

# Quality Review Report 2010-2011

**The School of international Cultures**

**Elementary School 179**

**468 East 140<sup>th</sup> Street**

**Bronx**

**NY 10454**

**Principal: Sherry Font Williams**

**Dates of review: January 26 & 28, 2011**

**(Due to snow)**

**Reviewer: Yolanda Torres**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The School of International Cultures is an elementary school with 406 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 20% Black, 76% Hispanic, 2% Multiracial, 1% Native American, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 22% English language learners and 18% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 93.7%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

### What the school does well

- The school-wide values-driven character education program and expert in social emotional development provide staff, students and families with discussions on monthly values resulting in improved behaviors and actions.
  - The character education program embraces values-driven philosophies, which students understand and emulate in their daily actions. In addition, a social worker visits each classroom, reads to students, and models discussions of the value of the month. Teachers' follow up and reinforcement with activities and expectations lead to positive classroom tone and improved student behavior.
  - The school mission: "We are a community that celebrates learning" permeates in the building via the acknowledgment of students' positive behaviors, attendance and academic achievements. In addition, classes such as music and dance, infuse content-related themes, which encompass the school's mission and value of the month. As a result, the school community, inclusive of staff, community partners and families participate in celebrations and assemblies on students' academic and social emotional success.
- The school leaders provide ongoing observational feedback to teachers to enhance their instructional practice and improve student outcomes.
  - School leaders meet with teachers to review differentiated professional development needs and reflect on their practice. During these meetings, they analyze student data, set timelines and expectations to ensure that the instructional needs for each teacher are met.
  - Assistant principals conduct learning assessment walkthroughs to provide teachers with targeted support to improve their pedagogy. This ongoing feedback and reciprocal collaboration serves as a mentoring structure that enhances teacher practice. In addition, new teachers and teachers in need of more focused professional development assistance meet on a one-on-one basis with school leaders resulting in individualized action plans for implementation and actionable feedback.
- Teachers and coaches use data-informed and collaborative processes to discuss and plan monthly units of study based on identified needs on Periodic Assessments leading to focused planning and teacher practice.
  - During planning sessions, teachers use a variety of assessments such as running records, conference notes, and Acuity results to identify students' individual needs. This process affords them a better understanding of teaching points, therefore, resulting in enhanced lesson delivery.
  - Teams of teachers discuss student performance on ELA practice test and share exemplars so students can see expected outcomes in the writing portion of the test. They formulate strategy groups in tiers to better support students in their assigned groups resulting in a more cohesive provision of academic services.

- The school consistently communicates high expectations as well as the importance of parental involvement in all activities.
  - The School Leadership Team is a venue to engage parents in the learning and decision-making process of the school. If any change is to take place on a specific grade, parents are brought in for decision-making and understanding on the rationale for change. Parents appreciate that their voices are heard as they provide their ideas and suggestions. They also acknowledge the school's ongoing communication of clear expectations and their important role in the school and their children's education.
  - Attendance percentages are prominently displayed to provide the community with an important measure of success. Once Students-of-the-Month are identified, they write a reflective piece on their personas and explain why they believe they were selected. Grading policy and rubrics, aligned to the Common Core State Standards, are evident throughout the school and classrooms resulting in improved student outcomes evidenced in daily classwork, assessment binders, and progress reports.
- The school leaders ensure that the organizational decisions align with their goals and the needs of students and professional staff.
  - The school provides academic intervention and/or enrichment support to students at all levels. Programs and instructional activities are organized based on students' needs and constantly monitored to ensure that they support students' academic improvement. Therefore, the needs of all student subgroups are addressed for further instructional growth.
  - Teacher teams meet regularly to discuss the needs of their targeted students. Staff developers, coaches and consultants support teachers in classrooms to ensure that their practice hones in on students' entry points of learning for academic breakthrough.
- School leaders and staff work collaboratively to regularly assess the effectiveness of their professional learning communities resulting in teachers taking ownership of the process.
  - Distributed leadership is evident as teacher teams engage in collaborative inquiry work resulting in teacher empowerment and group autonomy. In addition, teachers evaluate how the inquiry work is consistent in classrooms leading to the enhancement of their own learning process and leadership development. As teachers go on classroom inter-visitations, they collect the formative data in order to analyze and share findings at these collaborative meetings to assess the effectiveness of their work.
  - The school leaders use a variety of protocols and formative assessments to ascertain teacher effectiveness in classrooms. As teachers receive feedback, a capacity-building plan is put in place for implementation resulting in more effective delivery of instruction.

## **What the school needs to improve**

- Ensure that the curriculum and student learning tasks are rigorous and engaging so that all students increase academic performance.
  - The school has made a concerted effort in aligning the units of study and rubrics to the Common Core State Standards. All students are required to complete social studies and science projects based on their units of study. Nonetheless, the academic rigor is inconsistent across grades and content areas resulting in uneven student articulation of their learning and how this learning connects to real world situations.
  - The curriculum and learning tasks reflect alignment with key State Standards. While there is evidence of the Workshop Model implementation across classrooms, the emphasis on rigorous habits and higher order thinking skills is inconsistent, thus, neglecting all students the opportunity to reflect, discover and take ownership of their learning.
- Further improve the setting of measurable and differentiated goals for special education students to meet their challenging needs.
  - The school uses data to form strategy groups to address the needs of special education students. While there is intent of differentiation of instruction to meet the challenging needs of this student population, this is not an embedded practice across all classrooms, thus leading to uneven instructional outcomes.
  - Teachers use academic and social emotional data to plan tasks to support the goals of special education students. However, some of the activities deny students the opportunity to gain academic independence.
- Build on the differentiated instructional practices in place via the Workshop Model to provide students with more challenging activities aligned to their learning needs.
  - As per the principal, the Workshop Model lends itself to the differentiated instruction model. Teachers hold individual conferences with students to align instruction to their needs. While there is evidence of differentiated instruction, not all students are making consistent achievement gains.
  - The school community focuses on student data to align their teaching practices to the adjusted curriculum based on students' needs. However, the implementation is inconsistent.
- Refine the systems and structures in place to evaluate practices to continue the upward trend of instructional and organizational coherence.
  - School leaders use protocols and observations to assess and evaluate instructional practices. They realize that the refinement of these protocols will help them develop a more systemic approach resulting in enhanced teacher practice and improved student outcomes.
  - Although the school uses ongoing walkthroughs to monitor curriculum and instruction, a more refined system is needed to analyze the data and inform adjustments to teacher practices and curriculum in order to accelerate academic outcomes for all students.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

<b>School name: The School of International Cultures</b>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?		<b>X</b>		
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?			<b>X</b>	
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?			<b>X</b>	
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			<b>X</b>	
<b>Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			<b>X</b>	
2.2 Align assessments to curriculum and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?			<b>X</b>	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends?			<b>X</b>	
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?			<b>X</b>	

<b>Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?			<b>X</b>				
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?		<b>X</b>					
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			<b>X</b>				
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?			<b>X</b>				
<b>Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?			<b>X</b>				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			<b>X</b>				
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?			<b>X</b>				
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?				<b>X</b>			
<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?		<b>X</b>					
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			<b>X</b>				
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?			<b>X</b>				
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?			<b>X</b>				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>