



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The International High School at Prospect Heights

**High School 524
883 Classon Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11225**

Principal: Alexandra Anormaliza

Dates of review: May 29 – June 2, 2008

Lead Reviewer: John Hudson

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The International High School at Prospect Heights is a high school with 412 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 23% Black, 36% Hispanic, 10% White, and 31% Asian students. The student body includes 90% English language learners and 2% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 - 2007 was 91.9%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 92.2% eligibility.

The New York City International High Schools only admit beginner and intermediate English language learners who have been resident in the United States for less than four years. The core principles of International Schools include experiential, project based learning in heterogeneous groups. The schools assess student progress and achievement through rubrics as well as other assessment tools. The International High School at Prospect Heights opened in 2004 and is in its first graduation year. It shares a building with three other schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Leaders and teachers make excellent use of matrices and other assessment tools to frequently monitor the progress of English language learners.
- The school maintains an extremely thorough and continuously updated understanding of different ethnic and heritage language groups.
- The school shares very useful information, translated into many heritage languages, with parents about each student's progress and performance.
- Leaders and faculty assess selected curriculum areas to provide a very thorough and continuously updated understanding of student progress.
- Teachers make effective use of data to understand students' next learning steps and create plans and time frames to meet them.
- The principal holds teachers fully accountable for the effectiveness of their instruction and for creating a positive, safe and inclusive environment.
- The principal is building the capacity of teachers so they play highly effective leadership roles in accelerating student progress.
- The principal and her staff use data rigorously to monitor the effectiveness of plans, accommodations, and interventions and refine them accordingly.
- The principal leads the school community with considerable skill and resourcefulness towards the next stage of school improvement.
- The school community shares the principal's vision for the high achievement, progress, and personal success of every student.

What the school needs to improve

- Regularly refine professional development plans and time frames to ensure the needs of individual teachers are met and improve teacher outcomes.
- Ensure teachers systematically participate in peer-review to build their skills and revise classroom practices to continuously improve their performance.
- Further extend the school's outreach to include every parent so that all can contribute effectively to their children's growth towards demanding goals.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

Leaders and teachers use data frequently and effectively to monitor the progress of students and groups of students. They meet very regularly to analyze individual student's progress and discuss the performance of groups of particular interest. These include English language learners, ethnic and heritage language groups, and higher performing students. Teachers make effective use of data to understand students' next learning steps and create plans and time frames to meet them. Administrators and teachers regularly identify lower than predicted progress and take timely remedial action whenever necessary. Excellent use of translation services enables the majority of parents to be fully involved in this goal setting and monitoring process. A small minority of parents is insufficiently involved and is not able to contribute effectively to their children's academic and personal growth. Teachers and leaders plan assessment events at specific points in the curriculum to gain an accurate understanding of student performance and progress. The principal holds teachers fully accountable for the quality of their instruction and for creating an inclusive, positive and safe learning environment. Instruction provides challenge and is differentiated to meet the individual needs of learners. An atmosphere of mutual trust and respect pervades the school community.

The principal places a high priority on building the capacity of teachers so they play consistently effective roles in accelerating student progress. Professional development plans are designed to meet the school's goals for improvement. Plans are differentiated to meet the professional needs of individual teachers. Teachers collaborate well to plan instruction and review the effectiveness of plans and programs. They do not systematically peer-review and revise classroom practices in order to continuously improve their performance. The principal and her staff use data very effectively to monitor the effectiveness of plans, accommodations, and interventions to improve student performance. They make timely refinements as required. However, plans and time frames to improve the performance of teachers are not evaluated sufficiently frequently. The principal leads the school community with considerable skill and resourcefulness towards the next stage of school improvement. The community shares the principal's vision for the high achievement, progress, and personal success of every student.

Through well-executed action planning the principal has ensured the school has made very good progress in all six areas identified for improvement in the last Quality Review. The inquiry team tracked the progress of a group of students at risk of being held back and devised specific interventions based on their academic needs. The team has developed a protocol for all staff for the early identification of such students so timely remedial action is taken in future.

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 the student's progress over time.

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

Leaders and teachers make frequent and effective use of standardized and their own assessment data to monitor the progress of students and groups of students. The school makes very effective use of group project work with end of topic final presentations. These projects, which are aligned with the curriculum, are popular with students. "Teachers don't tell us what to learn. We do group projects and write our own research papers." Students use carefully constructed rubrics to assess each other's end of topic presentations and evaluate one another's performance. In these ways, teachers and students maintain a continuously updated understanding of what students know and can do.

Teachers and administrators meet regularly to analyze individual student's progress and discuss the performance of groups of particular interest. These include strugglers, special education, and higher-performing students. The school places substantial emphasis on the progress of English language learners, approximately ninety percent of its student population. The principal is alert to potential barriers to achievement. "We worry about certain ethnic groups. Students from some countries have a seriously interrupted education. When a student joins us from one of these countries, it raises a red flag. We need to examine their history and get as much background as we can." The principal is aware of preconceptions within some cultural groups. "Collaboration is alien in some cultures. We need to work with parents and students to help them understand that learning does not, necessarily, depend upon lecture-style teaching with students taking notes". The principal takes all necessary steps to ensure the school maintains a rigorous and frequently updated understanding of the progress of every student.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

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

Teachers make effective use of data to understand students' next learning steps, set objectively measurable goals, and create plans and time frames to meet them. Teachers and administrators identify lower than predicted progress and take timely remedial action whenever necessary. The inquiry team tracked the progress of a group of students at risk of being held back and devised specific interventions, based on their academic needs, to accelerate their learning. These interventions were successful in enabling the focus group to progress to the next grade level. The team has developed a protocol so such students as these can be identified at a much earlier stage in future so more timely remedial action can be taken.

The school makes highly effective use of student advisory sessions where advisors gain a frequently updated understanding of students' learning strengths and areas for

improvement. Advisors act as a contact with parents who appreciate the easy accessibility of the school. Parents report the school “Does a good job keeping in regular contact with home”. The school works with a very diverse population and makes extensive and highly effective use of translators. Information on student progress and next learning steps is translated into many of the thirty or so languages spoken by parents. Translators are available for parent teacher conferences and other meetings with parents. The majority of parents are fully involved in helping their children to improve towards demanding goals. The school is working hard to find ways to include a small minority of parents who are insufficiently involved. These parents are not contributing effectively to their children’s academic and personal growth.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

Teachers and leaders plan frequent assessment events to maintain an accurate and continuously updated understanding of student progress. Students’ language development and understanding of content areas are very high priorities. Teachers use this knowledge to continually refine a broad and engaging curriculum with good opportunities in the arts and technology. A range of other activities including drama, debate, and clubs for different ethnic groups enhances the curriculum. There is much emphasis on reading development and the school makes good use of a variety of scaffolds to support writing development. As students become more proficient in their use of English, the scaffolding is gradually reduced.

The principal holds teachers accountable for the quality of their instruction and its effectiveness in promoting students’ language development and the mastery of content. Teachers are responsible for ensuring students learn in an inclusive, positive, and safe environment. Instruction is challenging and is differentiated to meet the individual needs of learners. Students point out “When we’re finished there is always another activity”. There is much emphasis on group activities, including experiential, research-based learning. Students and teachers make very effective use of rubrics to assess performance. Students maintain ownership of their own learning and progress through frequent evaluation their own and each other’s progress. This encourages an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect that pervades the school community. Students enjoy their education and value it. “This school lets your spirit soar. Helps you be what you want to be.” Consequently, attendance and achievement continue to improve.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

The principal places a high priority on building the capacity of teachers so they play consistently effective roles in accelerating student progress. Professional development plans are designed to meet the school’s goals for improvement. In her walkthrough classroom observations, the principal is looking for specific instructional skills in all

teachers. Among other areas of interest, she is looking for instruction that includes specific language-based teaching, promotes critical thinking skills, and shows growth from previous observations. Professional development plans are differentiated to meet the professional needs of individual teachers as evaluated from walkthroughs, data analysis, and conversations with individual teachers.

Teachers visit one another's classrooms and collaborate well to plan instruction and evaluate the effectiveness of plans and programs. Some teachers review each other's classroom practices in order to continuously improve their performance. Not every teacher makes use of this excellent procedure, however. New teachers are enthusiastic about the very good induction and continuing support they receive. "I was hired early, went to the June retreat and was informed by staff reflection of the previous year, attended the two-week planning period before the start of the school year and was involved in the summer school. I have a mentor and get wonderful feed-back on my planning and instruction." In addition to support from the International Schools Network, the school enjoys an excellent partnership with ARUP, the international design and engineering consultancy. The company provides expert professional development for the school's math teachers and supports a student internship.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

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

The principal and her staff meet frequently to monitor the effectiveness of plans, accommodations, and interventions to improve student performance. They use updated student performance data, particularly end-of-semester portfolios, and their own knowledge of individual student's progress. Based on objectively measurable evidence administrators and staff make timely refinements to plans, accommodations, and interventions to improve student performance. For example, the school has identified difficulties with its current daily schedule. This provides insufficient opportunity for teachers to meet, scrutinize student work and performance data, and plan instruction. The principal and her staff have reviewed the situation and planned changes to be introduced in September to overcome these difficulties. Plans for teacher improvement are effective and teacher outcomes are improving. However, progress towards interim goals is not tracked at regular enough intervals. Consequently, professional development plans and time frames to improve teacher performance are not evaluated sufficiently frequently.

The principal leads the school community with considerable skill and resourcefulness towards the next stage of school improvement. A culture of self-analysis and self-improvement is becoming strongly apparent throughout the school. The principal and faculty are working with common purpose to help students and teachers learn. The school community shares the principal's vision for the high achievement, progress, and personal success of every student.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The International High School at Prospect Heights	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
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Quality Score				X	
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Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather and generate data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the students progress over time.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?				X	
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?				X	
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?					X
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?					X
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?				X	
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?				X	
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1				X	

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set rigorous, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?				X	
2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?				X	
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?				X	
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?				X	
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?				X	
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?			X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?				X	
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?				X	
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?				X	
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?				X	
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?				X	
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?				X	
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X	

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.					
To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?				X	
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?				X	
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?			X		
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?				X	
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?				X	
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning, and effectively address discipline related incidents?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4					X

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.					
To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?				X	
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?				X	
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?				X	
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?				X	
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?				X	
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5					X

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped