

**Long Island City High School**

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**High School 450**

**14-30 Broadway**

**Queens**

**NY, 11106**

**Principal: William Bassell**

**Dates of review: May 24 – 26, 2006**

**Reviewer: Stephen Walker  
Cambridge Education**

# Long Island City High School

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## Part 1: The School Context

### Information about the school

Long Island City High School is located in the Long Island City section of Queens. This 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade school serves approximately 3,500 students from culturally diverse backgrounds. 51% of students are Hispanic, 18% Asian or Pacific Islander, 16% White and 15% Black. The community is home to many new immigrants from all over the world including Mexico, Central America, the Middle East and Bangladesh. Approximately 17% of students have special educational needs, and 23% are English language learners. The majority of students are from low-income families, and more than 60% qualify for free school lunch.

There are approximately 315 professionals and support staff, including the Principal, with 13 Assistant Principals, 205 teachers, 16 guidance counselors and 39 paraprofessionals. The school is housed in a well-kept modern building with a very good range of facilities including an extensive library, two gymnasias, swimming pool, auditorium and outdoor sports area. The view from the sixth floor cafeteria provides a panoramic view of Manhattan.

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## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school performs well when compared to city and similar schools.
- Curriculum programs are well-developed with an impressive range of core classes and electives to meet the needs of the large number of students.
- There is a positive ethos in the school resulting in high standards of behavior and a sense of student commitment to the school.
- There is an extensive and varied program of enrichment activities with a good level of student participation.
- The school is recognized for its success in arts education.
- The Principal provides reflective, accessible leadership and is a model for good relationships throughout the school.
- Teachers and support staff are energetically committed to the personal and academic development of the students.
- The majority of teaching is good and promotes effective learning.
- There are good systems of guidance and counseling which support the academic achievement and personal development of students.
- Intervention programs effectively support students who require additional help with their work.
- Students are well prepared for further education, and many students in the graduating classes enroll for college.
- A significant number of students graduate with Advanced Regents Diplomas.
- The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis and effective supervision ensures that it is safe and secure.

### What the school needs to improve

- Further raise the performance levels of students across the school with particular reference to the underachieving and disengaged groups.
- Ensure that all Assistant Principals adopt a robust and consistent approach when analyzing and monitoring the academic performance of classes.
- Develop rigorous policies to improve student attendance, reduce cutting from classes and the number of students who drop out of school.
- Develop the function of the cabinet group of Assistant Principals so that it works more collaboratively on the strategic development of the school.
- Develop a more consistent approach to assessment with particular reference to testing, grading and sharing attainment information with other staff.
- Make more effective use of assessment data in order to analyze differences in performance and progress by gender and ethnic groups.
- Continue to develop strategies to share good practice in teaching in order to further improve the quality of learning across the school.
- Encourage more parental involvement with the school so that students are better supported in their learning.

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## Part 3: Main Findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **The school is proficient with some well-developed features.**

This is an improving school with a strong emphasis on both academic achievement and the personal development of the students. The school has a particular reputation for provision in the arts.

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

**Quality Statement 1: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor and facilitate the student's progress over time.**

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

The school has been identified for 2005-2006 as a 'School in Need of Improvement' under Title 1 of the Federal *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB). This is because many of the English language learners (ELL) and Special Education students do not pass Regents examinations in English and Math. The school considers that, as many of the ELL students have little experience of English and some of the special education students have profound learning needs, they are disadvantaged in formal standardized state assessments. Results in 2004 were disappointing with low percentage graduating rates for Black, Hispanic, special education and ELL students. However, there has been a marked improvement in 2005 and the school is well placed when compared with city and similar schools. Over 64% of students graduated in 2005 and there was a considerable rise in performance among all groups except ELL, of whom 30% graduated in 2005. A significant number of students graduate with Advanced Regents Diplomas. Students are well prepared for further education, and many students in the graduating classes enroll for college.

The Principal analyzes a considerable amount of data in order to gain a whole picture of the school. For example, he consistently collects and analyzes the attendance, scholarship and cohort data to monitor the school's progress in meeting the New York State mandates. The school is aware of underachievement within subjects, teaching groups and sub groups. It is also aware that the 36% of the students in their fourth year who did not gain promotional requirements, included long term absentees, ELL students, special needs students and students who have dropped out of school. The school needs to raise further the performance levels of students across the school with particular reference to the underachieving and disengaged groups.

The school makes a broad analysis of performance by subjects and notes the trends. The Principal and Assistant Principals examine the results twice yearly, but it is not evident that they sufficiently challenge performance between teaching groups. The school needs to ensure that all Assistant Principals adopt a robust and consistent approach when analyzing and monitoring the academic performance of different teaching groups.

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The school monitors general trends in attainment by gender and ethnic groups, but no detailed analysis of the differences is undertaken by the Assistant Principals. More effective use of assessment data could be made in order to reduce differences in performance and progress by gender and ethnic groups. At present, there is not sufficient analysis of this issue with particular reference to subjects and performance at different grade levels within the school. The school needs to raise further the level of performance of each sub group of students including the English language learners.

The school has a considerable amount of data on attendance but it does not appear to have sufficiently analyzed this information according to individual students, grades or sub groups. Attendance is approximately 75%, which is below city averages. Drop-outs for each grade are high, particularly for 9<sup>th</sup> grade. There is also a high cutting rate from classes. There is a general concern about absences among 9<sup>th</sup> grade boys who are often potential drop-out candidates. However, the school has not used the data to look in detail at patterns concerning ethnic groups and gender absenteeism. There is now a need to further develop a more rigorous policy to improve student attendance, reduce cutting from classes and decrease the number of students who drop out of school.

**Quality Statement 2: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.**

**This area of the school's work is overall proficient with some well-developed features.**

The school has developed systems for teachers to record the grades of individual students. Assistant Principals are provided with term by term scholarship reports. These are used to provide comparative data and to examine trends for individuals and teaching groups. However, there is no evidence that the Principal and Assistant Principals are setting specific goals for the pass rate for each class or the Regents attainment for subject areas. Report cards are distributed to parents six times a year and give a clear indication of percentage grades achieved by the students. Comments on the reports are included for some subjects. There are regular parent consultations when subject teachers discuss the individual progress of students. However, attendance at these meetings is low and the school needs to find ways to encourage greater parental involvement so that students are better supported in their learning

Intervention programs effectively support students who require additional help with their work. Students are flagged by their guidance counselor as needing additional support, after the first marking period of each semester. Teachers provide additional tutoring on a one-to-one basis and in small groups. Academic Intervention Services arrange double periods in English and Math for level 1 and 2 students. There are regular Saturday morning classes for students who require additional support. An effective Saturday program provides for students with interrupted formal education. There are good systems for guidance and counseling which supports both the academic achievement and personal development of students. Each student is allocated a counselor and there is effective support on an individual basis through Pupil Personnel Services and Supplementary Education Services. The Life Center provides all-day care to 18 infants and toddlers whose

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parents attend classes at the school.

Assessment data is used by the Assistant Principals to gain an overview of students within their subject areas. The information is also used for programming and placing individual students. The performance of students is recorded on a regular basis but there is limited evidence that the detailed progress of all students is tracked by subject teachers during the year or on a year-by-year basis. In many departments records of student progress are not passed onto to the next teacher. In some departments there are different tests for similar classes with very little cross moderation of results. The school should develop a more consistent approach to assessment with particular reference to testing, grading and sharing attainment information with other staff.

Case studies of ELL and special education students show outstanding progress with well documented progress records. Students with complex learning difficulties have been successfully integrated into main classes. Support from the teachers and paraprofessional staff have enabled them to achieve high marks in Regents examinations and gain places at universities. Recently arrived students with very little English made rapid progress through the English as a second language (ESL) program and are now taking the Advanced Regents Diploma in a number of subjects.

Many students make good progress during their time at the school as measured by certification and entry to college, particularly as 70% of the students perform below standard on entry tests. A transcript is kept for each student which shows the actual marks gained for each course on a termly basis throughout their time at school. Some departments gather additional data by establishing baseline for incoming 9<sup>th</sup> grade students by administering a formative assessment at the beginning of the school year. However, this is not consistent across the departments and the school needs to develop an agreed system so that it is possible to measure actual progress rather than just the performance levels for individual students.

**Quality Statement 3: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.**

**This area of the school's work is well-developed.**

Curriculum programs are well-developed with an impressive range of core classes and electives to meet the needs of the large number of students. The school offers a large number of Advanced Placement courses plus a College Now program where students can earn credits towards their college education. Students are encouraged to study mathematics, science and foreign language for four years as well as the study of art, culinary arts and technology. Eight foreign languages are offered in the school. There are a large number of electives and advanced courses in art, music, dance, drama and the culinary arts. The Principal uses the budget effectively to provide the students with classes that will help them move towards graduation, with extra support classes, tutoring and enrichment at all levels of ability and age.

Due to overcrowding in the school, a staggered timetable with six teacher shifts has been introduced including a 13 period day with some students starting at 7 o'clock in the morning and others finishing school at 5.30pm. There are many examples of imaginative curriculum development including the Ramp Up Balanced Literacy Program and the courses in the Western Queens Center for high achieving honors students. There is a

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particularly successful culinary arts program that trains students in many aspects of the food service industry. It provides a three year professional culinary program with an emphasis on the classic techniques of French cooking. Outside programs such as JROTC, ISA and Global Kids have been integrated into the school in order to further the personal and social development of students. The school is introducing smaller learning communities and one period of advisory a day to support incoming freshmen for the next academic year.

There is an extensive and varied program of enrichment activities with a good level of student participation. There are a variety of clubs, musical concerts, art exhibitions, dramatic and musical productions. ESL students were distributing an impressive magazine, 'Voices of the World', during the week of the review. The excellent sporting facilities are used by over 23 PSAL sports teams.

The majority of teaching is good and promotes effective learning. Teachers and support staff are energetically committed to the personal and academic development of the students. Most teachers engage the students in a variety of activities and students respond in a very positive manner. Teachers' explanations are clear and students understand the work and are able to move on to the next stage of the lesson. However, some lessons are very content driven where teachers tend to lecture to the students. A number of teachers would benefit from support in classroom management and guidance on asking questions, engaging students in discussion and checking students' understanding of the work. The school needs to further develop strategies to share good practice in teaching in order to improve the quality of learning across the school.

**Quality Statement 4: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

### **This area of the school's work is proficient with some well-developed features**

The Principal provides reflective, accessible leadership and is a model for good relationships throughout the school. It was impressive to walk through the hallways with the Principal and see how the students greeted him as they moved from their classes. There is a positive ethos at Long Island City High School resulting in high standards of behavior and a sense of student commitment to the school. The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis and effective supervision ensures that the building is safe and secure. The cabinet team of Assistant Principals provides essential links between the teachers and the Principal. They are responsible for the management of subject areas including the quality of instruction and professional development of the teachers. Assistant Principals provide an essential middle management role in this large school. The school needs to ensure that all Assistant Principals adopt a robust and consistent approach when analyzing and monitoring the academic performance of classes.

Lesson observations of teachers are firmly established as both a monitoring and support mechanism in the subject departments. Teachers are observed at least twice a year and senior staff members regularly visit lessons on an informal basis. Feedback to teachers from the Assistant Principals includes a discussion on strengths and areas for development. This is then linked to appropriate professional development and support as required by individuals, coordinated by the professional development team. Most

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development examines effective classroom practice for individuals or small groups of teachers. There is an increasing interest in peer observation as teachers watch and share good practice within and across departments.

The Principal is highly respected by all members of the school community and has the capacity to effect change. He needs to develop more robust systems for self-evaluation in the school so that there is clarity about the strengths and areas for development. The Principal has a good understanding of priorities but, at present, the cabinet group of Assistant Principals does not have a strong enough role in the strategic development of the school. He may wish to consider the frequency of cabinet meetings and whether a smaller sub-committee could work more strategically on school wide issues.

**Quality Statement 5: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.**

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

Teachers regularly assess students' work through a variety of formative and summative assessments. Teachers are accountable to their Assistant Principals for the performance of their classes and students. However, this has not been formalized and there is not an agreed consistency across the school so that each teacher knows what grades are expected for each group and how evaluation of progress will be undertaken at the end of each marking period. The Principal analyzes assessment information and identifies areas of underachievement in subjects or specific groups of students. For example, there was a concerted drive across the school after the 2004-2005 Annual School Report results to raise the performance across the sub groups. Intervention programs help students improve their performance and there is evidence of gains in final grades for many students. ELL and special education students are supported well in the school. Teachers use many opportunities to enlist the support of parents to help students raise their levels of performance. The school should consider how teachers presently collect information on their students and how they can involve them and the Assistant Principals more in the analysis and interpretation of available data.

The school collects a considerable amount of information on attendance for the city data base, but has not as yet been fully effective in improving attendance, reducing cutting from classes or the number of students who drop out of school. Parents are telephoned automatically for each absence and letters are sent home for long term absences. All absences from school and lessons are recorded, but this information sometimes takes a week to be processed. The scale of the problem is sometimes overwhelming and the school needs to review systems for the collection of information and develop more effective strategies to address these issues.

Parts of the school are particularly vibrant and enhance the learning environment and positive feel to the school. The work in the arts is exceptional and provides a university feel to parts of the campus. Newsweek magazine lists the school as one of the top high schools in the USA while Inside Schools recommend it as a 'noteworthy school'. However, not all areas reflect the positive ethos that has been developed in the school.

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There is too much litter in the cafeteria and corridors, and students should be reminded of their responsibility in keeping their site tidy. The high rate of cutting from classes and wandering about in corridors during lessons is not in keeping with the general commitment to the school by most students. It would now be a good opportunity to clarify expectations for both teachers and students regarding academic performance and compliance to school policies. The Comprehensive Education Plan is a working document and has clear targets with success criteria, actions and monitoring arrangements. However, there needs to be a more formal vision that is shared, discussed and owned by the Assistant Principals and the rest of the staff. Additional delegation by the Principal would provide more time for him to think holistically and ensure that all monitoring and support systems are functioning effectively throughout the school. This would also allow the Principal more time to visit classes and do what he does best, which is interacting with students and staff thus sensing the real atmosphere within the school. There is an urgency to remove the category of a 'School in Need of Improvement'. The school can then celebrate its many considerable successes. The school has good capacity for further improvement and success.

### Other key observations

The school is recognized for its success in the arts and the Principal gained the Special Arts Recognition Award in 2004 from "America for the Arts" for his commitment to arts education. Long Island City High School uses the arts to encourage academic achievement in the core classes and to support the development of the whole person. There is a strong belief that the aesthetic side of the students should be nurtured and encouraged as part of an entitlement education. The Opera Institute and Orchestra Academy provide outstanding college preparatory programs for performers. The school has strong links with the Metropolitan Opera, American Ballet Theater and New York Philharmonic Orchestra.

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## Part 4: Evaluation Criteria Grade Summary

<b>Quality Statement 1: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor and facilitate the student's progress over time.</b>	o	✓	+
<p>1.1 The school uses available data (e.g., diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments, students work products, standards-based portfolios, attendance, descriptive review, security data, etc.) and generates its own to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of how well each student, classroom, grade level, and other important categories of students and the school are:</p> <p>(1) currently performing, and (2) progressing over time, on English Language Arts, mathematics, and other important academic subjects.</p> <p>Criteria for measuring student progress are "objective" when they are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• standards-based,</li> <li>• consistent across students,</li> <li>• capable of revealing progress or a lack of it over time and ways to close the gap between current and expected practice,</li> </ul> <p>and when they allow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the performance of different students to be compared, and</li> <li>• learning activity to be broken down into component parts so strengths and weaknesses on each sub-activity may be identified.</li> </ul>		X	
<p>1.2 The school makes effective use of the data to assess the performance and progress of students by racial and ethnic groups, English Language Learners and special education students, and all other categories of interest to the school.</p> <p>{This criterion and the next are partially aspirational as of now. City and State Report Cards and Division of Accountability and Assessment reports provide only some of the necessary data. The NYC DOE will soon provide schools with fuller access to better data.}</p>		X	
<p>1.3 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, racial and ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.</p>		X	
<b>Quality Statement 2: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.</b>	o	✓	+
<p>2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable, goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and it develops plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.</p>		X	
<p>2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as warranting attention.</p>			X
<p>2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.</p>			X
<p>2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. That information is central to setting reasonably challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.</p>		X	
<p>2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners</p>		X	

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<b>Quality Statement 3: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.</b>	0	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with the school's high expectations and improvement plans and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals.			X
3.2 Decisions about the use of teacher and student time are based on the organization of the day and week needed to inform teachers about each student's performance and next learning steps, set goals and plans for improved student learning, and implement and continuously improve plans for reaching stated goals.			X
3.3 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.4 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.5 Teachers are accountable for student outcomes. The Principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.		X	
3.6 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.7 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.		X	
3.8 Instructional programs actively engage students.		X	
3.9 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X

<b>Quality Statement 4: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.</b>	0	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.		X	
4.2 Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer- evaluation are aligned and overlap.		X	
4.3 Leaders, faculty, and staff share the same goals and frequently evaluate themselves, their interventions and each other's plans and interventions, including, when possible, by comparing outcomes across classrooms and schools. The school monitors its performance and tackles weaknesses. Even in areas where the school is successful, leadership is not complacent, but aims to improve further. The goal in all cases is to improve student and school performance and progress.		X	
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results and revision of plans takes place in teams.		X	
4.5 The Principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear and are generally followed.			X

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<b>Quality Statement 5: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.</b>	o	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is reaching stated goals.		X	
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.		X	
5.3 Information generated by interim assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.		X	
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive each successive phase of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve students' academic outcomes.		X	