



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**The High School for International Business and
Finance**

High School 462

**549 Audubon Avenue
New York
NY 10040**

Principal: Juan Alvarez

Dates of review: January 15 - 16, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Richard Woolf

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 High School for International Business and Finance is a high school with 686 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 5.8% Black, 92.2% Hispanic, 1.5% White, and 0.5% Asian students. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 43% special education students. Boys account for 58% of the students enrolled and girls account for 42%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 87.6%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 89% eligibility.

The school occupies one floor of the former George Washington campus. It shares campus-wide facilities with three other schools, which includes a re-modernized sports field and track, swimming pool, auditorium and cafeteria.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is a strong leader, with clear visions and is respected by the whole school as being a force for positive change.
- The three assistant principals and a growing staff of dedicated professionals fully support the principal in moving the school forward.
- The goals of the school are clearly stated and revised at appropriate times during the year.
- The school professional development program meets staff needs in improving student outcomes.
- The school has a strong system of staff working together collaboratively and sharing good practice through supportive intervisitation.
- Administration is a group of exceptionally skilful resource managers that clearly aid student progress.
- The students are very proud of their school and the motivation staff give them to succeed, within a well-structured and safe environment.
- A growing feature of classroom work is the high levels of student engagement and accountable talk.
- The parents are supportive of the staff in helping their children to achieve.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure teachers share the good practice in differentiation with greater consistency and effectiveness across every subject and grade.
- Develop more challenging ways of using data to raise the academic profile of special education students and English language learners.
- Consider the most effective ways to develop a learning culture throughout the school.

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.

Over the last four years and under the leadership of the current principal the school continues to develop into a place where students receive every opportunity to maximize their potential. Everyone works together in pursuit of making the school a harmonious, safe and secure environment. The adoption of an effective behavior management system contributes greatly to achieving this. Opportunities now arise to build on this success to create an environment based on a culture of learning.

The staff work very collaboratively and an effective professional development program operates allowing staff to improve their teaching and hence student learning. The administration makes exceptional use of the resources available to them to meet individual student needs. This includes establishing smaller teaching groups and the hiring of extra staff in support of student development. A growing strength is the use of data to improve instruction. However, the school uses data more effectively in determining outcomes for the general education population than for special education students or English language learners. Likewise, the principal appreciates the school does not yet deliver differentiated instruction across the entire faculty with the consistency he would like to see.

Since the last Quality Review, the school has made progress in all the areas for improvement. These include better teacher record keeping through computer-based systems and more active student engagement in lessons. The inquiry team is monitoring the progress of a group of students the school deems as struggling learners. Early indications reveal that this close analysis is proving beneficial in improving their outcomes and participation rates.

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.

Building upon the array of qualitative data it has on its students, the school now uses quantitative data to greater effect. This allows for more in-depth analysis of individual student strengths and weaknesses. Assistant principals, with responsibility for specific subject areas, are using the data to good effect in determining the progress staff make in aiding students to reach their set targets. At the same time, a system of graphical representations allows the administration to track specific cohort progress. Staff use a computer-based system of data tracking in order to chart individual and whole class

progress. This is proving an invaluable tool in their efforts to raise the academic profile of their students.

The school uses data to track the progress of its special education and English language learners but not with the same rigor as the general education students. As a result, it is unclear whether the progress made by these groups of students receives the recognition the qualitative data suggests it should. In terms of ethnicity, for new arrivals, their country of origin is important data in understanding the levels of formal education a student may receive prior to entry. This data then informs the instructional program the student receives. The data shows insignificant differences in terms of gender according to ability on entry or to the progress either group makes over its time in school.

The school is careful to analyze data over time as a means of demonstrating progress. Graduation rates are higher now than four years ago due to this analysis of cohort strengths and weaknesses. Progress against similar schools is also significant. The school scrutinizes middle school data more effectively and supplements it with its own in-house generated data. Teachers feel they receive effective training on data usage and this is increasing their ability to provide better instruction.

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 mission of the school is to create an atmosphere where given the right learning conditions all students can achieve their full potential. Consequently, the school sets all goals with this view in mind. The senior leadership team, which includes parents and students, sets goals that are measurable, aspirational but realistic. Key goals are attendance and cohort grade improvement. Using cohort entry data with supplementary data from in-house testing the school is able to set these challenging targets. From this benchmark data, staff set individual student and class targets. Clear guidelines given to staff reflect the principal’s high expectations in reaching the goals and these include time frames for their completion. The school appreciates it still does not yet set its special education students and English language learners “hard-edged” data driven goals. The work of the guidance counselors in supporting the school’s high expectations is critical in the achievement of the school’s goals.

The school shares its goals across a broad spectrum of the school community. Students considered unable to achieve, on the basis of their entry data, make significant progress because of the high standards and expectations the school sets. The New York Times, June 2007, drew specific attention to this in an article about the school. Parents are appreciative of the open communication they have with teachers, feeling this to be essential in the development of strong school partnerships. The parents feel confident to discuss aspects of their children’s work with the teachers and attendance at parent-teacher conferences is high. In challenging students to reach their potential, the grade keeper software, in use by all teachers, provides visual information on a weekly basis to show progress. This is proving very positive for teachers and students alike.

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 school follows the mandated curriculum for students taking the Regents examinations. Assistant principals produce detailed curriculum maps and pacing calendars. From these teachers have the freedom to deliver the content areas in ways that specifically meet the needs of their students. There is an emergent use of technology as a teaching aid and this is proving a motivating factor for an increasing number of students. To build literacy stamina all subject areas include writing pieces in every lesson. This is proving successful as students’ outcomes in Regents examinations improve. The students supplement their main curriculum with the addition of numerous activities. These aid not only academic progress but also the students’ social and emotional well-being. Staff acknowledge the administration allows them to teach in ways which engage and excite the students. However, with the freedom comes responsibility and the staff are aware of the principal’s “non-negotiables” like lesson planning.

Teachers work very hard at providing an environment, which is safe and conducive to learning. There are many good examples of teachers using differentiation as a means of meeting individual student needs. This is not yet consistent across the faculty and is an area the principal continues to monitor and develop. The principal and administration are excellent resource managers. Examples of this are the creation of smaller teaching groups for more individualized instruction and student specific schedules which impact positively upon student outcomes. Staff appreciate the opportunity to meet in study groups on a weekly basis, affording them the time to work and plan collaboratively.

Over the last four years, the school’s “zero tolerance” policy in dealing with poor behavior has proved to be highly effective. Calmness exudes throughout the school and every member of the community trusts and respects each other. One student said, “I think the best things in school are really supportive teachers and friends”. The school has recognized the opportunity to build on this success to create an environment based on a culture of learning throughout the school.

The school sets a high priority on attendance, as without it students cannot learn. The school’s attendance target is challenging but every indicator shows each semester the gap is narrowing in achieving it.

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 principal and his team undertake numerous lesson observations and provide staff with positive feedback, which they greatly appreciate. They feel this encourages them to reflect on their practice and develop into better practitioners. Many aspects of professional development arise from these observations. The study group meetings support professional development, as do programs from outside organizations specifically addressing issues like student engagement. The school has a strong program of intervisitation. The visits are non-threatening and teachers welcome this as a means of improving their own practice. Collectively these outcomes improve instruction and in turn

student learning. Over forty percent of the staff are new teachers, many new to the profession. Very good systems are in place to ensure all these teachers have professional and personal support including mentoring. The work of the study groups is another example where new staff learn the school's rules and rituals.

Over the last four years, the school has seen a developing and strengthening guidance department. The deans and guidance counselors work closely with all staff to support the aim of meeting the students' individual needs and preparing them for college. The appointment of a third guidance counselor this year means more one to one work with students takes place. This is proving to be essential as the school strives to meet its graduation and college entry targets. A successful peer education and mentoring program operates and the linkage of grade 12 students to ninth graders is proving very beneficial. The employment of recent graduates trained in the peer mentoring is providing the school with additional resources in dealing with more emotionally challenging students.

Students like the uniform code as it makes them stand out and feel important in comparison to other schools in the building. The school makes very good use of outside organizations to service the needs of both students and staff.

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 principal uses the three marking periods as indicators in the establishment of student progress. At these points, formal meetings with staff reflect on both their own and student progress in achieving targets. This allows for the adjustment of targets to occur. The administration constantly observes and monitors progress and responds swiftly when tracking individual or cohort progress by establishing further interim goals and targets.

In previous years, the school made use of outside interim and diagnostic tests to monitor progress. They are now in the process of developing their own diagnostics to meet student need. These tests, including mock Regents examinations, are proving valuable sources of interim data for teachers. Collation of all data is the responsibility of an assistant principal who uses technology to service staff with current data that is beneficial to their teaching. The principal has an intimate knowledge of each student's progress through studying individual report cards and interim data arising from the tests the students take. This is a powerful, if time consuming, way of understanding overall school progress. He acknowledges this and seeks ways of sharing this with other members of the administration. Clear procedures are in place for the revision of goals before setting new goals. This is a reflective school and seeking ways of improving outcomes in student performance are at the forefront of every faculty member. Parents receive monthly updates through the senior leadership team on the progress the school makes in reaching its targets. The principal is a visionary. His plans for the school's future development are exciting, challenging but achievable.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME:	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
The High School for International Business and Finance (M462)					
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 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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5					X

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped