

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2008-2009**

**Information Technology High School**

**High School 502**

**21-16 44th Road**

**Queens**

**NY 11101**

**Principal: Nancy Casella**

**Dates of review: February 12 - 13, 2009**

**Lead Reviewer: Barbara Kwiecinski**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Information Technology High School is a high school with 973 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 18.5% Black, 51% Hispanic, 12% White, 16% Asian and 2.5% other students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 60% of the students enrolled and girls account for 40%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 84%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

The principal was new in post four days prior to the last Quality Review. The school shares the building with a District 75 school.

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This school is proficient.**

The principal works collaboratively to set the direction of the school. Many new, consistent practices and processes are in place. These are rapidly moving the school forward. Her drive and determination ensure the school's mission and vision are put into practice. Students articulate this and there is clear evidence that their views are important. The Comprehensive Educational Plan uses all appropriate data to inform the goal-setting process. Students are key members of the school leadership team who collectively design plans with measurable outcomes and improvement targets. At present, not all plans emanating from the Comprehensive Educational Plan include interim quantifiable goals and evaluation outcomes, but the principal is addressing this as part of her action plan.

The inquiry team works strategically and enthusiastically. The members' excellent computer skills result in the electronic storage of all data and its interrogation in many different ways. Communication from the team to faculty is good. Their philosophy is, "There is no such thing as a student who cannot learn". They work tirelessly to meet the needs of underachieving students.

An in-house database system provides a useful additional data source to add to the extensive range of other assessment databases used within the school. Teachers receive a full set of data related to each student at the beginning of each semester. There are some examples of its very effective use to inform practice and improve learning outcomes. This is particularly the case in the support for English language learners and special education students, where teachers use data very effectively to inform planning. Consequently, these students make very good progress. There are examples of other good instruction practice, but in some classes, teachers rely too heavily on textbooks and whole-class teaching. The principal has an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching across the school. She is supportive of her assistant principals, who until her appointment did not take on an instructional leader role. Processes are now in place where they have subject responsibilities in order to observe colleagues and share learning outcomes. Administration is at different stages on this learning journey, but is committed to staff and students. Subject goals are in place in many areas, but students are not sufficiently specific about their personal goals or able to articulate the improvement strategies to reach the next level in their learning.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal works tirelessly to lead a student-centered environment, and she supports all members of faculty to be consistent in practice.
- A wide variety of data sources, effectively used by teachers, students, parents and administration, inform the Comprehensive Educational Plan, which now drives the school forward.
- School leaders reflect on subject, grade and student outcomes and use the budget to make positive staffing changes.
- There is a climate of great respect between staff and students, resulting in students wanting to succeed.
- The school makes use of many data sources to gain an accurate understanding of the performance and progress of all students.
- The work of the inquiry team is exemplary and based on a clear strategic plan to support identified students.

### What the school needs to improve

- Refine the goal-setting process to give students a better understanding of their personal next steps.
- Continue to address consistency, particularly in the assessment of students' work and subsequent differentiated lesson planning and teaching.
- Extend the strategic planning process in order that all planning has measurable interim goals and checkpoints in order to evaluate success.
- Continue to support the assistant principals to enable them to operate a consistent process of teacher observation and support.

## Part 3: Main Findings

### How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

**Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The principal believes in distributive leadership. As a result, administration, the inquiry team and the extended cabinet use many data sources to give them an accurate understanding of the performance and progress of all students. Department coordinators are in place and the positive relationship they have with the assistant principals provides a greater focus in departmental test analysis. The school tracks the progress of English language learners and special education students effectively. It revisits individual education plans on an on-going basis and adapts them according to students' need. The school tracks the progress of other subgroups of students in social studies and science, in addition to all core subjects. Use is made of Scantron to track progress in reading, language arts and math in addition to acuity. As a result, the school has an accurate picture of students' current levels and the sub-skills they need in order to progress to the next level. The ability of teachers to use the data effectively is developing quickly. The inquiry team is very pro-active and teachers speak very positively about the support they receive from the team in order to understand and use the many different data sources. There are areas of very good practice, where use is made of students' preferred learning styles to accelerate progress.

Attendance is improving because of the school's rigorous systems and is now at 90%. A computerized phone dialer informs parents within a two-hour period of absence. Ninth-grade girls were a particular problem. The advocacy group gives the girls extra support and this is having a positive impact. The school makes very effective use of data to inform organizational decisions. Where results indicate that teaching is unsatisfactory, it implements support measures and teaching groups are changed.

The school welcomes parents, but feels that too few are involved in their children's education. In order to address this issue positively, parent workshops on understanding reports are in place. To complement these workshops the school website allows parents to track the progress of students. In addition, students and their parents access the many individual teacher sites regularly.

**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.**

Teachers, students and parents understand that the purpose of the Comprehensive Educational Plan is to set the strategic direction of the school. Prior to the principal's appointment this was not the case. A clearly articulated procedure, where students are

part of the goal-setting process, results in the compilation of a shared working document. The school reinforces its goals, based on data, at the beginning of the school year. As an outcome, it completes a goal-setting sheet, with a common format, in math, English language arts, social studies and science. The documents clearly quantify the expected gains for the four subject areas. The school sends home contracts related to department goals at the beginning of each semester. This process clearly outlines departmental expectations to parents. In addition, many parents access the school's very good web site. Teachers post excellent student work on their sites. They grade this against defined rubrics, which provide another way of communicating high expectations to families.

The school sends report cards home six times a year and in addition, many teachers e-mail parents and share individual student needs. As a result, parents and students feel well supported. Communication was a key priority identified in the learning and environment survey. Parent conferences are now positive and provide opportunities to identify where students need help and how parents can be supportive. The school recognizes the fact that some parents find it difficult to attend school meetings. In order to keep all families informed a computerized phone dialer, dials students' homes and indicates the ways the school can support student learning.

Teachers regularly talk to students about their progress. At present, the school has not formalized this process. Consequently, students are aware of whole-class subject goals, but are less knowledgeable about their individualized goals. This leads to some students being unable to articulate next steps and self reflect on their learning journey.

The school prepares students well for college and their parents are involved in this process from ninth grade. It keeps parents well informed about the many programs where students receive support. In addition, the parent-teacher association gives workshops on college applications and funding issues. This results in increased numbers of students gaining college placements.

**Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students' learning goals.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The end-of-year data indicated a difference in performance across different subjects. Consequently, the administration made positive staff changes to address the areas of underperformance. It is tracking results carefully and there is already an indication of improved results.

In a good English language arts lesson, English language learners enjoyed working in ability groups. Through effective teacher questioning and the use of exemplar work they make good progress. The calm atmosphere observed here is consistent with that found throughout the school. Although there is inconsistency in the quality of teaching and its impact on learning, relationships between teachers and students are always good as is students' personal progress. Students want to succeed and are always respectful to their teachers and fellow students.

There are examples of effective use of data to inform instruction in most social studies lessons and English language arts. In both these curriculum areas, progress is good.

Student progress in math also shows a positive trend. Not all teachers differentiate lessons to meet the needs of individual students and when this is the case, students make insufficient progress. They respond positively when their work is valued. The learning environment in most social studies lessons is good and addresses the needs of visual and auditory learners. Teachers clearly assess work against defined rubrics and Regent test results reflect the high expectations.

The school is very collaborative and there is a family environment where teachers support each other. Teachers plan their work collectively and now share effective methodology. This is because of the principal's clearly defined communication channels.

**Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The inquiry team shares in the instructional leadership of the school by evaluating student performance and progress. The team gives well received support to all teachers. Teachers welcome this aspect of their professional development and their understanding and use of data is extending. The inquiry team also shares the strategies that are having a positive impact on low-achieving students. They also support and encourage teachers to reflect on their practice because they base their work on an action-research model.

Since the principal's appointment, the emphasis on classroom observation, the sharing of practice, and the introduction of learning walks, results in greater dialogue regarding teaching quality. The climate is changing rapidly and through the principal's leadership, the administrative team is beginning to gain the skills and confidence to take on an instructional leadership role.

The professional development plan relates to the goals in the Comprehensive Educational Plan and, as an outcome of this, teachers have individual goals and plans. In order to meet these, the school uses additional external sources to give further support. These include attendance at educational conferences and workshops that align to school goals. The expectation is for teachers to share the outcomes at department, faculty or professional development days. As a result, there is an improvement in student performance and teacher confidence.

Teachers are encouraged to visit each other's classrooms and share practice, and the newly revised meeting structure encourages greater collaboration. The school supports new teachers very well and they feel comfortable asking for help from faculty as well as their mentor. Collaborative team-teaching is developing. It benefits from the good communications regarding the needs of special education students.

The school effectively shares student data, but at present does not scrutinize student work across subject areas. This means faculty is unaware of the variety of expectation. The principal works very hard to develop the administrative team. Their expertise in accurately judging the quality of a lesson and setting teachers achievable time-framed goals is improving. Teachers, keen to succeed, welcome their feedback. Learning walks have a monthly theme, enabling faculty to understand what administration are looking for.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and 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 analyzes data on an on-going basis. Administration work collectively and enter valuable debate with their inquiry team colleagues. The outcomes of discussions are then cascaded to departments and support staff. This results in the accurate identification of student failure or lack of progress and the school puts very good support structures in place. As a result, English language learners and special education students make excellent progress. The school is beginning to track the progress of other sub-groups but at present, has not documented this. It does quantify strategies for improving student outcomes and instructional practices within the Comprehensive Educational Plan. Faculty is beginning to refine plans at subject level to include interim goals and time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments.

The school-wide student survey, to identify preferred student-learning styles, informs teacher planning. Science staff group students according to the survey outcomes and evaluate their progress. Positive trends indicate the success of this methodology. Students enjoy lessons where there are a variety of tasks and the opportunity to carry out practical investigations. Communication is greatly improved and school leaders use many data forms to evaluate the effectiveness of all aspects of the school's work. Consequently, good professional development is in place at both whole school level and individual level. The inquiry team gives additional support in data use. The co-planning meetings within subject areas effectively use this information to adapt their curriculum plans.

Although not consistent practice, there are examples of very effective teacher assessment of students' work. This is particularly the case where teachers use their own website or the school's website to define expectation clearly. In the best examples, students and teachers communicate electronically, clearly tracking conversation where teachers give on-going support. Parents welcome this and say that within a busy work-life balance they feel an integral part of their children's education.

After a period of great uncertainty, the school is now in a position to move forward rapidly. The principal has a clear vision, which she articulates clearly for all members of faculty. Her expectations are high and she shares these with all members of the school community. She is very self evaluative and has an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses within the school. Structures are now developing where staff and students are encouraged to reflect on their practice, and make subsequent adaptations to their practice as a result.

# School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

<b>School name: Information Technology High School</b>	△	▷	✓	+
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.</b>				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>	△	▷	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?			<b>X</b>	
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?			<b>X</b>	
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?			<b>X</b>	
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?			<b>X</b>	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>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.</b>				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>	△	▷	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?			<b>X</b>	
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?			<b>X</b>	
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?			<b>X</b>	
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?		<b>X</b>		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			<b>X</b>	

## DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DY0, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

**Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.**

To what extent do ...	Δ	➤	✓	+
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?			X	
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?		X		
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?			X	
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X	

**Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.**

To what extent do school leaders...	Δ	➤	✓	+
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?			X	
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?			X	
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?			X	
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?			X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			X	

**Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and 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 and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?		X		
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?			X	
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?			X	
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?			X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X	

Quality Review Scoring Key							
Δ	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed