



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Academy of Finance and Enterprise

High School 264

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

Principal: Gilberto Vega

Dates of review: March 3 - 4, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Frank Jones

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Academy of Finance and Enterprise is a high school with 314 students from grade 9 through grade 11. The school population comprises 10% Black, 56% Hispanic, 17% White and 17% Asian students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 7% 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 92.2%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 56% eligibility.

The school is in its third year and the first graduation will take place in 2009. Three other schools share the building and one of these the same floor, causing minor problems in student circulation.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal works tirelessly, empowering and involving those around him in the development of the school.
- Careful analysis of pertinent qualitative and quantitative data ensures programs match the needs of individual and groups of students.
- Relationships are exceptionally good at all levels and between all groups.
- The school maximizes the potential of its size, using flexible scheduling and innovative application of the budget.
- Students and parents speak extremely highly of the school, its principal, the staff and the high level of commitment they have.
- The school has extremely high expectations for all students irrespective of capability and these are transmitted to parents and students.
- Students are provided with a range of opportunities to engage in experiential learning.
- Professional development is welcomed by teachers and is closely targeted at individual and school needs.
- The principal has a well thought through vision for the school, shared by the community and enacted on a daily basis.
- The school is exceptionally well led by the principal and assistants whose complementary skills add vibrancy to its development.

What the school needs to improve

- Extend the use of existing data to refine subject and long-term whole school goals to accurately reflect prior student performance.
- Continue to carefully measure the progress of students in the collaborative team-teaching class against that of their peers in general education.

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 principal has worked tirelessly and with great ability to translate his vision for education into a school that reflects it. His collaborative approach, high sense of the importance of good communication and empowerment of the school community has enabled the success the school has achieved to date. The school is exceptionally well led by the principal and assistants whose complementary skills add vibrancy to its development. All staff are highly motivated, work well together and model the very positive relationships that are prevalent across all areas of this learning community. Students speak highly of the education they receive and the opportunities that they have, especially when activities place themselves in real-life situations and the relevance of their learning becomes apparent. Parents are well informed and a part of the school which has extremely high expectations for itself and each student. Regent's honors, advanced placement courses and graduation are common parlance where all are encouraged to reach challenging goals.

The inquiry team has made a significant start in advising teachers in the instructional approaches to reading so the target group's improvement and the impact of the push in support can be evaluated. The detailed analysis of data provides the school with a constantly updated picture of each student, their performance levels and their needs. The latter are swiftly addressed through intervention, supplementary support and good scheduling. Analysis of whole school data and the revision of plans to provide programs targeted at identified student need has improved greatly since the previous Quality Review. Goal setting is an improving feature of the school but not yet sufficiently refined to build on prior performance at grade and subject level. Professional development is seen as the cornerstone of this well-informed workforce which responds readily to new initiatives. The impact is evident in the good quality teaching, the understanding of the whole child, and the school as a learning community. The school is small and maximizes the advantages of its size specifically with its understanding of the 'whole child' and the plans it makes for their further development. The progress made by the school is good but importantly it has all the components in place, the commitment and the intellectual rigor required to sustain and improve its present performance.

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 leadership team carefully analyzes a wealth of pertinent data, which ensures they are constantly informed and have an exceptionally accurate understanding of the progress and performance of each student. Continuous classroom assessment, marking periods and student transcripts provide teachers with detailed information of what each student has achieved in terms of their knowledge, skills and understanding. In-depth analysis of this data results in modification and additions to programs to enable students to remain on track, so they can acquire the required credits for graduation. The disaggregation of data identifies any patterns that may emerge between genders or different ethnic groups. When the school identifies disparities in performance, as in the case of black students, it implements strategies to remedy the situation and monitors the impact. Teachers pay close attention to the needs of English language learners and special education students so they can access the specific learning components that will lead to them testing out, or in the case of the latter group, enable de-certification to occur.

The school is less than three years old but has started to analyze previous results to identify what points can be learned and how to further increase student performance. Comparisons with other establishments clearly illustrate that this high school is outperforming similar schools, yet the principal has been keen to learn from and share best practice with those schools, specifically where they have a high English language learner population. In this way the school has been able introduce and adapt strategies to successfully meet the needs of their own students. Teachers are confident in the use of data and use it readily to target planning and focus instruction, so increasing the rate of student progress.

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 has adopted a corporate approach to goal setting at whole-school level and closely monitors the four-year plan devised to ensure they are on track. Departments have adopted a similar approach and goals are in place and shared with the community. In both cases the longer-term achievement goals set are aspirational and therefore do not necessarily reflect student prior performance. Students’ more immediate goals are accurately set following marking periods when conferences take place and an evaluation of progress is made, resulting in closely focused learning objectives for each student. This ensures that tracking of students is a high priority and goals clearly reflect the skills and knowledge each student has to acquire on their journey to graduation.

Close tracking of students enables the school to quickly identify underperformance and introduce strategies to address them either at group or individual student level. To improve the performance of special education students the school has introduced a collaborative team-teaching class in grade 9, following discussion with and training for staff in the instructional strategies that will support the initiative. It is too early to make a secure judgment about the impact on achievement of these students, but the school has started to carefully measure their progress against that of their peers in the rest of the grade.

The school has extremely high expectations for all students, irrespective of capability, and it transmits these to parents and students who in turn are enthused by the challenges they face. One parent stated, "No one talks about graduating without at least an advanced diploma". Students speak in the same way and are keen to work with the knowledge that success will enhance their life chances. Parents are exceptionally well informed, not just about the progress of students, but through bi-lingual workshops which bring greater understanding to the graduation process. As a result parents appreciate this information, feel involved and able to support their children.

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 has a wealth of data generated by the curriculum it offers students. The administration and teachers use this to identify student needs and to provide the next incremental steps in their learning. The use of this prior attainment data informs discussion and outcomes at the frequent joint-planning sessions. Administrators know students well and regularly talk with staff about student progress, as well as to monitor their performance towards identified goals. Staff welcome this high level of accountability and the support that is offered. Teaching is frequently good and tasks are closely matched to student learning needs. All students are given a theme word such as 'ethics', which they then have to use to develop a portfolio of work across all subjects. This cross-curricular approach brings heightened relevance to the learning experience, as students use known skills in different contexts. Students receive a range of opportunities to engage in experiential learning, and they gain valuable experience and insight from involvement in community service, internships, the virtual enterprise program and other workplace initiatives

Students and parents speak extremely well of the school, its principal, the staff and the high level of commitment they have for them. This is reflected in the quality of relationships which are exceptionally good at all levels and between all groups. This results in a rich and positive learning environment where staff and students feel valued and grow in confidence. The school operates long days, but attendance is good because students enjoy coming to school and the excitement it offers. The school maximizes the potential of its size, using flexible scheduling and innovative application of the budget by creating additional time for professional development and translating documentation into various languages to support the school community. The in-depth knowledge they have of all students provides staff with a picture of the whole child. The school reacts swiftly to schedule additional support as necessary and provides funding to make the initiative work.

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.

Frequent classroom observations are part of the regular routine of the school and are used developmentally to enable teachers to further improve their predominantly good practice. On occasion staff have a specific focus, and ensuing whole-school discussions

develop a collaborative understanding amongst themselves. Weekly joint planning, grade and subject meetings allow for a detailed dialogue and acute focus on the learning needs of students and what strategies should be employed to meet them. Individual teachers have their own professional goals, which are set in discussion with the principal at the start of each year, and as a result instruction improves. Teachers welcome professional development, which closely targets individual and school needs, resulting in this school being very much a learning community. All teachers observe each other and welcome this as a positive experience. The principal believes strongly that staff need continuing support if they are to succeed and therefore induction of staff to this growing school is a high priority. New teachers are allocated experienced mentors who provide firm foundations based on good advice which encourage further growth in skills.

The academic intervention team swiftly addresses the needs of students who are experiencing difficulties. Case conferences involve both student and parent so a joint approach to the problem can be made. Involvement of teachers in this process promotes increased understanding and consistency in the application of strategies to support the student. The exceptionally good communication, within the school and with the wider community, means that procedures to enable the smooth running of the school are understood and applied. The school is developing a series of effective partnerships which reflect the purpose of the school and enable students to experience an array of opportunities that broaden and enrich their understanding.

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 clear vision that the principal has for the school is underpinned by a well thought through philosophy and a structure to make it happen. There is a high degree of collaborative planning and decision-making at all levels in the school, so staff feel empowered and have ownership of its direction. The school has a clearly mapped four-year plan which encompasses the direction of the first cohort of students from inception to graduation. It clearly identifies the sequential steps that needed to be taken and dates for completion of tasks. The school reflects on the success of each stage of the plan and makes alterations and refinements to improve future performance. The plan is carefully monitored and adjusted to enable subsequent students to benefit further. The school is growing in a structured and informed manner by systematically evaluating its progress.

The senior leadership team constantly monitors the impact of their actions and makes adjustments or introduces new initiatives, such as the establishment of the virtual enterprise program in grade 11, to ensure they remain on track to meet stated goals. This process is used as an exemplar by staff, grade and subjects who are adept at realigning goals and instruction, using the information that emanates from their detailed analysis of data and intimate knowledge of student need. The rigorous approach to tracking student progress and performance allows shorter-term goals in particular to be evaluated and revised, thus ensuring they remain challenging and extend student learning. Interventions follow analysis of data and these serve to support underperforming students through advisory sessions, credit recovery, after-school or Saturday classes.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Academy of Finance and Enterprise	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 rigorous, 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 and tardiness?				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, and effectively address discipline related incidents?				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