



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

International School of Liberal Arts

High School 342

**2780 Reservoir Avenue
Bronx
New York**

Principal: Karen Maldonado

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Reviewer: Denis Pittman

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The International School of Liberal Arts is a bilingual school with an enrollment of 271 students from grade 7 to 10. The school provides a transitional bilingual education program for English language learners who comprise the whole school population. A high proportion of students are at the very earliest stages of gaining a facility in English. As a community of English language learners students have the opportunity to learn a new language (English) while developing their academic skills in their native language (Spanish). The ethnic composition of the school is 100% Hispanic.

This year sees the school's first full year of existence as a fully fledged entity. Previously it functioned as a program initiative reflecting a 'new school' proposal as promoted by the principal. As an empowerment school it has more flexibility to make key decisions and control resources for the school's community. Empowerment schools are free to develop or purchase professional development services, choose which schools to affiliate with, and benefit from reduced reporting paperwork requirements.

The school shares its building space with five other schools on the Walton campus.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has a clear vision for the school, is well respected by students, parents and staff and leads by example.
- The school effectively collects data to monitor the developing English competencies of its students.
- Relationships between students and staff are positive, which is reflected in the good support and help students receive.
- Staff members know and respect students and respond well to their individual needs.
- Students enjoy school and respond well to the high expectations made of them.
- A strong collaborative ethos is being developed.
- The school runs smoothly on a daily basis with clear and effective procedures which provides a safe environment for students.
- The school has good partnerships with the community and other support agencies to enhance its instructional program.
- Staffing and budgetary decisions reflect the learning needs of students.
- The school provides many support programs to promote credit acquisition and remediation needs of students.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to develop teacher competencies in analyzing and using data and use this in planning the curriculum.
- Ensure that differentiated instruction is consistently applied across classrooms and grade levels.
- Maintain the focus on sustaining and improving student attendance.
- Develop curriculum maps in all content areas to ensure consistency in assessment procedures.
- Continue to develop strategies for improving parent involvement in the school.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The school is enhancing the life opportunities for its students through its goal of creating bi-literate proficiency (English and Spanish) for all. The shared educational values of the principal and assistant principal provide the school with a clear purpose and direction. It is a school that stresses high expectations relevant to the student's innate abilities. The support and care of each student is central to the school's work. Teachers are very supportive and are willing to help and encourage students. Their commitment and hard work is reflected in the demonstrable improvements that students make in the development of their language and literacy skills. Parents are very supportive of the school. They are appreciative of the supportive learning environment which is being created and value greatly the progress their children make. The curriculum is designed to reflect and build upon students' interests and capabilities and it is successful in engaging them. The working relationship with the local community including cultural support groups is very productive in promoting the goals of the school. Given the dedicated commitment, enthusiasm and hard work of staff, the school has the capacity to sustain its pattern of improvement in its formative years.

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 school has effective systems for collecting a breadth of data relating to the performance and progress of individuals and groups of students. Given the low level of English competence for a significant proportion of students, the school appropriately focuses on establishing a secure baseline assessment. Apart from the collection and analysis of standardized scores which come from the City testing procedures, each teacher compiles a range of formative assessments. The cross referencing of this data, which has been built up on the basis of recent and past assessments, gives an increasingly accurate picture of each student's achievement and progress. As part of the school's commitment to 'empowerment', the school has created a team to focus upon the performance of 8th grade students. The 'Empowerment School Intensive' team is effectively monitoring the outcomes of intervention strategies for individual students.

The outcomes of the periodic assessment process have not met the specific requirements of the school. The tests are not adequately structured to evaluate the skills and competencies of students who are English language learners. In consequence the school is considering using its own assessment procedures to satisfy the periodic assessment criteria. The English language proficiency test shows that students needed help in their writing and listening skills. This data has already informed the instructional programs of teachers. The school recognizes that a cohort of 10th grade students have very low competencies skills and are not meeting transition requirements. In consequence teachers have created a credit recovery program from guidance resources and expertise.

Given the primacy of the school's focus on language acquisition, the school is very effective in supporting those students who may not have had any experience with formal education. The school also has good intervention strategies for those pupils who are not only learning a new language but who are also special education students. Because this is a new school there is no past performance data available. Similarly there are very few bilingual schools in the city for a comparative analysis to be made.

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 goals of the school appropriately reflect its unique characteristics through a commitment to develop dual literacy, ensuring that a high proportion of students meet the promotional criteria and making attendance a high priority. There are established timeframes for achieving these goals and with appropriate progress checkpoints. The senior leaders have worked effectively in collecting and analyzing formative assessment to gain a detailed awareness of literacy needs. For example, from the analysis of students' writing it was made evident that teachers had to continue to focus on this as an area for improvement across all content areas. The analysis highlighted that students often repeated the same words over and over and occasionally invented words. At a more general level, students had difficulty in analyzing and understanding the task set. This level of analysis provided an impetus for a specific focus on the achievement of grade 8 students. In this context a representative sample of students from this grade are being mentored regularly to provide support and guidance in order to identify their specific learning needs. The data from this initiative is being analyzed to see whether there are general patterns which might have a greater application within the school. In a broader context the progress students are making in their language acquisition owes much too how immediately and effectively the school responds to new data to drive forward the school's agenda of improving performance. The effective collaboration between staff is a major factor in promoting these developments. The discussions within grade levels are an important aspect of promoting common goals and plans to address the needs of students.

Students are aware of the high expectations of the principal. These expectations are conveyed to staff and parents through regular meetings about the progress of students. Students are appreciative of the extra help that is given to them by staff in order for them to make improvements in their work. The useful data exchange of information between teaching colleagues and some of the parents enables the school's goals to be reinforced. The school is seeking to increase parental involvement in order to communicate the message of high expectations.

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 appropriately selects and provides a standards based curriculum, tailoring it well to meet the learning needs of the student body, all of whom are English language learners. The assistant principal has effectively created a detailed map of the curriculum

which is being offered. There is a carefully considered emphasis on promoting programs in support of the school's goal to promote literacy, employing scaffolding techniques to promote learning in English, Spanish and content areas. Curriculum decisions are made in consultation with teachers. Staff work individually and in small teams to create and share useful classroom materials. In this context there are particular strengths in English language arts.

Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. Currently there are inconsistencies in the way the data is used to promote differentiated instruction to meet the needs of students. The application of English as a second language strategies are not sufficiently evident in some content areas. Budgeting decisions in relation to professional development are centrally focused upon the learning needs of students. Grants are also sought to provide additional funding. This is reflected in the improving range of technology available to students and staff. Staffing decisions clearly reflect the need for language competence to meet the requirements of bilingual students. Scheduling decisions are appropriately flexible in order to accommodate the changes in language development of students.

Students are usually actively involved in their learning experiences. There is a developing extra curricular program which includes clubs and extended academic day learning. The school identified that more needed to be done for students who had experienced interrupted education. To do so, a program including phonics based word recognition and beginning writing and literacy has been provided. The relationship between students and staff is positive. Students value the time and energy that staff give in order to help them to succeed. This commitment and enjoyment of school are reflected in student attendance rates which are approaching 90%. The school celebrates achievement through appropriate awards and presentations during assembly sessions.

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 proficient.

The school carefully selects staff using specific criteria related to teachers' competence in Spanish, subject specialism, high expectations of students and their understanding of how data can be used to change instruction practice. The school is successful in building this staff profile and appointing staff who share the school's values. Professional development programs have evolved around training related to and developing strategies for promoting differentiated instruction. Staff indicate that these have been helpful in raising the confidence and competence of the staff. The principal recognizes the importance of professional development to promote literacy skills in a variety of contexts and is creative in the use of resources and time to ensure that an adequate provision is made for this purpose. The effective use of data is an area for ongoing development. Staff are supportive of each other and willingly share ideas. Staff are increasingly confident in the use of computers and laptops. These skills enhance the quality of instructional activities.

The principal is respected for her professional knowledge and her capacity to coordinate the transitional stage of the school's first year of existence. She has created a supportive environment where staff feel valued. The principal and the assistant principal regularly observe teaching and give constructive feedback about the outcomes of these observations. They are fully aware of the strengths and areas for development of all teachers. They plan collaboratively and include other key staff, such as contents leaders,

to improve instruction. Teachers have been modelling strategies and sharing ideas for dealing with the different aspects of writing genre.

The school is welcoming to students, parents and visitors. It is managed well and effective systems and procedures ensure that the school runs smoothly. Students know where to go and what to do. The school works well with outside agencies and institutions. It has good links with the Committee for Hispanic Children and Hispanic Families, the Office of Youth and Development and Montefiore Health Clinic. The outcome of these links has been a more positive integration of the community and school. Parents are encouraged to take part in the school. The school is becoming increasingly successful in promoting greater family participation but recognizes that this is an area for further development.

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 proficient.

The goals and values which underpinned the original proposal for the creation of the school effectively provide a steer for its activities. They are focused on raising the hopes, aspirations and achievement levels of bilingual students. Teachers are actively engaged in reviews through mid-year conversations and end of year evaluations of school targets. As part of those evaluations appropriate use is made of scholarship reports, the outcome of formative assessments and the feedback from parents. The evolving focus of the school outlines how the needs of all students are to be met including effective intervention strategies and programs for those students in greatest need, for example students who had no experience with formal education. The analysis and use of data collected in these reviews is central to strategies for improvement around issues such as achieving consistency in the use of rubrics to much broader issues such as the improvement of students' writing.

Staff are actively encouraged to take responsibility for assessing and analyzing students' progress so as to identify requisite changes and take remedial action where necessary. In the short period of the school's existence it has shown itself to be adaptive in its use of assessment procedures. For example, the introduction of the periodic assessments software program has shown itself to be ineffective in the evaluation of the English language arts component because of its over emphasis on comprehension. The school is using its own formative assessment of language competencies to provide a better picture of the overall performance and standards of achievement of its students.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: International School of Liberal Arts (HS 342)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score		X	

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.	∅	✓	+
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"> each student, classroom, grade level, 		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"> ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students* 		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"> all other categories of interest to the school* 		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		
Overall score for Quality Statement 1		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.

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.	∅	✓	+
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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2		X	

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.	∅	✓	+
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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3		X	
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.	∅	✓	+
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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4		X	
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.	∅	✓	+
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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5		X	