



**Department of
Education**

Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

**Quality Review Report
Office of Accountability
2008-2009**

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

**Felisa Rincon de Gautier Institute for Law and Public
Policy**

**High School 519
1440 Story Avenue
Bronx
NY 10473**

Principal: Grismaldy Laboy-Wilson

Dates of review: March 16 - 17, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Elena Papaliberios

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Felisa Rincon de Gautier Institute for Law and Public Policy is a high school with 404 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 24% Black, 73% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 11% English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys account for 40% of the students enrolled and girls account for 60%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 83.6%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 71% eligibility.

The school's theme is law and public policy and courses such as contract law, urban politics, civil law, moot court and mock trial, support its theme.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The principal and staff have developed a clear vision for the future of the school and have high expectations for students. They share this vision with the school community in an environment of mutual respect. The school carries out a thorough analysis of data and reviews it at the administrative level as well as at the teacher level. The data specialist does a good job in providing charts and reports of the data analyses for teachers and administrators to review. The inquiry team uses this data effectively to create strategies that support student learning. Inquiry work has successfully spread to the entire school and each department has selected a target population from the lowest third in the school. Teams are beginning to develop strategies to engage students in improving writing across all content areas.

The administrative team has made effective organizational decisions that have had direct impact on the improvement of student outcomes. After a review of the progress report, the administrative team hired a new math coach to support teachers and students in improving Regents results. The school has already seen a significant increase in passing rates. The new courses in law support the development of the theme of the school. However, the curriculum is under review as the current guides and maps do not provide teachers with enough support to ensure all lessons have rigor and widen the opportunities for differentiation.

The principal and assistant principals make good use of the observation process to support the development of teachers. Individual goals are set collaboratively and an individualized teacher support plan is set up. Observation reports include references made to the areas for improvement. Some aspects of professional development are less effective because there is not enough practical application of theory and teachers have insufficient time to develop and implement their approach.

This school has started to involve counselors in the goal setting process. All students have a form to record their overall goals and their individual goals for each subject. Although overall goals are set, teachers do not have a formal structure to set individual instructional goals with students. They do not use interim assessments to assess student progress in every subject.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school does a good job at collecting and analyzing data, which has helped to refocus resources and to address student needs.
- The staff have high expectations for their students and they share this with the school community in an environment of mutual respect.
- The principal and assistant principals effectively use the observation process to develop an individualized teacher support plan to improve teacher performance and increase student outcomes.
- The inquiry team has successfully spread the inquiry process to all departments where teachers select a target population in each content area and this has started to accelerate student progress.
- The administrative team has made effective organizational decisions based on data to improve student performance.
- The principal and staff have a clear, comprehensive, and well-articulated vision for the development of the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that all teachers set measurable, actionable, and differentiated instructional goals with students.
- Improve the current curriculum guides and maps in order to support teachers in increasing the rigor, and widening the opportunities for differentiation in all lessons.
- Strengthen the professional development program by including practical application of the taught theories, and allowing time for teachers to develop and implement their approach.
- Ensure that all teachers use interim checkpoints and individual student data to improve instruction and meet the needs of individual students.

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 school thoroughly analyzes many data sources including the progress report, the learning environment survey, HSST, Regents results, credit accumulation data, and ATS for cohort data. Data is also collected through teacher and student surveys. This has helped the school to focus its resources in areas of greatest need. The hiring of a math coach was directly the result of this analysis where the progress report revealed that students were performing very poorly in math. Special needs population data analysis revealed that the English language learners have passed their Regents exams except for the English language arts exam. This directed the schools efforts to provide academic interventions and create a class to prepare these students to pass the Regents.

Teachers reach out to parents regularly to keep them abreast of the students' progress. A parent reported that his child's teacher called him even to tell him that his son passed the Regents exam. He said, "I was very happy and impressed by this teacher who took the time to call me and tell me this about my child, it made my day." Attendance has been a concern in this school as last year it was at 83%. The school hired a new attendance teacher this year and the attendance team does constant phone outreach to parents. This has helped to raise the schools attendance to 87% for this year.

The school effectively uses a data tool provided by the support organization as well as the data charts and analyses that the data specialist prepares for the school. Some teachers use a program called Grade Keeper to record student progress and to share with students. This allows students to see where they need to improve and gives them the opportunity to discuss with teachers the next steps for improvement.

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.

Counselors have just started to meet with students to go over their overall school goals as well as their subject specific goals, and students carry the template that shows SMART goal setting. This good model is beginning to have an impact on students' involvement in setting their own learning goals. Although teachers set overall goals with students, they do not have a formal structure to set individual instructional goals. Consequently, most teachers do not set measurable, actionable, and differentiated instructional goals with students. Many teachers raised concerns of not having enough time. The special education teachers, however, indicated that they use the students'

individualized educational plan as a model and follow the goals indicated within those plans.

The school leadership team collaboratively developed the Comprehensive Educational Plan after a thorough review of data, including attendance data. The school goals directly align with the needs identified in the progress report and other data sources. As the school elicits more input from the staff, the principal is aiming at having teachers complete the entire writing of the plan next year.

Teachers and administrators review report cards each marking period and effectively set interventions, tutoring, and credit recovery programs to assist students to meet their learning targets. They also support students using the math coach who assists with tutoring, testing, and re-testing.

Parents and students indicate that the school staff have high expectations for the students. A parent illustrated this by sharing that his older son was an English language learner when he arrived at the school, and the teachers felt that he could accomplish what ever he wanted. In the eleventh grade, they placed him in an advanced placement English class where he did well. He felt that it was due to the teachers' high expectations and support that his son graduated and is now attending college. The positive behavior intervention and support team (PBIS) comprised of staff and students have set high expectations around behavior and achievement, which has led to rewards for students reaching these standards.

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 school has made effective organizational decisions based on data. A review of the math data revealed that the school is underperforming in comparison to its peer group in the progress report. A coaching position was budgeted in order to improve student outcomes. The school also set up tutoring and credit recovery for those students needing additional supports. These have been successful in helping to raise passing rates and improve Regents results. Funds allocated to provide a common planning period have been extremely helpful in the implementation of the co-teaching model. The co-teaching model has had direct impact on the improvement of instruction.

The school has focused on the development of differentiated instruction and has a good plan in place for professional development in this area. The training has not yet been fully effective as teachers are at different stages in their understanding and development. Teachers indicate that they feel more practical training would enhance their progress in this area and help them to improve this aspect of instruction further. In contrast, the professional development provided by the consultant and the math coach have been very effective in improving math scores and strengthening teacher practice. Some teachers are making increasingly effective use of technology to engage and motivate students. Small group activities and opportunities for collaborative learning also support learning. The new courses in law support the development of the theme of the school. Students speak well of the moot court and mock trial courses as many have taken the course. This is helping students understand what the law field entails and helps them in determining if that is a field that they would like to pursue in college. However, the school's curriculum is an area under development. The current curriculum

maps available lack sufficient rigor and opportunities for differentiation to support teachers in improving their instruction. Some curriculum development has taken place with the support of outside trainers but there are no structures in place for teachers to organize and create current curriculum plans.

The school is the recipient of a character education grant this year, which has supported the work to instill responsibility, empathy, and compassion in every student. In addition, they have implemented the behavior, intervention, and support program to support this work further. These have played a major role and have been an integral part of the creation of a culture that exhibits mutual trust and respect among all members of the school community.

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 principal and assistant principals make good use of the observation process to support the development of teachers. Individual goals are set collaboratively and an individualized teacher support plan is set up. Observation reports include references made to the areas needed to improve and teachers have started to work with the math coach and the consultants from the support organization. Collaboratively, the administrators and the teacher agree on three areas of improvement based on observations and student data. The plan includes recent passing rates and the professional opportunities in which the teacher will participate. They list three individual goals and next steps to improve teacher performance and increase student outcomes. This structure has been successful in helping teachers to self reflect and in looking for resources to support their growth, such as their work with the math coach.

The inquiry team has selected their target population based on the progress report data and on the social studies Regents data. The team meets weekly to review student work and analyze progress. The inquiry team has successfully spread the inquiry process to all departments of the school where teachers have selected a targeted population in each content area. All teams meet on a regular basis and then share the work with all the teams once a month at a faculty meeting. Their work has started to have a positive impact on student progress. The professional development plan is in place, but the program is not always as effective as it might be. Sometimes there is an overemphasis on theory and the program does not always allow teachers enough time to develop and implement their approach.

The school has a successful partnership with an organization that supports its law program. The Justice Resource Center provides pedagogical support for the teacher as well as support for the development of the law program. This year, the school added an additional class, contract law, which has helped to build its law program. The school also has a partnership with Lehman College where students take college courses such as political science and sociology to support their academic and social development.

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 entire school community shares a clear vision for the successful development of the school. During the summer, the entire faculty came together to refine the school's vision. The result was a written and well-articulated vision on core beliefs, curriculum and assessment, academic expectations, teaching approaches and strategies, and school culture. This vision is also widely shared with students at their town hall meetings.

The school keeps a close look at its senior class by reviewing report cards every marking period and providing senior advisories. This has helped to move the graduation rate to 57%. Another way the school has monitored success is in their reading program, where students are required to read a certain number of books. If a student achieves the goal, teachers revise their target.

The school does make effective use of pre-assessments and diagnostics. However, at the classroom level, teachers are unable to demonstrate the use of interim assessments to monitor student progress, and create individual student instructional goals. This is restricting their ability to meet students' individual needs.

The administrators as well as the inquiry team regularly review data in the progress report, quality reviews, and learning environment and other data sources to evaluate the effectiveness of any of the organizational initiatives that they have implemented. They effectively used this process in the revision of the credit recovery program this year.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

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|--|---|----------|----------|----------|
| School name: Felisa Rincon de Gautier Institute for Law and Public Policy | Δ | ➤ | ✓ | + |
| Overall QR Score | | | X | |
| 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. | | | | |
| <i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i> | | | | |
| | Δ | ➤ | ✓ | + |
| 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? | | | | X |
| 1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students? | | | X | |
| 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? | | | X | |
| 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? | | | 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 student’s learning. | | | | |
| <i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i> | | | | |
| | Δ | ➤ | ✓ | + |
| 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? | | X | | |
| 2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)? | | | X | |
| 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? | | | X | |
| 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? | | | X | |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 2 | | | X | |

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, DYQ, 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. | | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|---|--|---|-------------------|---|-----------------------|
| <i>To what extent do ...</i> | △ | ▷ | ✓ | + | | | |
| 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 | | | | |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 3 | | | 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. | | | | | | | |
| <i>To what extent do school leaders...</i> | △ | ▷ | ✓ | + | | | |
| 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 | | | | |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 4 | | | 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. | | | | | | | |
| <i>To what extent do...</i> | △ | ▷ | ✓ | + | | | |
| 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 | | | | |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 5 | | | X | | | | |
| Quality Review Scoring Key | | | | | | | |
| △ | Underdeveloped | ▷ | Underdeveloped with Proficient Features | ✓ | Proficient | + | Well Developed |