

# Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**International High School at Union Square**

**M438**

**40 Irving Place  
New York  
NY 10003**

**Principal: Gaylea Prichard-Silvers**

**Dates of review: December 4-5, 2012**

**Lead Reviewer: Marisol C. Bradbury**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

International High School at Union Square is a high school with 176 students from 9th through grade 11. The school population comprises 13% Black, 43% Hispanic, 3% White, and 40% Asian students. The student body includes 95% English language learners and 1% special education students. Boys account for 61% of the students enrolled and girls account for 39%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 82%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The curriculum consistently emphasizes higher order skills and CCLS aligned tasks so that the diverse population of English Language Learners is cognitively engaged. (1.1)
  - Units of study culminate in projects that incorporate inquiry based learning, student choice, and application of learning from multiple perspectives. For example, unit three on India culminated with a project in which students had to analyze documents, create simulations, and research various elements of ancient Indian civilization, including religions, social structure, and governments. Students had to use their own backgrounds to write an essay in response to the driving question: “Do belief systems unite or divide civilizations?” This project allows ELLs to demonstrate high level thinking and ownership of their learning as it relates to their background and life experiences.
  - In their subject area teams, teachers meet daily to analyze student work as it relates to their lesson plans. Social Studies teachers modified the upcoming lesson by adding more opportunities for writing and discussion as a result of their assessment of student low-level understanding on previous lesson. This collaboration allows teachers to refine lesson plans, assignments, and identify scaffolding techniques to use in future lessons to support and cognitively engage ELL’s.
- Teachers articulate a sense of responsibility for the learning of all students by planning and teaching lessons aligned to the shared belief that students learn at a different pace and need to be challenged accordingly. (1.2)
  - As members of the International Network for Public Schools, teachers, administrators, and staff articulate and practice a belief that everyone is responsible for creating experiential, project based learning, integrating language and content, and promoting heterogeneity and collaboration. Units of study indicate alignment to CCLS, projects, depth of knowledge information, unit content and language objectives, a hook of interest as motivation for ELL’s, driving questions and appropriate texts to accompany each lesson. In this way students are engaged and understand the expectations for their learning and the learning of their peers.
  - Across classrooms, teachers use visuals, graphic organizers, independent and small group work, repetition, reading, writing, and formative assessments to determine language acquisition and learning. In a US History lesson, the teacher wrote on the board: “ Was the American revolution justified?” and asked students to define the word “justified”, followed by series of critical thinking questions about war. Students were asked to draw on post its, engage in a gallery walk, read aloud, gather important facts, complete graphic organizers, and select important arguments to present to the class. This was followed by a homework assignment of their choice that would prepare them for a debate during

the next lesson. This variety of strategies engages students throughout the lesson and provides multiple entry points for learning.

- The school has a highly developed culture of mutual trust and respect that supports the academic, social, and emotional well-being of students newly arrived to the country. (1.4)
  - The principal articulates a theory of action that if there is collaboration among colleagues and professional development opportunities, then together, they can own the learning of students, including social-emotional, and academics. Teachers meet daily in their subject area teams and grade level teams to look at student work and conduct case studies of students performing at low levels. Teachers meet with students to discuss their progress and ways to better support them. Students share their struggles, areas of difficulties, and how they learn best during these discussions. As a result, teachers use individualized strategies based on students' academic, social, and emotional needs and students articulate a sense of responsibility for their learning and the success of the school.
  - Students meet in their weekly advisory group to participate in group discussion, analysis of their academic progress, and community service work. Students stated that they are aware of their academic progress and were vocal about their desire to attend college visits organized by the school. They also indicated that they love their teachers, principals, peers, and their school because of the many supports available to them. As a consequence, the data reflects an increased number of 11<sup>th</sup> graders taking the PSAT and SAT, attending college visits, higher scores on internship exhibition projects, and higher attendance and completion reports of students involved in both school based and external extracurricular activities.
- The school's assessments, rubrics, and grading policies are aligned to standards and measure common skills to evaluate student progress across classes. (2.2)
  - Across classrooms, teachers use the International Network for Public Schools classroom and school wide rubrics that provide a clear understanding of the conditions needed to support the learning of students as well as the mastery of academic skills. Consequently, students receive meaningful feedback by their teachers as to what is needed in order to improve their grades and learning.
  - Across grades and subjects and at the end of every term, teachers use a common portfolio assessment tool to assess student outcomes and adjust curriculum according to trends in the data and student interest. Teachers assign projects that include choices of topics, themes, or units. Students are asked to gather multiple perspectives and evidence, thus demonstrating their ability to problem solve, and gain deep understanding of content of their choice. As a result, teachers are able to track student progress toward goals on self selected material.

## What the school needs to improve

- Communicate high expectations to the entire staff and develop a system to provide feedback to families relative to student progress towards college and career readiness. (3.4)
  - The principal and newly assigned assistant principal communicate the expectations to teachers as per the International Network Framework for teaching and provide meaningful feedback through formative, and informal feedback. Although there is a system of accountability for those expectations, administrators have not yet developed a culture that supports a mutual system of accountability, preventing the reinforcement of professional expectations for those teachers needing improvement.
  - School leaders strongly believe that all students are capable of reaching their maximal potential. As they move forward, they are developing expectations connected to a path for college and career readiness and systems to communicate with families. Some parents expressed that they have been informed of their child's academic progress and that they would want to see more access to college, including support for the application process, and more academic courses aligned to college readiness. However, some parents were not aware of the systems already put in place by the school or plans to strengthen college and career readiness, thus hindering their children's chances to make use of such programs. This results in a lack of a personalized communication with parents who are unfamiliar with the language and the educational system, so they are not informed of the expectations for college and career readiness.
- Develop a process to evaluate the quality of school level decisions with particular attention to the alignment to the CCLS to increase the coherence of practices and supports across the school. (5.1)
  - School leaders believe that if they provide professional development and create the conditions for teachers to collaborate, then teachers will create effective conditions for student learning. While this theory of action has helped create a culture of collaboration, there is still a need to improve the pedagogy of a few teachers in order to meet the expectations of teacher effectiveness. School leaders are developing systems of accountability for such expectations that results in the improvement of pedagogy across the school in order to provide all students with high quality teaching and alignment to CCLS.
  - School leaders and teachers regularly meet to discuss and assess the expectations for students, advisory curriculum, and college and career programs in response to student learning and achievement levels. The school community is now discussing and developing a process to regularly evaluate the alignment of their curricula, programs, and projects to meet the expectations of the CCLS. This process in progress of alignment to the CCLS limits increased rigor in the curriculum, and higher levels of college readiness.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: International High School at Union Square	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score			X				
<b>Instructional Core</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula, including the arts, physical and health education, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?			X				
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by a research-based, common teaching framework and is aligned to curricula, engaging and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?			X				
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels?			X				
<b>School Culture</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X				
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve them?			X				
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet students' learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			X				
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X				
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching with a research-based, common teaching framework 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?			X				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an <b>inquiry approach</b> that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			X				
5.1 Evaluate the quality of school- level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?		X					
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed