

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2009-2010**

**Information Technology High School**

**High School 502**

**21-16 44<sup>th</sup> Road**

**Queens**

**NY 11101**

**Principal: Dr. Nancy E. Casella**

**Dates of review: February 24 - 25, 2010**

**Lead Reviewer: Veronica Yurcik**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Information Technology is a high school with 978 students from grade 9 through 12. The school population comprises 16% Black, 56% Hispanic, 13% White, and 15% Asian students. The student body includes 11% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 68% of the students enrolled and girls account for 32%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 89.4%.

### Overall Evaluation

#### This school is proficient.

Information Technology High School students cooperatively and peacefully share their school site with a District 75 special education school, mirroring the respect and high expectations imbued by their teachers, counselors and school supervisors. As one parent stated, "I see my son growing with principles and morals," crediting his teachers for his growth. Parents praise the school and its support programs and describe the communication and education as "excellent". Students marvel about "teachers who care so" and "who see something in you that you cannot see yourself". The principal messages clearly to students for them to make the effort, saying "We will do everything possible to make you succeed."

The school has analyzed key documents carefully and made considered adjustments in student goal setting and differentiation of instruction based on recommendations from past Quality Reviews. Students set thoughtful personal academic goals after thorough reflection on a multi-page goal-setting tool and in one-on-one meetings with their teachers. Emphasis on differentiation in classroom instruction is evident in tailored work materials and student choice in work products. Teachers' perceptive recognition of individual needs helps students to identify specific strategies to support personal learning goals. The school, however, has not implemented a professional development plan this year to support continued learning and advancement of teacher skills in providing supports and extensions that lead to high engagement for all learners.

The principal aligns resources and personnel to establish coherent effort in reaching school goals and building teacher leadership. The creation of lead teachers and teacher teams enables focus on purposeful curriculum choices, sharper analysis of student performance, and concurring curriculum adjustments to improve student achievement. Teacher teams, however, lack support in learning inquiry protocols for viewing student work and in analyzing lesson design to inform changes in practice. There are emerging structures to support and evaluate teaming and distributive leadership, but they are not yet fully developed thereby affecting full coherence of instructional and assessment practices. Work products exhibit evidence of higher order thinking skills. However, application is not apparent consistently. The improvement in teacher questioning skills is an area of emphasis. The school is still developing tools to aggregate data to identify trends more easily to influence instructional adjustments. Nevertheless, the school has recognized the needs of several key subgroups astutely and refocused work to support these students in meeting academic targets and improving graduation rates. In summary, the strong belief system of the school staff members, their strong sense of personal accountability, and their commitment to their students create a learning environment whereby students feel enabled personally to achieve real life goals.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school is very effective in establishing common purpose, which creates strong positive attitudes toward learning and a safe environment, producing successful outcomes in student personal and academic growth.
  - Students describe with appreciation the consistent and comprehensive enforcement of discipline by the principal and her team as a “big change”, moving them from the hall into classrooms where they learn. As a result, the school is a peaceful learning environment characterized by respectful student behavior within classrooms and quiet orderly hall passings.
  - Staff members exemplify a unique positive culture and attitude by speaking only in affirmative terms about all of their students, accepting full responsibility for their learning. The school strategically analyzed its Learning Environment Survey and revised systems, increasing student voice and investment through use of student interest and learning style surveys. Students describe the school staff glowingly as being “one of a kind” in their sensitivity and understanding and in their ability to motivate them to succeed academically where they did not think it was possible.
- All school staff members communicate high expectations clearly in ongoing exchanges with students and their families that promote thoughtful self-reflection and a focus on academic achievement.
  - Students are enthusiastic about the school’s new goal-setting system as making a “big difference”. As one student stated, “You set a goal for yourself, you want to achieve it.” All teachers conduct one-on-one conferences with students, resulting in students’ thoughtful summaries of their strengths and weaknesses and in the development of academic goals and supportive strategies. For example, one student uses a challenging booklist to improve vocabulary and another student uses a teacher website to guide her in writing improved essays.
  - School staff reach out proactively and repeatedly to parents with daily calls regarding absence and lateness to reinforce attendance and punctuality expectations. The commendable practice of volunteers calling parents on weekends is raising attendance at support courses and at Regents exams, thereby increasing passing rates. The school purposefully offers structures such as ARIS parent link workshops, newsletters, staff email access, teacher websites, and access to the new online adoption of Snap Grades tracking system to give parents sufficient tools to understand their child’s performance and collaboratively improve their child’s learning. Parents express appreciation about the school’s caring attitude and describe its frequent communications as “excellent”.
- The principal aligns resources strategically to support coherent effort to advance learning.
  - The principal reassigned assistant principals judiciously from administrative duties to content area supervision, appointed lead teachers, created an instructional cabinet, and established a school-

based option for subject-area coordinators. These changes refocus priorities on learning, improve communication, raise accountability, and enhance monitoring of practice and data to improve instruction.

- A school-based option for weekly after-school professional development enables critical sharing among colleagues, increasing buy-in and resulting in improvement in the use of rubrics, the posting of student work, differentiation, targeted instruction, and focus on understanding standards. Teachers describe these sessions as “excellent.” As one teacher stated, “Why didn’t someone ask us to do this before?”
- The school designs learning and enrichment activities purposefully to complement a comprehensive range of social-emotional services that support youth development by both school- and community-based personnel.
  - Successful partnerships with community-based organizations result in on-site counseling services, student internships, and enrichment activities, which support student well-being, positive motivation, and learning. The school’s active receptivity to students’ likes and needs generates innovative learning experiences, such as the “Stoked” club, in which students make skateboards and snowboards; “Real Care” in which students learn responsibilities of parenthood by caring for a computer programmed life-sized doll with simulated real needs; a new band and music program; and ongoing maintenance of gym, weight room and aerobics programs, and several programmed technology classes, some of which lead to potential networking and systems certifications.
  - Close collaboration between guidance personnel and teachers at frequent department meetings, walkthroughs and professional development sessions strengthen the school’s emphasis on serving the whole child to promote healthy and intellectually curious students.
- School staff work together conscientiously and cooperatively to track student progress, making adjustments to meet students’ learning needs.
  - The school has retooled data analysis to analyze cohort data and credit accumulation assiduously. As a result, guidance counselors and supervisors redirect efforts to categorize needy student subgroups, monitor credit recovery, and provide informative feedback to students and families, leading to improvement in student class and exam performance.
  - Teachers use rubrics consistently, are beginning to administer common mock Regents exams, and target subgroups based on assessments.
- The school cultivates common shared beliefs ably and provides differentiated supports, enabling students to produce meaningful work products.
  - Hands-on learning activities requiring students to diagram, illustrate, or create various products are integrated well into lessons across classrooms, promoting students’ successful participation and active engagement.
  - Teachers use ARIS summative data intentionally to determine reading levels and to provide differentiated texts to ensure student engagement.

## What the school needs to improve

- Provide more focused professional development on inquiry process and key school initiatives to strengthen in-depth analysis of student work and investigation of root causes preventing student achievement.
  - Teacher teams' item analysis of Regents performance leads to calculated course modifications and extra review classes focusing on specific areas of academic need, resulting in improved student performance. However, rigorous analysis of student work, teacher practice, and interim assessments is hampered by the lack of focused study protocols and professional development on inquiry process.
  - Teacher professional learning is supported through individual professional plans, ongoing teamwork, and scheduled walkthroughs. However, there is no specific plan in place to expand last year's differentiated instruction initiative to ensure advancement of teacher expertise.
- Expand curriculum development to emphasize higher-order thinking skills more consistently across all subject areas to increase the academic rigor of student performance.
  - Key personnel and teams make purposeful decisions in designing curriculum scope and sequence based on analysis of Regents skills and performance standards. However, identification of common needs across content areas and alignment across grades are not yet established impeding school-wide instructional coherence.
  - While there is some evidence of infusion of higher-order thinking skills in assignments that require students to think critically, evaluate, and make connections, this practice is not consistent in all classrooms.
- Refine assessment tools so that information on key subgroups is more easily accessible to inform decisions affecting instructional goals for these students.
  - School leaders and teachers analyze ARIS data carefully. However, they do not have tools to aggregate data effectively to gain sufficient information on key trends and subgroup performance for making curricular decisions and specifically tailoring classroom interventions.
- Assess the effectiveness of teams and the structures employed to evaluate progress toward goals regularly to strengthen immediate strategic interventions and long-term planning.
  - The supervisory cabinet meets regularly to discuss progress of the school's teacher teams and to analyze student performance data formally and provides resources to teachers based on observed needs. The principal carefully analyzes performance results to program teachers, and to identify teacher leaders and needed supports. However, there are no designated systems for evaluating the effectiveness of teams to improve the formation of interim goals, effective evaluation of assessments, or student work products and subsequent intervention in response to identified needs.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

<b>School name: Information Technology</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?			<b>X</b>	
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?			<b>X</b>	
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?				<b>X</b>
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			<b>X</b>	
2.2 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the team and classroom level?			<b>X</b>	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance trends?			<b>X</b>	
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?				<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			<b>X</b>	

<b>Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	▶	✓	+			
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X				
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?			X				
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			X				
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?				X			
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X				
<b>Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	▶	✓	+			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?			X				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?		X					
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?			X				
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?				X			
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			X				
<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	▶	✓	+			
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X				
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X				
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?			X				
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?			X				
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
△	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	▶	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>	✓	<b>Proficient</b>	+	<b>Well Developed</b>