



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Secondary School for Research**

**Middle-High School 464**

**237 7 Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11215**

**Principal: Jill Bloomberg**

**Dates of review: March 26 - 27, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Diana Shepherd**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Secondary School for Research is a middle and high school with 488 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 39% Black, 45% Hispanic, 6% White, 7% Asian and 3% other students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 65.5%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 70% eligibility.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The quiet determination of the principal and the commitment of the staff ensure that there is a culture, which supports learning for all.
- The principal makes good use of data to inform decisions relating to staffing and scheduling in order to improve instruction for students.
- The curriculum is sufficiently wide to ensure that the majority of students can demonstrate excellence in their chosen area.
- Grade teams use data effectively to track the progress of all students, which enables them to plan for the next steps in learning.
- The professional development team provides very good support to all teachers in order to ensure that instruction is confident and thorough.
- The integration of special education students and the focus on their specific needs ensures that they make good progress.
- Collaboration across teams ensures that students' needs are understood promoting good levels of trust between students and staff.
- Lead teachers promote the use of innovative strategies for learning, which motivates both learners and staff.
- The school collects and uses a wide range of data to inform whole school planning.

### What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that all plans and goals set have interim measures against which to measure their success.
- Use advisory to coordinate the development of students' goals in order to more closely align guidance and student support with academic goals.
- Support teachers in using data effectively in order to differentiate instruction in order to meet the needs of all students.
- Develop effective methods to ensure that all parents can access the goals set for their children and appreciate the school's high expectations.
- Increase levels of attendance significantly.

## Part 3: Main Findings

### Progress made since the last review

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

### Overall Evaluation

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

The Secondary School for Research is a small school, which serves students from all over New York City. Since the last review, conferencing has become an embedded aspect of practice across all grades and is supporting the development of individualized learning. Deploying lead teachers across the curriculum ensures that teachers use innovative methods for instruction across all grades. The school has introduced laptops and SMART boards that teachers use them well to motivate students and enhance learning.

The inquiry team meets regularly to explore issues relating to underachievement in the Global History test in Regents. Their work is thorough and well planned and they are exploring issues relating to students' ability to interpret the language of questions. The outcomes will directly inform instruction methods in this area. Teachers and grade leaders collect and analyze data thoroughly. They use it well to inform instruction and intervention, although they do not always use it well enough to differentiate instruction.

The principal sets high expectations for everyone and clearly leads the vision that all students can go to college. This has been a successful aspect of the work of the school and many students are accepted into college, receiving support in order to remain there. These expectations are well articulated and shared by all, including the majority of parents. Strategic plans, however, lack measurable success criteria and this prevents monitoring and evaluation being fully effective.

The curriculum is rich covering the mandated elements in interesting and innovative ways. Music, art and sports enable students to excel and it is evident that these enhance their enjoyment of school. There is a strong culture of collaboration in the school. Teachers work alongside each other, with coaches and lead teachers to improve the quality of instruction. They are highly motivated by this work and have successfully introduced a number of new methods for instruction in English language arts and social studies. Students are working effectively and collaboratively with increasing levels of independence but their levels of attendance remain low.

### 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 the student's progress over time.**

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

The school has good data systems, which provide an effective overview of performance and progress using standardized test scores. This enables the administration and the teachers to have a clear understanding of the achievement of each student. The grade leaders and subject coaches update the systems at the end of each marking period and

use classroom charts and conferences to inform students. Teachers share data across grades in order to ensure that all practitioners fully understand the expectations for achievement. The careful analysis does not show significant trends in the performance of any one group in the school.

Special education students and English language learners benefit from the detailed analysis carried out by grade leaders and make good progress through targeted intervention. The school does not reduce the expectations for students because they have special learning needs. They work hard to include them in all classes, using push-in teachers as necessary. The scheduling and organization of academic intervention services ensure that students attend. Students and parents both report that this is a good strategy and more attend after-school support as a result.

The school appreciates the value of benchmarking its performance against similar schools and measures itself against the two other schools in the building. Both are small and admit similar students. The principal reports that the developing partnership is useful when evaluating overall performance. The training for staff in the use of data is very thorough. The staff developer runs regular lab-sites and models procedures for all staff. Staff collect and evaluate qualitative as well as quantitative data. Training on the use of data is ongoing and thorough and ensures that all staff are fully aware of the systems and how to use them.

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student’s next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student’s learning.**

**This area of the school’s work is well developed.**

The school makes strategic plans to improve student outcomes. The expectations are high and grade leaders use assessments at the end of each marking period to chart the progress made by all students. Strategic plans, however, do not include measurable, interim goals to enable the administration to track the progress year to year. However, the overview of data does provide a clear picture of where students are failing and this enables the school to intervene quickly. Each department uses data well to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions and to identify specific issues for focus. Where necessary, individual plans are developed and these may include support for social and emotional as well as learning issues, but in all plans the academic expectations are paramount.

Regular conferences in English language arts help to maintain the high expectations evident across the school. The individualized work in math also supports this. Admission to college is an expectation for all and high school students report that they appreciate the support the school gives towards this goal. Each year the number of students accepted into their college of choice is improving. Teachers and administration work hard to ensure that communication with parents is effective and that parents and students understand the goals set by the school, but there is more work to do to ensure that all parents understand their child’s goals and the school’s high expectations. The parent teacher association is established and a small core of parents attends regularly. The school is, however, successful in ensuring that the majority of parents attend the parent-teacher conferences to receive their children’s report card.

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.**

**This area of the school’s work is well developed.**

The administration organizes the curriculum carefully and each marking period has a specific focus. This ensures full coverage of the statutory elements while ensuring continuity across the grades. There are six marking periods instead of four in order to generate sufficient data to monitor and track achievement effectively. Students receive four years of science and math instead of the statutory three. As a result, math and science are strong areas of the curriculum and students make very good progress. At periods of transition, parents are kept fully informed of any issues that might prevent promotion.

The administration responds, wherever possible, to student interest when planning the curriculum. Instructional strategies enable different learning styles and teachers design activities to support students working together in groups and pairs. This promotes the development of independence. Book clubs are a good example, providing a forum for students to discuss literature while encouraging debate on a range of issues. The students in one class responded very well to this way of working and were engaged in articulate, independent and well-informed debate on the Holocaust. Music and athletics are important aspects of the extended curriculum and students enjoy taking part in both.

Coaches in English language arts and math ensure that data is used to inform instruction. They scrutinize work across each grade twice a year, encouraging teachers to address the individual needs of students and that students are making adequate rates of progress. Not all teachers are confident in differentiating activities provide just the right level of challenge for individuals and groups.

The principal bases all scheduling and resourcing decisions on data. She uses funding well to address the learning needs of students, reducing administration costs. Procedures to address lateness and absence are in place and the attendance team works systematically to ensure that students attend school. As a result, although still low, attendance is improving and this remains an area for improvement.

**Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

**This area of the school’s work is well developed.**

The culture of collaboration in The Secondary High School for Research is strong. Subject departments are well developed. Grade leaders and teachers work effectively together to ensure that instruction for students is coherent and well planned. The principal and the coaches observe teachers and identify the issues for development, which inform professional development. The professional development program includes a strong coaching element, which is linked to each teacher’s identified development needs and those identified through analysis of student data. Teachers respond well to the work of the lead teachers. These practitioners team-teach in the classrooms, providing models of good practice as well as feedback on the quality of instruction. This work develops continuity and consistency across the grades and intervisitations support further development. Because of this work, learning environments are generally stimulating and provide good scaffolds for learning. In addition, displays of work around the school celebrate the work of students and provide models for others to aspire to.

The administration has plans to support new teachers very well. Mentors ensure that new staff are well inducted into school. Teamwork is good. The guidance teams work with the academic intervention team. They set goals for students and align services with these goals. Guidance counselors are often the first people students go to when they are in trouble. Their work, however, is not well enough coordinated across the school, through advisory, to ensure that vulnerable students are supported across the grades. The behavior policy is clear and all students and parents are aware of how it works. Behavior is good, the environment is calm, and staff deal with any incidents firmly.

The school has a number of significant partnerships, which have a positive impact on the lives of the students. In particular, the work with colleges, supporting applications, has had very positive outcomes.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.**

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

The school uses data well to plan improvement for students and teachers. These plans, however, do not always include objective success criteria. This would increase the school's strategic understanding of performance and enable an enhanced clarity in the establishment of next steps.

The administration uses a range of diagnostic tools including Acuity to measure the success of plans and to evaluate the outcomes carefully in order to identify the next steps for all groups of students. Teachers use data from interim assessments to track and revise goals as necessary. The principal and the school community know their strengths and are eager to sustain and develop the systems currently in place in order to inform student goals and to improve further the quality of instruction in the school.

The quiet determination of the principal and her insistence on high expectations for both students and teachers has gained high levels of respect among the staff. Her consistent approach and transparent leadership have enabled teachers and parents to understand and share her vision that all students will attend college. As a result, they work well together to ensure that many students are successful and achieve this goal

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: The Secondary School for Research</b>	△	▷	✓	+	◇
<b>Quality Score</b>				X	

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

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	△	▷	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?				X	
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?				X	
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?				X	
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?				X	
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?				X	
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?				X	
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>				X	

### Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	△	▷	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?			X		
2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?				X	
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?				X	
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?				X	
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?				X	
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>				X	

### Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	△	▷	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?				X	
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?				X	
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?				X	
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?			X		
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?				X	
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?				X	
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance?			X		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>				X	

<b>Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.</b>					
<b>To what extent does the school . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?				X	
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?				X	
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?				X	
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?				X	
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?			X		
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>					X

<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>					
<b>To what extent do . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?				X	
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?				X	
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?				X	
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?				X	
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>					X

◇	<b>Outstanding</b>
+	<b>Well Developed</b>
✓	<b>Proficient</b>
➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>
Δ	<b>Underdeveloped</b>