



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Arts, Imagination and Inquiry

High School 299

**122 Amsterdam Avenue
New York
NY 10023**

Principal: Stephen Noonan

Dates of review: November 13 - 14, 2007

Lead Reviewer: Jo Cheadle-Maruta

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

Progress made since the last review

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 Arts, Imagination and Inquiry School is a high school with 325 students from grade 9 through grade 11. The school population comprises 39% Black, 52% Hispanic, 4% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 19% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 is 87.5%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 50% eligibility.

The school is currently in its third year of existence, with its first year of grade 11 students. It shares its building with five other high schools. Over the past three years, the school has responded to local changes that have altered its status and support networks from year to year. Additionally, having started its operation in the basement of the building it occupies, the school has now moved to an upper floor. Currently, the school's facility is in an unfinished state and is not entirely appropriate to support the range of student and curriculum needs.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has a clear vision of what the school should be like and communicates this vision effectively to the whole school community.
- Senior leaders clearly understand their roles and effectively support the principal's good leadership toward realizing the school vision.
- The majority of staff members have been at the school since its conception and share fully in the development goals.
- Members of staff have continued to work collaboratively to meet the needs of students, despite ongoing changes.
- The school knows its students well and leaders are now making good use of data to plan long-term improvement goals.
- The school works very successfully with the Lincoln Center Institute for the Arts in Education to provide innovative and interesting ways of delivering the core curriculum.
- The school is self-reflective and recognizes where it needs to improve.
- Many students are motivated, articulate and aware of the goals for their learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Establish rigorous systems for comparing the school's work with schools in similar contexts.
- Provide opportunities for further training in the analysis and use of student data.
- Ensure that teachers make consistently good use of student information to plan instruction that precisely meets their needs.
- Ensure that the whole school community has consistently high expectations of student attitudes, behavior and commitment to study.
- Establish a consistent approach towards the management of student behavior.

Part 3: Main findings

Progress made since the last review

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

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Since its establishment two and a half years ago, the High School for Arts, Imagination and Inquiry has been working to establish a foundation for its vision and philosophy. This vision is based on creating a sustainable, successful and effective school where students achieve well. In the context of ongoing change and difficulties with its facility, the principal has provided strong leadership and encouraged staff members to remain positive and forward thinking. His vision for students to gain all that is positive through an innovative arts-based curriculum goes hand in hand with his determination that academic achievement must be high. This vision is articulated very clearly and staff are committed to its realization. A team of three assistant principals now supports the principal, two of whom work as assistant principals in another school in the building. Each has roles and responsibilities clearly delegated and there is a real sense that the work of the leadership team is encouraging consistency across the school. There are still anomalies to address to ensure that success is fully achievable, including more effective match of work to student needs and the encouragement of greater parental contribution. However, plans for development and improvement clearly indicate that the school knows the path it needs to take.

The inquiry team is working well. Their work has continued since the last Quality Review and the group has become the steering party for goal setting and strategic thinking. Members have decided on a focus group for their current work and looked closely at available data to establish areas for improvement. Current analysis has shown that some students who are completing course work satisfactorily find great difficulty in passing the Regents exams in their global studies and living environment courses. The inquiry team has identified students with low-level literacy skills for whom tests present significant problems, despite the fact that their knowledge of concepts is increasing. The work of the team has influenced curriculum programming and instruction to ensure that this group of students receives the support they need to be successful in exams. The group functions effectively and is useful as a forum for whole school development planning and self-evaluation processes. The impact of their work extends to whole school intervention practices, ensuring that students' needs are met and rates of progress improve.

Despite difficult working circumstances, the school has made some progress on the areas identified for development at the time of the last Quality Review. Plans for the accommodation of new students have been fully implemented and computer technology is now being effectively used to support data collection and analysis. Attendance has improved slightly and school leaders continually look for ways to encourage all students to attend school regularly. Other aspects of highlighted areas for development remain pertinent to the school. The school has identified the need to improve student progress by matching work to individual levels of achievement. Expectations of how students should behave and apply themselves to their work remain inconsistent.

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 proficient.

The school collects and analyzes a useful range of data regarding student performance and outcomes in interim assessments. Of most importance to school leaders is the establishment of a sound baseline for achievement on entry to the school. Leaders are fully aware that levels on entry are low for many students and understand that it is essential to show good progress on these starting levels for those students who may not reach grade level. This is particularly the case for special education students and English language learners, some of whom arrive at the school with little or no English. Baseline data is collected usefully for these two groups in particular. The school is now using Kaplan assessments to make regular and rigorous assessment of student progress in order to identify strengths and weaknesses in performance. Leaders use computer technology effectively to support the data collection and analysis process, and the school is making good use of the ARIS system to support their work. Members of the inquiry team have received training in using the system. Training for other staff members has not yet taken place and this has a negative effect on their use of data to drive classroom instruction. In its unusual context as a new school and the only school linked with the Lincoln Arts Center, comparisons with similar schools are tentative. However, leaders are measuring success in comparison with the other high schools located within the building, all of whom have been in existence for the same length of time. Currently, these comparisons relate to school setup and the implementation of each new "first time" experience, but nonetheless, the school is able to measure its successes and mistakes and amend strategies accordingly.

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 proficient.

The school's inquiry team has made good use of collected data to carry out regular reviews of student performance and set goals for improvement. Until the recent appointment of assistant principals, this group has provided a forum for whole school goal setting and self-evaluation. The identification of strengths and weaknesses in achievement has enabled the group to focus on particular groups of students, subjects and classes and provide the necessary intervention strategies to improve outcomes. The team has communicated information from its review to the whole school community to ensure that all staff share improvement goals. Goals are set for pass rates in Regents exams. Students know their individual long-term goals and, for the most part, are aware of the short-term targets they must achieve to reach the goals set for them. While the school is committed to communicating student goals to parents, this is not easy. As yet, for a variety of reasons including the fact that some students travel great distances to attend the school, parental contribution to support student learning has been limited. The school is instilling in students the desire to do well, but cannot always guarantee that parents are able to support the realization of this desire at home. For this reason, the pupil personnel team works to ensure that "in-house" strategies support the progress made by particular groups of students who may otherwise "slip through the net." This is the case for a group

of girls who need support to accept that their image will not be tarnished by the desire to achieve well in school.

The principal clearly states that “academic success is non-negotiable.” The school seeks to encourage students to think about their long-term opportunities. Students are motivated to believe that “I want it and I can do it” is actually a reality. The school measures its success in this area by the number of students who rethink their own long-term goals and begin to research college opportunities when they had not initially considered this an option. There is good collaboration to ensure that the school supports students to achieve their goals. There is an overriding recognition that the school must employ intervention strategies that take account of academic needs along with personal needs to ensure success. This requires a team approach to both goal setting and intervention planning that the school has established and continues to develop.

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 proficient.

The school’s curriculum philosophy is innovative and interesting. Interwoven with core programs the school encourages “capacities for imaginative learning” that support rigorous academic learning across all subjects. In partnership with the Lincoln Arts Center, students experience a wide variety of artworks including dance, music, theatre, visual arts and film. Many students are appreciative of the opportunities afforded to them by this unique program and are motivated by original styles of learning and teaching. Internships and special projects with the Lincoln Arts Center have been highly motivating for particular students who would otherwise have lost interest in their studies. Additionally, the school is working to establish a core program that fully meets the needs of all students and makes regular review of curriculum content. Examples of this are the recent adaptation of the math and living environment programs in response to analysis of Regents pass rates. Data shows that while students have a clear understanding of concepts, they are often confused by the ways questions are asked. This has led to revision of literacy lessons to encourage better comprehension strategies. Moreover, the school seeks to provide relevance for learning by making connections between subjects and reinforcing key language concepts through a variety of subjects. Students themselves talk positively about the links in their learning which give meaning and relevance to academic study.

While the analysis of data is providing valuable information for whole school development and improvement, its use for driving classroom practice is inconsistent. The result is that while students may have a very clear picture of expected long-term outcomes, some do not achieve their short-term targets because teaching does not match their needs closely enough. When teaching does not cater for the full range of learning needs and styles, behavior deteriorates and students do not engage fully. Moreover, despite the existence of a clear and appropriate code for conduct in school, expectations and the use of consequences when the code is ignored are very inconsistent. The result is a continuous low-level lack of application that disrupts learning for all students and endangers the sense of purpose and drive throughout the school. Attendance rates are not as high as the administration would like it to be. Leaders constantly seek ways to encourage better attendance and monitor the impact of absence on learning, using good attendance as the “hook” for possible participation in special projects. Currently, one such project involves a partnership with Samsung, which is a great incentive for many students. The school works hard to facilitate closer partnerships with parents to encourage good attendance.

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 proficient.

There is a suitably differentiated program for the professional development of staff, driven by regular classroom observations and analysis of student performance data. Recent developments to this aspect of the school's work have established the importance of striving for excellence and the accountability of all staff members. There is a suitable mentoring program in place and staff are supported by external and in-house training. Teachers have opportunities to observe modeled lessons and gain professional skills and knowledge by working alongside specialists from the Lincoln Arts Center. It is a positive sign that despite difficult times in the past two and a half years of set up, the staff has remained stable and are generally enthusiastic about the opportunities and experiences open to them. In addition to what the Lincoln Arts Center provides for the school, there is a good range of professional partnerships that support whole school development and improvement. Many of these partnerships support the school in devising supportive programs and interventions for students, enabling personal and social growth alongside academic development.

School management systems are developing well. Demands on the principal to be a "jack of all trades" are slowly diminishing as student numbers rise and funds have become available for additional school leaders. Even so, the school does not yet have a fully functioning administrative team and day-to-day administrative issues still fall to senior leaders. There is a strong sense of community and teamwork however, and staff "pull together" to make sure a job is done. Working procedures that ensure the school runs smoothly are slowly embedding, and students are increasingly aware of the expectations regarding their behavior and attitudes. It is significant that many students recognize their role in establishing good working patterns and procedures. They feel able to voice their opinion and contribute ideas that could improve organization and outcomes. At present, there is a level of inconsistency in ensuring that all students respond in the same positive way.

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 proficient.

The school is becoming increasingly more capable of reviewing and revising its work through an ongoing process of self-evaluation. Leaders have clearly established the vision for how the school should be and communicate this effectively to the whole school community. The newness of the school and the changing context in which it works hamper the realization of the vision at the current time. However, the school is carefully plotting its journey and responding positively to the need to be flexible, redefine goals and create new action plans to ensure that goals are reached. School leaders make increasingly effective use of the teachers' interim assessments of student performance to inform whole school monitoring and the setting of goals.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Arts, Imagination and Inquiry	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
Quality Score			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 . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
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			
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			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 . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
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		
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			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 . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
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		
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X		

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.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
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		
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X		

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.

To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
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 make 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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X		