



# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**International Community High School**

**High School 334  
968 Cauldwell Ave  
Bronx  
NY 10456**

**Principal: Berena Cabarcas**

**Dates of review: May 17 - 18, 2007**

**Reviewer: Peter Barton**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The International Community High School opened in September 2006 for students who are beginning to learn English and have been in the United States under four years. The school shares the third floor of PS146. It currently has a ninth grade and will be adding a grade per year until 2010. All of its 108 students are new English language learners, 13-18 years old, speaking Arabic, Bengali, French, Mandarin, Spanish and several West African indigenous languages. Fifty-nine percent are Hispanic, 33% are Black and 8% are Asian or from other ethnic backgrounds. The school has an average 94% attendance which is above that of City schools. Eighty-five percent of the students qualify for Title 1 funding which is also above the City average.

The school is sponsored by the International Network for Public Schools (INPS).

They have five principles:

- 1 Heterogeneity with collaboration - all classes range from a 1<sup>st</sup> through 9<sup>th</sup> grade academic level.
- 2 Experiential learning - students are taken on educational visits to build background knowledge needed for understanding the content in the classroom.
- 3 Language and content education - older English language learners need to learn English within content of classes.
- 4 Local school governance - localized autonomy for teachers to create their own curriculum.
- 5 One learning model for all - portfolio learning is essential for students and staff.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The first principal of this school is recognized by the whole school community as an inspirational, passionate, caring, empowering and effective leader.
- The principal has sought through distributive leadership and consensus to establish a culture which is realistic about the present and builds for the future.
- The principal is supported by a staff and cabinet/administration that are passionate and committed about student progress, recognize their own limits, but are hungry to learn and develop their own skills.
- The principal and staff recognize that instructional practice is developing and are working hard to make sure that structures are in place to support improvement in the coming year.
- All staff work in a completely collaborative culture, have strong vision for the future and are developing the curriculum to match the needs of students.
- The school is developing its use and response to data in a more systematic and focused way to incorporate the portfolio curriculum and the need for all students to learn and speak English as soon as possible.
- Overall the school is a calm and orderly environment where individual needs, both pastoral and academic, are met in a timely and compassionate manner.
- Relations between staff and students are very good with significant mutual respect.
- Collaboration between staff, students and parents is further enhanced by professional development and the opportunities to reflect at retreats, away from school.
- Attendance is excellent, monitored appropriately and well supported by parents.

### What the school needs to improve

- Develop the instructional skills around portfolio curriculum which enhances language and content integration to facilitate rapid language acquisition.
- Develop strategies for the improvement of classroom and behavior management.
- Develop an International Community High School guide covering curriculum description, assessment processes, and target setting which provide demanding, measurable goals for individual long-term improvement.
- Consider more deeply how greater differentiation can be achieved in the portfolio curriculum to engage all students...
- Consider more streamlined ways of presenting student data in a format that is more accessible to staff, students and parents.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a proficient school.**

This newly created school shares a building, works with students who have little or no English language skills and is staffed by mainly newly qualified teachers. Given these circumstances the principal and staff have done a remarkable job in this pioneering first year. Students and parents recognize this progress and the principal and staff deserve much credit for their efforts.

The staff are enthusiastic and eager for the students to succeed. The school culture emphasizes reflection and modification in a continuous cycle of improvement. The data collected by the school enables the establishment of a picture of overall performance and progress made by each student. Samples of work show great gains in written and spoken English. Student performance is monitored closely on an individual and class basis to quantify progress. Initial interviews and test diagnostics reveal issues that require immediate intervention. Whilst extensive planning is in place for the coming school year, current individual goals for students are not well aligned to overall school goals. The school has one learning model involving portfolio assessment based around project enquiry. The curriculum is well aligned to the needs of the students and graduation requirements. A review of curriculum documentation is nearing completion after a year of work. Students are articulate, supportive and greatly value the support they have had during the last year. They are rightly proud of their achievement in mastering the English language.

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

#### **Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.**

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

The data collected by the school enables it to establish a picture of the overall performance and progress of individual students. Students' work shows great gains in English acquisition over time. A common grading system is in place having been developed during the year. This data is used on a day-to-day basis to generate progress reports and report card grades which are discussed through one-to-one meetings with the advisor. Progress reports are mailed home and 90% of parents have visited school to discuss the progress of their children during the year. Students are also given opportunities to recover credit. As the academic year closes the staff and principal are working hard to develop teachers' curriculum guides to further influence scope and sequence, grade level benchmarks and portfolio project rubrics for each subject area. The aim is to monitor student performance more closely on an individual and class basis to quantify progress.

Initial interviews with students and test diagnoses reveal crucial issues that need to be dealt with. For example, 36% of students have had interrupted education caused by a variety of political, economic, social and migratory factors. Student achievement on entry is used to identify goals to assist the students and teachers in areas such as tutoring, night school and differentiation in the classroom. The school is developing ways of interrogating data through appropriate meetings with staff. Agendas, including

case discussions are organized by the Coordinating Council, which has representation across the school.

The school recognizes that it needs to improve its case management sessions and teachers now bring work by students to moderate with other teachers. Teachers post grades on a day-to-day basis and students enjoy and respect this level of immediate feedback. This information can be appropriately accessed through the internet and can be shared with friends and family.

As yet it is difficult to compare performance and progress with other schools as the school does not have sufficient data. However some comparisons will be possible with other International Community High Schools at the end of the academic year.

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: 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 proficient.**

The principal has been active in bringing her considerable experience in International Community High Schools to setting goals and promoting the actions required to meet them. Because the school is not a year old, has no long-term data and no Comprehensive Education Plan, the principal has carefully reviewed priorities and developed a school-wide development plan. Teachers have common preparation time four times per week to provide time to plan and develop goals through focused meetings; the four meetings are sharing curriculum and student work, the coordinating council, case management and advisory/curriculum planning. During these professional development sessions teachers draw up activity guides, project and project plans, rubrics, benchmarks and a portfolio assessment system. As a result of this work, curriculum guides will be published this summer. The meeting structure facilitates effective collaboration so that there is a shared understanding between teachers about what is to be achieved and how goals are reached. Whilst key individual student targets for the year are developed they lack rigor. More demanding and measurable targets for individual long term improvement have yet to be worked out and clearly stated. These goals at present lack both timeframes and success criteria, elements that are missing from the activity guides currently being drawn up.

Parents feel that communication with the school is good, with access to teachers via direct contact and/or electronically. Parents are involved in the Development Plan, newsletters, and parent teacher conferences. They find report cards helpful in providing information about the school priorities and the progress of their children. Students themselves value the high aspirations that the school has for them and appreciate the leadership of the principal and the caring, hardworking staff.

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

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

The school, which caters exclusively for recent immigrant students, is part of the Internationals Network for Public Schools. To ensure that International College High School students succeed in graduating and engage in post high school life two further programs are added – the internship program and a graduation portfolio presentation.

The school has aligned its budget and staffing to the needs of developing its one learning model - a portfolio curriculum with assessment based around project enquiry.

The whole curriculum is based around portfolio work. A carefully planned interlinked curriculum is emerging as the school devotes considerable time to its development. During this inaugural year, the school has monitored the effectiveness of the curriculum on students' outcomes and made adjustments accordingly. Evidence from elsewhere shows that this method of working has promoted great gains in English acquisition for some students. Those students who did not understand or speak English, can at least understand more of what teachers say, those who understand English but who hardly spoke are saying more, those who know how to read, write and speak are learning to write essays, helping teachers translate and assisting both in class and in the school office. All students are producing innovative portfolio presentations which are showing improvement; some are very good.

Not all instruction engages students. Behavior and classroom management strategies have not yet been subject to careful evaluation. Teachers make their own decisions about scheduling and are totally committed to the portfolio style of teaching, learning and curriculum management. They believe that properly handled the system allows students to share, encourage and grow individually. Sufficient evidence does not yet exist in the school to make full judgments about the progress of this cohort against like cohorts in other International Community High Schools. The school has been successful in promoting levels of attendance that are above the City average.

**Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: 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 well developed.**

Staff are selected through the coordinating council and principal with help and support from the International Network for Public Schools. A social worker and coordinator of special programs are also involved. The council screen resumes, rank candidates and then arranges phone interviews. A crucial part of the interview process is the ability of the candidate to plan with other candidates activities that students can use during portfolio work. This tests the candidates' ability to interpret data and class information, and work collaboratively. Final decisions to hire are made through the staff to the principal.

Professional development is effectively driven through the weekly or bi-weekly advisory, curriculum development and case management meetings. These meetings are student-focused and are driven by up-to-date data on student progress. Professional development is further enhanced by retreat where teaching staff are taken to a country centre to reflect in peace. At these sessions teachers have collaboratively produced activity guides, projects, rubrics, benchmarks and a portfolio assessment system. These meetings also discuss strategies for English language learners, develop clubs or activities and provide an opportunity for teachers to work with school aides and other members of staff to create academic intervention programs for struggling students whose schooling has been interrupted. Teachers also engage with external professional development programs through the INPS network. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of these activities in terms of student outcome.

The principal visits classrooms every other day. Every lesson observed is discussed with the teacher concerned. Peer observation is particularly useful with difficult classes when teachers share teaching and behavior management strategies. Staff hold the principal in high regard, as do parents. She 'lives and breaths the mission', is supportive of staff and works hard for the future.

Outside bodies play a crucial role in supporting student development. Significant use is made of the International Rescue Committee (IRC) who provide staff and volunteers to academically support refugee students

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: 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 undeveloped.**

The school is in its first year of operation and does not yet have a progress report or a Comprehensive Education Plan. However the goals for this and subsequent years have been set out by the principal in a plan which provides a firm basis for future development. This plan ensures that a broad understanding exists of the expectations for staff and students and the actions required to achieve them. As an example, the first goal in the principal's plan 'that all teachers will develop the ability to create a project-based curriculum to ensure that the needs of English language learners are met and that they are accumulating credits throughout the year' has been largely met with the first marking period generating a course pass rate of over 75% and the first end of semester portfolio presentations were of a high standard.

The meeting structure is extensive, effective, functional and timely, supporting the needs of this diverse and newly-formed school. Planning has understandably initially centered on the principal. Already the principal, staff and parents are creating plans and goals for the coming year which are more developed and have wider ownership. Those currently in place are not, understandably, as aligned as they need to be. These future plans will focus the school more accurately to its core purpose in the coming year. The principal has clearly demonstrated the capacity to chart the direction for a new school and to establish a firm foundation for future growth. So much has been achieved in a short period of time.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: International Community High School HS 334</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>		X	

<b>Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.</b>	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• each student, classroom, grade level,</li> </ul>		X	
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students*</li> </ul>		X	
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>		X	
1.4 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, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.	X		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>		X	

\* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

<b>Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: 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>	∅	✓	+
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 to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.		X	
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 a particular focus area.		X	
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.		X	
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.		X	
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.		X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>		X	

<b>Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.</b>	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.		X	
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.		X	
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.	X		
3.7 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	
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.		X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>		X	
<b>Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: 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>	∅	✓	+
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 decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. 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 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	
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.		X	
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.		X	
4.7 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>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			X
<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: 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 accelerating learning.</b>	∅	✓	+
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 being effectively implemented and 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 periodic 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 successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.	X		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>	X		