



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Information Technology High School

30Q502

**21-16 44th Road
Queens
NY 11101**

Principal: Joseph Reed

**Date of review: October 28, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Juan Mendez**

The School Context

Information Technology High School is a high school with 971 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 15% Black, 56% Hispanic, 10% White, and 19% Asian students. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 18% special education students. Boys account for 25% of the students enrolled and girls account for 75%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 90.6%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards	Additional Findings	Proficient
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	Focus	Developing
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels	Additional Findings	Developing
School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	Additional Findings	Proficient
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	Celebration	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Instructional leads drive teacher teams, thus a majority of teachers are engaged in structured based inquiry collaboration that is aligned with the school's instructional goals delineated in the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP).

Impact

Teacher teams implement systems to monitor and further analyze student assessment data which results in improved teacher practice.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams are organized by subject area, and meet each Monday during the 90 minute professional development block; this dedicated meeting time is facilitated by instructional leads, all of whom focus on such topics identified in the school's Comprehensive Education Plan such as Common Core implementation and key components of the Danielson Framework.
- Teams engage in data analysis and lesson study on an ongoing basis and documentation reveals strategic revision of lessons and curriculum to more effectively target subgroup populations.
- The school's data specialist disaggregates data on Common Core aligned strategies to address learning gaps revealed by the school's data specialist. These gaps include skills relevant to inference, text-based answers and mathematical fluency. Teams build capacity by addressing these instructional shifts through the analysis of student work.
- Teacher teams have built leadership capacity with the integral use of instructional leads. These instructional leads are designated by school leadership and receive training by the school's network. These trainings include the sharing of lesson planning approaches as well as the participation in peer observations to highlight best practices school-wide.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Teachers experiment with research-based strategies but have not reached professional consensus about what constitutes “best practices” for learning and strategies to stimulate student to student discourse and engage learners in high levels of thinking and participation was inconsistent.

Impact

Although school leaders prioritize key components of the Danielson Framework to inform teacher practice, teaching strategies do not consistently meet the needs of all learners leading to uneven levels to student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- Principal notes that “The underlying problems were that these strategies were not coherent, shared by the entire school community, and did not reflect a common set of beliefs,” as evidenced by inconsistent use of research-based strategies among teachers.
- Teachers generated a list of instructional strategies aligned with Danielson components 3b, 3c, and 3d in September 2014. For example, conversations with teachers reveal ongoing use of newly forged mnemonic devices linked to shared practices: “Triple A—Add, Ask, and Argue.” While these strategies demonstrate practices being aligned to curricula, practices are not consistent across content areas.
- Danielson-aligned strategies to garner student engagement, encompassed by “turn and talk” and “phone a friend” were inconsistently used across classrooms, and teachers were observed frequently interrupting student attempts to converse around content-based material. In addition, although debates and student-created essential questions were mentioned as new approaches being used, these techniques were not observed across classrooms.
- Although teachers encourage students to utilize turn and talk, substantial wait time for students to be intellectually engaged is not provided. Higher order thinking skills for students with disabilities and English language learners are not evident across classrooms. For example, most classes focused on recall questions that were not followed up with clarifying questions, thus limiting the degree of accountable talk during classroom discourse.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school community aligns curricula to Common Core learning standards and targets increased efforts around instructional shifts and higher order thinking skills that call upon student use of evidence when writing from sources.

Impact

Students make meaningful connections that lead to new understandings and teachers are able to establish coherence that enables them to make more purposeful instructional decisions.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers design both curriculum maps and scope and sequence documentation to ensure a high degree of coherence across classes. This curricular coherence is seen in maps that spiral argumentative skills that engender frequent opportunities for students to establishing claims and counterclaims in written work.
- School leaders make purposeful instructional decisions aligned to the school initiative titled *Prove It*, that prioritizes the first standard across reading, writing, and speaking to enrich curricula through argumentative discourse and writing.
- Teachers use data derived from student work as well as from recent itemized analyses of Regents exams to plan academic tasks tied to Tier II and Tier III vocabulary to accentuate academic vocabulary in the form of domain specific words.
- The majority of students interviewed stated that they were engaged in a variety of academic tasks where they had to use textual evidence to defend opinions or ideas.

Findings

While the school uses a combination of common assessments to determine feedback strategies that will positively affect student knowledge and achievement, student self-assessment is an emerging practice.

Impact

School leaders assess student work to pinpoint student strengths and areas that need improvement, yet student self-assessment through the use of rubrics is inconsistent and therefore leading to missed opportunities to make effective adjustments to meet the needs of all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Information gathered from State assessments has led to updated policies showcased in Jupiter Grades. These policies serve as a means to elevate student mastery in areas where students are underperforming, especially on social studies Regents exams.
- More than half of the schools in the peer group outperform this school across all subject area assessments, thus requiring the need for a partner school to share practices.
- Across classrooms teachers incorporated ongoing checks for understanding to monitor student learning. For example, teachers used exit slips aligned to lesson objectives, thumbs up/thumbs down, and think/write/pair/share strategies.
- Across classrooms, students were infrequently seen using rubrics to gauge the effectiveness of their arguments. Students mentioned regular meetings that occur with teachers to assess progress around student goals with inconsistent feedback.
- Homework assignments inconsistently sought to check for understanding, and several classrooms posted homework from the previous day: "Review lesson and write summary."

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders establish a positive culture that inculcates high expectations to students, staff, and parents through multiple means of communication.

Impact

A collaborative learning environment is strengthened through increased parental attention to ongoing student progress which has yielded a 4% gain in the percentage of students earning ten or more credits over the past year.

Supporting Evidence

- High expectations are communicated regularly to teachers through the staff handbook, weekly newsletter, observation feedback, faculty conferences and PD sessions.
- A common set of school rules, detailed in the student handbook as well as student learning goals reinforce accountability for elevated expectations.
- Strong lines of communications steer the role of parents in orientations, PTA meetings, SLT meetings, college readiness workshops and the parent handbook. Parents agree that “The environment is positive, people are friendly, and the security is good.”
- School-level action plans, email, and memoranda memorialize aspects of professionalism and expectations, which are further articulated through trainings around the online grading system and foremost through ongoing feedback to students connected to a path to college and career readiness.