



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

High School for Arts and Business

High School 550

**105-25 Horace Harding Expressway
Queens
NY 11368**

Principal: Ana Zambrano-Burakov

Dates of review: June 2 - 3, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Ronnie Young

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

High School for Arts and Business is a high school with 729 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 7% Black, 84% Hispanic, 2% White, and 7% Asian students. The student body includes 18% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 - 2007 was 81.3%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 67% eligibility.

The principal has been in post for less than a year.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal, ably assisted by the hardworking assistant principals, provides strong, inspirational and dynamic leadership.
- Very effective procedures are in place for raising attendance, which have risen in some grades by over 12%.
- Clever programming of students allows fulfillment of individual need by differentiated levels.
- The administration, faculty, students and parents have extremely high expectations of themselves and of each other.
- The school has excellent relationships with parents, many of whom participate fully in the life of the school.
- The curriculum is broad and deep, and offers a range of opportunities to a very high level.
- Frequent observations of teachers and walkthroughs have facilitated differentiated improvement strategies for teachers.
- Innovative budgeting and judicious use of external funding have allowed greater flexibility and targeting in instruction.
- Students show high levels of respect for each other and staff, and great enthusiasm for learning.
- Effective use of data has enabled the school to focus on and improve the performance of individuals and groups of students.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure all goal setting across the school is measurable, time-limited and incrementalized, with clear performance indicators.
- Involve students more in setting and monitoring their own goals so they can take more responsibility for their learning.
- Capitalize on areas of good practice in the school by making them the norm across all departments.
- Clarify, agree and promote the vision so it becomes the driving force for change across 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

In the nine months the principal has been in post, she has proved herself a strong, dynamic and inspirational leader. Aided by her team of hardworking and dedicated assistant principals, she is tireless in her work to make the school as student-centered as possible, whilst maintaining the high results and rate of student progress the school currently enjoys. The collection, analysis and use of data are routine and well established in the school. The support of the data manager and clear systems facilitate teachers using data well to assess and improve students' skills. The data is disaggregated carefully into groups of interest so the school can take swift action if it identifies trends or patterns.

The school matches its very high expectations of all students with effective strategies for improving and challenging them, so all students can reach their full potential. The school expects its staff to be fully accountable for student performance and teachers feel personally responsible for the well-being and progress of all their students. Parents play a large part in the school and are expected to co-operate fully, which the vast majority do. The school provides a wide curriculum, which fulfills a wide range of aspirations and interests. Accreditation is both academic and vocational, with arts and sport well represented. The school provides depth in a range of advanced placement subjects so that suitable students are able to study at levels higher than advanced Regents. The school's attendance emphasis this year is highly effective, as strategies have raised attendance dramatically.

The school still has work to do, however. Students play insufficient part in goal setting, which leads to some passivity. Many school and personal goals are neither measurable nor time-limited, so makes identification of achievement difficult. There are some excellent areas of good practice in the school, but these are variable so the school does not capitalize on them. The principal knows where she wants the school to be and shares this with teachers, parents and the students, but there is insufficient clarity on how to achieve this vision.

The inquiry team works well and is currently tracking a group of 17 students who need targeted intervention to boost skills. The school has made good progress since the last Quality Review. Existing programs are now sustained and the number of advanced placement classes has been increased. Goals have started to show some incrementalization and the school's attendance strategies have improved attendance with spectacular results.

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 administration and faculty have a very good knowledge of the performance and progress of every individual student and each class and grade. As well as the new instruments of ARIS, Acuity and Scantron, on which all staff have now been trained, the school uses other diagnostic tools such as Wizard and the High School Scheduling and Transcript program (HSST). All teachers have a school laptop and can access student information as required, including cohort and individual progress data. A school data manager assists staff well and provides professional development on using the programs. All teachers use the data, whether or not they teach a core curriculum subject. This enables them to clearly understand individual's needs. One said, "I can even find reasons for them not working in physical education now."

Special education and English language learners have additional data. IEP-Pro, a program, cuts and pastes the individual education plan goals of special education students into Word documents so they are available to all teachers. Special education students are integrated into combined teaching team classes so they are taught mainly by general education teachers. Eighty-six percent of English language learners are Spanish speaking and there are several bi-lingual and native language arts classes in Spanish. These accommodations have helped to integrate both special education and English language learners quickly. Although the vast majority of students are Hispanic, the school tracks by ethnicity. Tracking by language level into native speakers (those born overseas), heritage speakers (those who speak a foreign language at home) and American speakers (those born here and whose family speak English) helps to program students effectively. The school also tracks gender. Discovering that Hispanic boys succeed better than girls in global history, the school realized that talking about politics in Latin America was culturally more of a male pastime than for females. As a result, the school is prioritising girls' discussion groups.

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.

All school staff, parents and students have extremely high expectations of each other and of themselves, which begin as soon as students start at the school. The school expects all students to graduate with high Regents scores and to take at least one advanced placement course. Parents speak of the strong expectations placed on them by the school. One said, "The school expects full cooperation from all parents in every area." The school has a very high parental participation rate; parent-teacher association meetings are very well attended and workshops and classes on Saturdays for parents often have waiting lists. Communications between parents and the school are excellent, with regular two-way exchange of information about students and their needs.

The school has robust systems for identifying individual and groups of students who need specific interventions. Frequent grade and departmental meetings track students and identify appropriate improvement strategies. One way of doing this is by programming students into special Regents review classes or by including them in tutor sessions. These take place during lunch, before and after school and on Saturdays, when students work 1:1 or in small groups with teachers or paid peer tutors. Higher achieving students also have special focus. For example, a group of grade 12 students who have already taken the advanced placement examination, is able to learn more advanced math in a college-level “math club”. However, students do not collaborate sufficiently in setting or monitoring their own goals. Goals tend to be vague and long-term. “To go to a good college,” “to study hard” and, “to do well,” are examples of goals the students relate. Students aim for their final outcome, but do not usually know exactly how to improve to reach it, and in many classes, they are quite passive as they take too little responsibility for self-improvement. Not all lessons and departments consistently exhibit the good practice evident in many areas of the school.

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 curriculum at the school is both broad and deep. The entrepreneurship/virtual enterprise program prepares students well for the world of work. Through the experience of working through a simulated office environment, they learn such skills as human resources and budgeting. As well as college credits, this course offers vocational accreditation. There is a full arts program, including vocational commercial art, fine art, graphics, dance and drama during and after the school day. The school adds breadth with a wide range of sporting and musical activities. A varied range of advanced placement classes in subjects as diverse as psychology, economics and art history adds depth. By acquiring extra funding for the school through a series of grants, the principal has been able to be innovative in scheduling and programming. Where possible, students are placed in flexible classes according to their skills levels, which has helped to differentiate teaching and learning. The school introduces extra classes to remediate or to fulfill a need at a higher level. Some courses run for two, some for three, and some for four semesters, depending on student need. For those who need longer sessions, several classes work in double periods.

Procedures for attendance are highly effective. A new attendance team, comprising an attendance officer, a guidance counselor, the parent co-ordinator and a secretary make daily phone calls and send out letters and the deans monitor the operation closely. Attendance is reinforced constantly to students, and there are regular attendance awards ceremonies. As a result, attendance has risen dramatically across the school this year, in some grades by over 12%.

There are high levels of mutual trust and respect between staff and students. Teachers feel very accountable for the progress and performance of their students, with one saying, “We always go beyond our immediate instruction.” This commitment is reflected in the enthusiasm students have for their learning and the school.

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

Administrators make frequent visits to classrooms to observe and offer constructive and helpful feedback to teachers. This has helped the staff to differentiate strategies for improving their instruction. The principal is committed to building capacity in the school so staff attend courses such as management and inter-disciplinary issues as well as curriculum, at a variety of levels. The administration encourages intervisitation of classes, especially by new teachers, so this is now routine. Teachers say this is helping to spread good practice. The deans visit classes every day to monitor attendance and behavior. The school runs extremely smoothly. Policies and procedures are clear and roles and responsibilities are well defined, with organizational charts and clear job descriptions. Staff are fair and consistent in their classroom and behavior management and this has raised levels of student respect and trust. As a result, numbers of principal and superintendent suspensions have dropped this year.

The school has very effective partnerships with a number of outside bodies that extend students' opportunities. For example, Healthcorps has provided resources and extra-curricular activities relating to health and nutrition and the school works with Lehman College on a writing project. The Young Playwrights Latino Challenge allows resident artists to work with students in the classroom and provides outside workshops. The school also enjoys beneficial relationships with such organizations as Baruch College, Teatro Stage Fest, Time Warner and the Center for Arts Education.

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 displays its goals for improving student outcomes on every wall of the school. Some are measurable and some are time-limited, but this is not consistent. They are in the form of outcomes, so do not contain increments or performance indicators to facilitate the school's understanding of how to achieve these outcomes. This makes them into aspirations rather than concrete plans.

Because the staff are practiced at using diagnostic instruments and measurements, they can see quickly if plans for students and themselves are effective. This has led to very timely revision of strategies when necessary. Grade teams revise students' individual programs and departmental teams review and change pacing calendars frequently. The school is continuously putting on revision courses of varying lengths and changing them according to the speed of students' improvement.

The principal is very clear in her vision for the school, and staff, parents and students understand the direction she wishes to take. However, the details of how this will take place are less well defined which has resulted in some passivity in some areas of the school community. The principal acknowledges this holds back the progress of the school.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: High School for Arts and Business	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