' teaching, particularly those new to the school. They plan together and revise the effectiveness of their plans, although a rigorous system for evaluating how instruction is used to target student achievement is not established.

The school works closely with community support agencies such as the Simpson Street Development Association (SISDA), Direction for our Youth and the Montefiore Hospital. These links provide good support to students and their families, helping them to access academic, recreational and social services that contribute to their well-being.

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 undeveloped.

The school has not established effective structures for evaluating how well it is doing and planning rigorously for improvement. It has developed action plans, as part of its Comprehensive Education Plan. These indicate clear targets for raising test results, for example, by increasing the proportion of students attaining Levels 3 and 4. However, they do not show how progress towards achieving these targets will be regularly evaluated. There is no clearly defined timescale with interim goals set up to measure progress towards the overall goal. This makes it difficult to measure how successful the school is in the short- and medium-term. There is no clearly defined link between setting goals and deciding how achieving them will be supported by other procedures such as monitoring lessons and the impact of professional development.

The school is using data to check on the progress of individual students and groups of students. Some teachers show students how key strengths in their work help them to gain a particular level. This encourages students to be more aware of their strengths and more responsible for their own learning. However, teachers do not consistently point out to students what they need to focus on to accelerate their learning significantly. As a result, students do not always know what to do to improve their work.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Business School for Entrepreneurship (IS 216)	∅	✓	+
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		