

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

The International High School at Lafayette

K337

**2360 Benson Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11214**

Principal: Michael F. Soet

Dates of review: April 30 – May 1, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Geri Taylor Brown

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The International School at Lafayette is a high school with 327 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 37% Black, 36% Hispanic, 13% White, and 14% Asian students. The student body includes 72% English language learners and no special education students. Boys account for 57% of the students enrolled and girls account for 43%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 92.6%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 95% eligibility.

As part of the Internationals Network for Public Schools, all students are recent immigrants. The school moved in July 2008 to this new location in the Bensonhurst section of Brooklyn. The staff is looking forward to celebrating the graduation ceremony for their first graduating class of seniors this June.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

The International School at Lafayette is a great school where one student excitedly exclaimed, "You can be sure that if your kid goes to this school they are going to college." Continued growth and improvement in scholarship and behavior are embedded in the culture of the school as graduating students proudly speak about entering college with over 12 college credits through the school's College Now program. This message of high expectations is echoed throughout the school community as teachers energetically work to ensure success for all students through offering differentiated instruction to support individual student growth. Teachers comfortably use varied teaching approaches and offer students a variety of ways to display their learning. The ability to provide this solid instruction is enabled by how teachers effectively collect and use a wide range of student data from multiple sources. The results of this hard work is seen in improved student achievement and high rates of student attendance. These results are also positively influenced by the continual strivings, by teachers, to increase their instructional capacity and professional growth. Teachers work hard in honing their skills to meet the learning needs of students.

These valiant efforts of teaching staff are rigorously directed and supported by a visionary principal and assistant principal who clearly keep the school-wide focus on continual student learning. They regularly and effectively use school data to gauge areas of growth and areas for needed improvement. This has led to the development and implementation of plans and programs that have influenced student success. These positive organizational initiatives include budgeting that maintains small class sizes and inclusion of the arts to support language acquisition. The results of these initiatives have been increasing rates of credit accumulation towards graduation.

While students feel supported and safe in this new school environment, the school has not yet enabled students to take full ownership of learning goals. All students know their ultimate learning goal, but there is not consistent clarity amongst students on how to incrementally work towards this goal. Additionally, the school has not yet developed a strong partnering relationship with parents. Both parents and the staff have indicated this as a goal for the upcoming school year. Also, the school is working on connecting with community based organizations that can support families experiencing personal and social challenges as they adjust to life in this country.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school leaders are supported and applauded by all stakeholders as they provide solid and visionary leadership that focuses on continual student achievement.
- School leaders and faculty regularly and effectively gather, analyze and use data to drive instruction and impact student learning in all core subjects.
- The entire school community holds high expectations for students, as is evidenced by the school goal of college enrolment for all students.
- Teachers continually refine and improve their teaching and improve student success through using differentiated instruction, a layered curriculum and project-based learning.
- Students feel safe and nurtured in this warm and supportive learning environment.
- School-wide collaboration provides the foundation for continual teacher growth and enhances each teacher's individualized professional development plan.
- School leaders carefully use school data to develop and implement organizational changes that positively impact student learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop and implement effective communications to help parents become more involved in school life and active partners in their child's education.
- Build on and deepen the good foundation of goal setting to empower more student ownership over the incremental steps to academic and personal success.
- Further develop relationships with community based organizations to offer additional support to families, especially as their challenges relate to transitioning to life in this country.

Part 3: Main Findings

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

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

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

The school does a good job as they collect, analyze and use student data from multiple sources. Teachers eagerly engage in formal and informal conversations about using this data to plan and differentiate their classroom instruction. Formal Teaching Teams, which consists of 5 teachers who meet weekly, are the core group where initial plans are made for meeting student learning needs. These effective structures provide the forum where teachers have skillfully integrated the review of the academic and sociological data for the 70-80 students under their care. They analyze student grades on teacher-created exams and state exams and cross reference this with additional indicators such as student attendance information, and date of arrival in this country. This insightful analysis led to the development of increased learning opportunities for student sub-groups. The after-school "Circulo Latino" Spanish class, as well as the French Embassy linkages for Haitian students have provided a sociological sense of family for these students. But most notably, these offerings have bolstered the class passing rate of these students and improved their overall school attendance.

As part of the cycle of effective communications, the school leaders meet weekly with the leader of each Teaching Team to support team efforts to deliver optimum opportunities for all students to succeed. These formal meetings involve rich detailed conversations about student data trends. These conversations have led to the development of successful organizational changes such as a two-year course of study for the Living Environment science. This allows for students to more fully acquire mastery of English prior to taking the State exam. Results on this Regents exam have added credence to this good practice.

The school has high student attendance rates. Consistent calls to homes and careful tracking of each child's attendance have positively influenced sustaining these high rates of attendance. This careful examination of attendance data showed a group of 20 students who had high rates of class failure correlated with their high absenteeism. Pointed work with this group, called "The Top 20", resulted in a positive change in their attendance behavior.

Parents speak highly of the school but their participation in school life is a concern. They agree with the principal, "that parent involvement has been one of our biggest challenges". There are well-documented approaches the school has made to invite families to be more involved through dissemination of student information to parents every six weeks, monthly Family Association Meetings and the distribution of report cards during evening hours. However, the school has not yet developed parents as true partners in the educational life of their children. The school looks towards continued work in this area during the upcoming school year.

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 proficient.

The school has developed a strong foundation for setting student learning goals. Well established structures, including the teaching teams and the discipline/department teams perform regular data analysis and cooperatively set student goals both within and across all core subjects. For example, subject specific curriculum maps include general timeframes for students to reach proficiency. The discipline/department teams do a monthly examination of subject specific data to identify progress, examine trends and to reset subject goals where needed. Using this subject specific information as a guide, the teaching teams specifically establish personalized student goals based on each child’s strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, students do a biannual portfolio presentation which involves a reflection of their growth in five areas: “language development, collaborative skills, humanities/arts knowledge, math/science knowledge, and personal growth.” These presentations, which are done in front of an audience of teachers, peers and parents, do well in providing students with a structure and an opportunity to examine their progress and establish plans for growth. However, student planning did not consistently include incremental steps towards reaching their clearly stated long term goals.

The principal and assistant principal lead all stakeholders in setting high expectations for students. All stakeholders support this drive for student excellence. It is seen in classrooms and in the hallways in the postings of exemplary student work throughout the school. Students refer to the class rubrics which clearly define the parameters for acceptable and exceptional work. They also speak candidly about the importance on on-time and daily attendance. Students, staff and parents are respectful and appreciate the school’s efforts to help every student to attend college. Students are extremely proud of the accelerated rate of language acquisition they make as illustrated in the high standards they achieve in Regents exams.

While the school does well setting school goals through careful examination and assessment of data, there has not yet been the full inclusion of parents in this process. Development of the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) primarily takes place within the cabinet. Full examination of a wide variety of school data serves as the focal point for the development of this document. Other school stakeholders make some contributions to this process through school structures such as the School Leadership Team. However, all stakeholders are keenly aware of the school’s goals which they state as, “improving language improving grades and improving graduation.”

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.

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

The school provides a varied and engaging curriculum. While aligned with the State standards, the curriculum in this school surpasses the required offerings by infusing the acquisition of English language into every core subject. Classes in social studies and math include time where students focus on reading and writing to acquire proficiency in

the spoken and written word. Additionally, students in this school are required to take a year of drama, a year of music and a year of visual arts. Creative instruction in these courses bolsters student mastery of English and offers multiple positive opportunities for all students to demonstrate this mastery using processes and products of their choice. For example, the drama class provides children with the chance to act, write scripts, direct productions, design and develop sets and arrange shows.

Teachers successfully provide lessons that develop cross-curricular skills such as in English where teachers use political cartoons to strengthen students' understanding of global events in preparation for the Global Studies Regents exam. These effective instructional practices enable students to link academic areas and reinforce the practical importance of language. The school does an excellent job in offering advanced learning opportunities to students. All students have the chance to accumulate college credits through enrollment in College Now classes.

Instruction is successfully differentiated by teachers so lessons meet the learning needs and learning styles of all students, including both high achieving and struggling students. Teachers very effectively use the instructional tool of "layering" to provide multi-level learning options for these two extremes of student learning needs. Student responses to creating a project for class could range anywhere from writing an essay to making a video depending upon the student skills and interest. Clear differentiation is well embedded in the instructional culture of this school. During a Global Studies lesson in genocide students were assigned to groups based on student learning needs. The varied class activities ranged from critiquing a movie to working with a class partner on a laptop.

The principal makes great use of a lean budget. He has creatively programmed the school to maintain smaller class sizes, especially in grades 9 and 10. The school data closely mirrored that of national data which shows high rates of student success when credit accumulation occurs during the initial grades of high school. In addition to maintaining small classes, the school provides "looping". Students have the same set of teachers for grades 9 and 10. Good results from this intervention includes some increases in parent involvement. The school leaders and staff have also acquired outside grants to fund support classes offered after school and during the weekend.

The principal has established a healthy climate of trust between students and adults which positively influences student progress. Students are comfortable speaking with any adult in the school. Students report that one of the best things about their school is that they can, "express how they feel" and share their "struggles in life" with their teachers. A testimony to the school is evidenced in the retention of nearly every student even though the new school location is at least an hour from their former placement. Students are willing to travel extra hours to attend school in a place that "feels like family." Students and their parents are pleased with the school's recent move into a facility that offers more amenities including more space for physical education activities.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school's work is well developed

The principal and assistant principal conduct daily classroom visits for the close monitoring of teaching and learning. These informal visits are supplemented by formal observations which point to teacher strengths and weaknesses, and connect teacher

growth needs to the learning needs of their students. These effective practices give school leaders a clear basis for their individual work with each teacher in developing personalized professional development plans. A key part of these personalized plans involve teacher development and implementation of plans and programs that resolve school problems. One group of teachers undertook an intensive study of the sustained silent reading project. The outcomes of their research led to a new curriculum and instruction plan being implemented school-wide this year for the class.

Teachers also participate in interclass visitations and attend specific PD workshops to acquire or sharpen skills, such as layered instruction. The principal is working towards duplicating this positive staff behavior in other areas. Most pointedly, staff members have not yet fully taken leadership control over some school projects and initiatives. There are plans for future development of distributive leadership structures and systems during the upcoming spring staff retreat.

School support personnel work effectively to meet student academic and social needs. However, the school has not yet established ties to community based organizations that will help families work through social and emotional challenges they face in transitioning to this country. The parent coordinator is working feverishly to partner the school with organizations of this nature in the school's new home community.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and 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.

Through a range of teams and meetings, the school monitors data systematically and thoroughly. School leaders and staff identify strengths and areas for improvements identified by the outcomes of data, classroom teaching and learning gains. They also examine qualitative data from school-developed surveys of students and teachers. Teachers working in these cooperative teams exclaimed that, "Working in teams makes data gathering manageable." They reflect on student achievement in their individual classes and adjust instruction, plans and groupings to match closely each student's learning needs. For example, while using role play as a primary instructional tool, a US History teacher changes students' working groups as they conquer learning goals.

The principal and assistant principal are visionary leaders who are leading school improvement meticulously. As the school approaches the celebration for their first graduating class they are also preparing for a reflective school staff retreat. School leaders have developed the theme: "Where do we want to be in five years? How do we educate the whole child?" During the past four years, school leaders and staff have done well in developing a school proposal into a fully functional and successful school. They have been careful and thoughtful in developing highly functional systems and structures that support their efforts for continual student achievement. Through regular and exacting data reviews, they have done an excellent job in providing personalized education plans for their students. Now these school leaders and staff eagerly anticipate attending the retreat to share their individual visions of what they want the school to look like in five years. They are also excited to develop a collaborative vision of where they want the school to go. The principal assuredly states, "We have to be more than what we are to really serve these kids well."

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: The International High School at Lafayette	△	▶	✓	+
Overall QR Score				X
Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>	△	▶	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?				X
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?				X
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?			X	
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?				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 student’s learning.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>	△	▶	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?			X	
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?			X	
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?				X
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DYO, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students' learning goals.							
<i>To what extent do ...</i>	△	▶	✓	+			
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?				X			
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?				X			
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?				X			
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X			
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X			
Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.							
<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	△	▶	✓	+			
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher's instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?				X			
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?				X			
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?				X			
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 4				X			
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.							
<i>To what extent do...</i>	△	▶	✓	+			
5.1 the school's plans for improving student outcomes and its strategies for improving each teacher's instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?				X			
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?				X			
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?				X			
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?				X			
Overall score for Quality Statement 5				X			
Quality Review Scoring Key							
△	Underdeveloped	▶	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed