Department of Education
Dennis M. Walcott, Chancellor

Independence High School (02M544)
Grades: High School
850 10TH AVENUE, MANHATTAN, NY 10019
November 2013

Consultation with the School Community on the Performance of Independence High School (02M544)

Introduction

We want every community to have high quality school options for families. To accomplish this goal, we are committed to continual improvement of our schools—from student achievement to school environment. We rely on each of our schools to provide an excellent education to our students and we hold all of them to a high standard. And now with higher state standards, it is even more important that we make sure all schools are meeting the needs of their students and preparing them for success in college and careers.

As part of this effort, every fall the Department of Education (DOE) reviews the performance of all schools Citywide. The data for Independence HS show that it has struggled to consistently demonstrate student achievement outcomes at a high level. Given these findings, it is important to hold conversations with the community to help determine the root causes of the poor performance and together identify the right next steps for the school.

We understand that students, families, and staff members of Independence HS believe in the school's potential, and we know that this conversation may be a difficult one. At the same time, we can—and must—do better for our students. We want you to share your insight about Independence HS's strengths, areas for growth, and the type of support that would help the school make changes that would be sustainable for years to come and best serve current and future students of your community.

Performance Summary

	4-Year Graduation Rates		6-Year Graduation Rates		Progress Report Grade			Change in Attendance
	2011-12	2012-13	2011-12	2012-13	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2012-13
School's Performance	N/A	N/A	52%	41%	C	C	C	-7%
Citywide Percentile Rank	N/A	N/A	45%	30%	8%	16%	20%	26%

In addition to the data above:

- On its most recent Quality Review in 2012-13, the school received a rating of Developing, indicating deficiencies in the way the school is organized to support student learning.
- New York State Education Department (NYSED) identified the school as in Good Standing.

Many important changes have occurred in our schools last year, so it is important to acknowledge:

- The Progress Report measures the progress and performance of students in a school, as well as the school environment, compared to other schools serving similar student populations.
- November attendance has been removed from all schools due to Hurricane Sandy.

Our Collective Effort towards Improving Performance

Schools cannot improve without the contributions of the entire school community, which includes the students, families, school staff, community partners, and the DOE.

Students make critical contributions to the improvement of Independence HS and their learning outcomes. These practices include:

- Attending school regularly and punctually;
- Participating fully in opportunities provided by the principal and teachers; and
- Devoting full attention to learning and being prepared for class.

Family involvement contributes to higher student academic performance. This might look like:

- Ensuring that children attend school regularly and arrive on time;
- Being aware of children's work, progress, and problems by maintaining verbal and/or written contact with the school about their progress, talking to children about school, reviewing their work and progress reports, and meeting with school staff; and

- Taking part in school and community programs that empower parents to participate in educational decision-making.

Principals, teachers, and all staff should work together to implement the Citywide instructional expectations and use the school's annual goal-setting process as an opportunity to prioritize improving classroom practice. This includes:

- Ensuring curricula are aligned to standards in all content areas;
- Ensuring school time is used strategically;
- Planning for both short-term and sustained professional learning experiences, actively supporting teacher growth;
- Shifting classroom practice to move students toward meeting higher standards; and
- Reviewing and refining systems that identify evidence of growth and gaps.

The DOE provides supports to schools by:

- Working with the principal to develop strong leadership skills;
- Providing strategies for engaging students in rigorous assignments;
- Providing teachers with professional development to improve instruction aligned with the Common Core Standards;
- Recommending effective ways to organize the school;
- Providing operational support for budget, enrollment, facilities, transportation, and health, among other areas;
- Helping the school to develop a culture that supports safety, respect, and socio-emotional development; and
- Supporting the school in developing and maintaining strong ties to the community.

Next Steps and What You Can Expect

Over the coming weeks, we will talk to parents, students, staff, and members of the Independence HS community about the school's performance and the collective effort we all must take to improve the quality of our students' education. In these conversations, we will be particularly interested to learn about things that may not be obvious on paper, such as:

- What is happening on a day-to-day basis in the school that is leading to the outcomes reported above?
- What potential changes could improve those outcomes?
- Are there new initiatives at the school that have begun to have a positive effect?

Based on your feedback as well as a thorough review of school data, we will develop a tailored action plan for the school. Action plans will include a variety of supports and interventions and may begin as early as January 2014. Examples of possible supports and interventions include:

- Continuing operational support to ensure that school leaders and teachers can spend more time focusing on instruction;
- Providing additional professional development for teachers in order to better support the needs of all students;
- Developing new academic intervention service programs and extended learning time opportunities for students;
- Helping the school establish community partnerships to meet their students' socio-emotional needs;
- Identifying grants aimed at specific needs of the school;
- Examining potential opportunities for leadership and personnel development plans;
- Reducing enrollment over time to allow the school to focus on a smaller number of students.

Depending on the findings of these conversations, we may also make recommendations for more long-term structural changes, including whether it is necessary to develop new high quality options for the community.

Sharing Your Concerns and Questions

Feedback from the school community is critically important during this consultation. In the coming weeks, you will be invited to a meeting at Independence HS to share your feedback. If you have questions or comments at any time, please reach out to the school's Cluster Leader, High School Superintendent and/or Division of Family and Community Engagement:

Cluster Leader: Douglas Knecht**,** D02proposals@schools.nyc.gov**,** 718-923-5184
Superintendent: Marisol Bradbury**,** D02proposals@schools.nyc.gov**,** 212-356-7563
Division of Family and Community Engagement (FACE): FACE@schools.nyc.gov or 212-374-4118
Office of Portfolio Management (OPM) Web site: http://schools.nyc.gov/community/planning/changes/manhattan/feedback?id=568