

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

Institute for Collaborative Education

Middle School-High School

**345 East 15th Street
New York
NY 10003**

Principal: John Pettinato

Dates of review: November 5 - 6, 2008

Lead Reviewer: John Collings

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Institute for Collaborative Education is a middle school-high school with 439 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 21% Black, 22% Hispanic, 46% White, 9% Asian students 1% Native American and 1% other groupings. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 94.8%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 16% eligibility.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

The Institute for Collaborative Education is a very successful school due to the stimulating inquiry-based curriculum delivered by highly dedicated teachers creating a fantastic climate for learning. The collaboration between students, parents, teachers, support services and the senior leadership is exceptional.

The school has a waiver from the Department of Education to pursue its own curriculum and means of assessment. Direct comparison with other schools is therefore difficult. However, its own assessments are more rigorous than City and State expectations and the vast majority of students make excellent progress, with significant numbers entering prestigious colleges. A number of factors combine to make the school outstanding, notably the dedication of teachers, use of data for continual review of student progress, and setting of short and long-term goals. The project-based curriculum also develops a very high-level of student self-reliance and personal responsibility.

Parental involvement is valued highly and there is a holistic philosophy in the school that personal development and attitudes to life and learning are as important as academic growth. As a result there is a high level of mutual trust and respect amongst all in the school. There is recognition that issues in students' personal lives can have a direct impact on their academic performance. The continual and regular interaction between parents, students and the school in reviewing students' personal and academic growth ensures students' full potential is reached.

Teachers' professional development is highly differentiated with individual development plans, arrived at through discussion to meet teacher, subject, and whole-school goals. The current focus is on improving the relationship between individual student goals and differentiation in the classroom and promoting use of classroom displays to support learning more effectively. The school is also reviewing the match between the vertical curriculum and assessments to clarify in even more detail the progress of student sub-groups. Teachers continually reflect on the effectiveness of their instruction and are formalizing a system of intervisitations to refine their instruction and so enhance student learning.

The school has a very clear view of the future due to its clear philosophy and rigorous self evaluation process. There are well-articulated short term and long-term goals clearly understood by all stakeholders. Achievement of long-term goals is supported through interim goals with clear expectations, interpreted through equally well-articulated subject and grade goals with timeframes.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The large amount of data collected by the school using its own curricular rubrics and expectations enable very effective monitoring of individual student performance and progress in each subject.
- The parents are effusive in their support of the excellent supportive learning environment and communication of the high expectations the school creates.
- There is highly effective communication between the school, parents and support services, thus ensuring that all understand the high expectations of the school.
- The school has a very rich, inquiry-based integrated curriculum motivating students to learning by involving them in evaluating their own progress and setting realistic goals.
- A very high level of mutual trust between students, students and teachers and their families ensures students are fully supported and challenged to reach their full potential.
- Professional development is differentiated and well founded on classroom observations, analysis of student progress data, and a focus on improving the differentiation of instruction.
- Extremely good school self-evaluation provides a clear view of the future and an accurate reflection of where it is now and what it needs to do to improve through clearly articulated goals, interim goals and time frames.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure the differentiation of instruction is firmly based on individual student goals and make the consequentially differing expectations explicit in lesson planning.
- Explore ways of matching interim assessment to the vertical curriculum in order to monitor progress, knowledge, understanding and skills in a wider range of sub-groups more effectively.
- Improve display to support students by enabling them to reference previous learning and scaffold future knowledge, understanding and skills to meet their goals.

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 makes extensive use of data to monitor student progress. It has a waiver from the Department of Education to implement and evaluate its own curriculum using its own, "Do your own assessments" although the middle school is still mandated to take City assessments. It also uses performance-based graduation requirements throughout the school. In the high school these far exceed the New York standards of the Regents examinations. This makes direct comparisons with other schools in the City unreliable. However, the school's progress report for the high school shows it is grade A, the highest, when compared with other schools within the city.

The exemplary level of progress is achieved through scrupulous assessment procedures identifying student performance and progress in all core subjects. These use a wide range of methodologies, which are coordinated in twice-weekly advisory meetings with students to identify whether they are meeting their goals and to advise them accordingly. Overall progress is monitored through the exit project for each of the six week cycles throughout the year. At the end of each cycle a very detailed and narrative report is sent to parents and student. Part way through each cycle there is a "habits of mind" review informing students of the next steps they need to take in order to ensure they meet their goals.

The strength of the school is the advisory system, where twice-weekly progress reports for every subject are sent to each student's advisory teacher. The advisory teacher counsels each student twice a week to identify individual strengths and weaknesses, thus all sub-groups of students are individually monitored. Where necessary the advisory teacher provides academic and personal support to ensure students meet the high expectations set. In addition to the narrative and "habits of mind" reports sent to parents there are numerous other opportunities to meet their child's teachers and access electronic communication about their children's progress. The close-knit collaboration between the administration, faculty, parents and students enables close analysis of student performance and makes sure all students stay "in the game".

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.

The school has rigorous goal-setting procedures. Twice-weekly advisory meetings with each student review the comments made by the subject teachers, in order to identify the next steps necessary to meet their longer-term goals for that particular six-weekly project. Where students have similar goals or needs teachers provide additional differentiated support, either within class or at the end of the day, thereby demonstrating

their commitment to students' learning. Student goals help inform subject and grade goals and, in turn, whole school goals. The whole school goals are extremely comprehensive and exceed the expectations for completing the DOE's Comprehensive Educational Plan for the school.

Weekly faculty meetings, grade and subject meetings continually review the appropriateness of the goals set at all levels and refine and adjust them as necessary to meet the challenging goals and expectations set by the school. However, expectations through exemplars and display are inconsistent so do not maximize opportunities for referencing previous learning and scaffolding developing knowledge, understanding and skills.

Parents are effusive about the challenge and enthusiasm the school engenders for learning, self-reliance and high aspirations in their children. Parents are also enthusiastic about the excellent communication provided and the frequent opportunities to discuss their children's progress and participation in determining the school goals, promotional and graduation requirements. Students and their parents are empowered and part of the school's ongoing improvement and development.

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.

As an "alternative school" the school is free to develop its own curriculum and structure. The school has adopted a vertically planned project-based curriculum. This motivates students significantly because it is inquiry-based, integrated across subjects, and involves them in evaluating their own progress and setting their own realistic goals. To implement this the school uses "backward planning" where the school identifies an end point they expect students to achieve, and a series of projects to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding is then planned to extend learning to meet the expectation. Projects run over six-weekly cycles ending with a narrative report identifying very clearly, and in scrupulous detail, students' strengths and weaknesses against rubrics shared with students and their parents. The rubrics are used as assessments but also as a means of setting individual student goals for every student in every subject. This ensures all students from the highest- to lowest-achieving are set challenging expectations to enable the best possible progress.

Progress towards the end of project goals is reviewed through advisory meetings with every student twice a week. Goals are also reviewed through subject and grade meetings to ensure sufficient challenge and where necessary goals are modified to meet identified needs. The school uses a range of differentiated strategies to ensure each student receives instruction appropriate to their needs. However, the school does not make sufficient use of homogeneous groupings in classrooms where students of similar abilities are challenged simultaneously.

The budget is used very well, particularly to ensure class sizes are small, enabling teachers to use the very demanding project-based approach effectively and to support the unpredictable demand for resources in this approach.

There is a collegiate ethos in the school. Students work with their teachers to set goals and expectations. Students are very self-reliant, self-motivated with a high level of trust and collaboration needed for successful project work. They not only work well with each other, the trust is also reciprocated with their teachers who are "always there for them". The school is extremely safe as indicated in the unprecedented positive results in the

Learning Environment Survey. Students are highly engaged, and with the support and advice of teachers, take full responsibility for their own learning. Students' academic progress is significantly above average and their maturity and ability to set their own goals and the self-motivation to achieve them is exemplary.

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.

Individual teachers develop goals and action plans as part of a very good individual annual performance review process. Personal and professional objectives are directed towards impact on instruction and supporting student progress and performance. Teachers who are new to the profession and/or the school are very well supported through their mentors, the collegiality of the staff and experienced colleagues.

As part of the distributive leadership, two teachers work as lead professional development facilitators at the weekly meetings and professional development days. They also meet regularly with the principal and the steering committee and cascade information to the rest of the staff at department meetings that occur approximately every three weeks. Individual teachers' needs are met as well as whole school initiatives. Consequently teachers are fully aware of how their personal development aligns with the goals for the school and as a result are involved and motivated by the professional development process in the school. This has a direct impact on improving teaching and learning in the school.

There is extremely close collaboration between parents, students and teachers. Parents often say that the school "knows their children as well or better than they do". They think the climate of support is "care beyond care" and think the principal a "genius". Teachers have high levels of investment in the school ensuring students make the best possible academic and personal progress through continual reflection on the outcomes of their instructional practice.

All teachers in the school take some type of leadership role. Currently the staff is collaborating in formalizing a system of intervisitations to implement the individualized professional development plans, and the subject, grade and school goals. Teachers have weekly opportunities for professional development, allowing collaborative team review of student work and progress in a climate of collaborative enquiry. Teachers work together systematically both formally and informally to reflect on the effectiveness of their instruction and are "continually in each others' classrooms" supporting and being supported. The partnership with parents is strong. Parents are kept up-to-date through the narrative reports, "habits of mind" monitoring and the availability of teachers to discuss the academic personal progress of each of their advisory students, and all those in their classes, where appropriate.

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.

The school is a community of reflective practitioners with a very clear philosophy based on an inquiry curriculum with rigorous evaluation of project work as the means of evaluating student's progress and performance. Each six-week cycle consists of a number of smaller projects culminating in an exit project. During this cycle not only is

there a review of each smaller project but also an interim assessment “habits of mind” to indicate what each student has to do in order to reach the goals set. Students are very involved in this process and often set goals for themselves that are extremely challenging. Individual student goals are aggregated for class goals within the cycle and then to subject, grade, whole school goals and sub-group goals where appropriate. Teachers use a range of differentiated instruction to support students, for example, heterogeneous grouping, some homogenous grouping and using a range of learning styles. The school is reviewing how it can improve the use of homogeneous grouping to match students’ experience and instruction to their individual goals within the classroom more accurately.

Teachers have used the findings from the Prodigy (Inquiry Team) to support students failing to make expected progress. The research identified that lack of success was due to the poor work habits of some students who lacked opportunities to work independently rather than any academic inability. This information is now influencing the nature of the support given and is being monitored to establish its effectiveness.

The school has a very clear idea of its own identity through its philosophy of student-centered learning where students are given the opportunity to demonstrate what they know rather than be tested to find out what they don’t know. This results in the school having very clear overall goals, which are then interpreted through distributive leadership by subject and grade leaders to create subject and grade goals. Teachers’ individualized professional development plans are then integrated to ensure unanimity of purpose to allow the whole school community to work collaboratively towards the same objectives. Goals at whatever level have measurable criteria for success with interim goals, explicit expectations and clear timeframes which reflect the needs of the school and are extremely rigorous.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: Institute for Collaborative Education	△	▷	✓	+
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, DY0, 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