



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

International High School at Prospect Heights

High School K524

**883 Classon Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11225**

Principal: Nedda De Castro

**Date of review: April 14, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Rod Bowen**

The School Context

International High School at Prospect Heights is a high school with 402 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 29% Black, 40% Hispanic, 13% White, 16% Asian, and 1% American Indian or Alaskan Native students. The student body includes 91% English language learners and 5% special education students. Boys account for 58% of the students enrolled and girls account for 42%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 85.1%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards	Celebration	Well Developed
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	Additional Findings	Well Developed
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	Additional Findings	Well Developed
School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	Focus	Proficient
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	Additional Findings	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

The school's curricula are strategically aligned to content and Common Core Learning Standards as well as instructional shifts as they emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills.

Impact

All learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities, have access to rigorous academic tasks that are embedded in a coherent way across grades and subjects ensuring the promotion college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's curricula across content areas are coherently developed through a backward planning process that uses Common Core aligned performance based assessment task rubrics as starting points. For example, the essential question in the 9th/10th grade social studies class, "What are the consequences of corruption for people in a society," is designed to move students toward mastering the performance indicator: Analysis and Persuasion, which is found on the Social Studies/Research Paper Graduation Portfolio Rubric.
- All content area curricular documents highlight the strategic integration of the instructional shifts: academic language and knowledge in the discipline. English language arts and social studies plans evidenced a focus on text based conversations and writing from sources. For example, an English language arts lesson plan outlined how students would identify a quote that showed a character's position on race or their African heritage.
- Common Core Learning Standards found in curricular materials include: integrating multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each; create interpretive and responsive texts to demonstrate knowledge and sophisticated understanding of the connections between life and the literary world; and translate quantitative information expressed visually or mathematically into words.
- The curricula referenced strategically assigned heterogeneous grouping as well as protocols that the groups were to follow such as Round Robin and Listen-Talk-Write. In addition, graphic organizers were available to inform both individual and group efforts.
- There was also evidence of ability based tasks that were aligned to the same learning objectives. For example, in a social studies lesson plan there were versions of the reading passage that included relevant content specific vocabulary in bold as well as sentence starters for those who needed such support. Documents from a science lesson showed three different levels of active listening prompts from academic vocabulary recognition to note taking.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school consistently communicates high expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness offering ongoing feedback on student progress to both students and families.

Impact

However, parents are not yet positioned to successfully partner with the school in directly supporting student progress. In addition, students have yet to own their educational experiences as they prepare for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- A parent who noted his use of PupilPath to ensure that his child's assignments were turned in on time, mentioned that many parents are not comfortable using the online technology. However, parents were in agreement that the school utilizes various modes of communication to keep them abreast of their children's academic progress and overall well-being. One of the parents stated, "By phone, by letters, in person; everything that happens, I know."
- Though the school coordinates family information sessions regarding graduation requirements and the college application process, as well as portfolio nights, most of the parents were not able to speak to ways in which the school empowers them with clear means to support their children's progress toward meeting the expectations that the school has for them.
- Through the school's advisory program, students participate in a college preparation curriculum that was developed in partnership with College Access: Research & Access (CARA). This curriculum provides students with opportunities to: practice executing the steps of filling out a college application, interview seniors who are at various stages of the college application process, beginning to identify colleges that are best suited for them, and explore different ways to pay for college.
- Students articulated that the group work in the school as well as the process for preparing for formal panel presentations instill the life skills of public speaking and team work. However, students were not able to provide examples of how the school's nurturing and supportive environment has set them up to independently make choices regarding their educational experience and next steps.
- A senior claimed that her internship gives her an idea of what it's like to work in an office. She noted that other seniors have internships in such sites as: a medical center, a school for the deaf and other offices.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Across all classrooms observed, instruction reflected a commitment to providing high quality supports and extensions through purposeful heterogeneous grouping, student collaboration and language acquisition.

Impact

Instruction is coherent and provides all students including English language learners and special education students with appropriately challenging tasks that yield higher order thinking in student work products.

Supporting Evidence

- In a science class, the activity was for groups to collaborate on a student friendly version of a Science Lab Report Writing rubric that they would use to assess their work in an upcoming lab. Groups were observed analyzing the expectations within the level of the rubric that they were assigned. The teacher asked clarifying questions regarding academic terms such as: revision, quotation and citation. As one group was preparing to rephrase a criterion found in the rubric, they were overheard sharing examples of inappropriate versus appropriate academic language, “We should never write ‘thingy’ or ‘stuff’ if what we mean is like, ‘glucose’ or something.”
- In another science class, students within groups had clearly defined roles designed to ensure engagement and support all members of the group. All groups were observed reading and annotating text, and focusing on terms that needed clarification. Students in one group were engaged in a constructive debate over the meaning of the word “solvent”. In another group, the person whose role it was to identify and help the group clarify challenging vocabulary anticipated the possible misunderstanding of a peer and asked if she knew what the word “precipitate” meant. She then asked her to share what it meant in her own words. This occurred before the group reached the sentence with the word “precipitate” in it.
- In a math class, members within groups were engaged in different stages of their individual performance based assessment. Groups were able to develop their own tasks for this motion project which required using a free falling object to investigate the relationship between quadratic, linear and constant functions. Students were observed discussing and interpreting data points, offering feedback to each other and working on their math reports.
- Students in an English Language Arts class engaged in character analysis of *Romeo and Juliette*, specifically focusing on the idea of conflicting loyalties. After individuals used scaffolded prompts that offered the conjunctions: because, but and so to write out their responses; they shared their work within their groups. The groups then had to identify which sentence amongst them was the strongest at identifying a character that clearly exhibited conflicting loyalties.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Assessments and rubrics utilized in all classes are aligned to the school's curricula and clearly highlight student progress toward mastery.

Impact

Students and teachers receive actionable feedback regarding student achievement that is used to adjust curricular and instructional decisions so that all students demonstrate mastery.

Supporting Evidence

- All students exhibited an understanding of how rubrics are used to guide their efforts. One noted that before starting a task, the class assessed a sample student essay using the rubric for the assignment and stated, "We tried not to make the mistakes that that person made."
- When asked how they would improve specific tasks if given the opportunity to do them again, all students were able to cite rubric aligned next steps, without having to refer the rubrics or teacher comments. Student reflections included, "I would improve my claim with more evidence," "I have to do better at explaining the mathematical steps," "I had to make it more engaging for the audience by making it more personal," and "I would make more connections to the real world."
- Vertically aligned projects and performance based assessments as well as rubrics and panel presentations drive various aspects of teaching and learning throughout the school. Ninth and tenth grade students work on formative core projects and portfolios that are assessed by rubrics that serve as benchmarks that lead toward the graduation rubrics that guide and assess student work in the eleventh and twelfth grade. As students present, they are assessed by a panel of both teachers and students. These panels document and track their feedback in a Google spreadsheet. This feedback goes back to the teachers, mentors and students so that adjustments to teaching and learning can be made. Samples of specific feedback that informed further mentoring and instruction to twelfth grade students include: "revise conclusion to show the relevance and significance of her opinion and why the topic of the essay is important to society," and "need to connect background research to experiment".
- Data from such performance based assessment work informed the search for and identification of writing models that could be used across the school. A science teacher added that the data informed decision to focus on writing across the curriculum; specifically the use of Hochman Writing Method has resulted in students adding information to their writing and providing more details to support their claims.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

All teachers are engaged in inquiry based professional collaborations where they systematically analyze their own practices as well as student work and data.

Impact

The instructional capacity and coherence of teachers has increased along with student achievement for targeted students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams are focused on vertical alignment, student work and their own practices to answer the question, “What do my students need to know, be able to do, and be able to explain in order to produce graduation-ready work in my content by the 12th grade?” The ongoing work of teams that addresses this question is grounded in the graduation portfolio rubrics that exist for every core content area.
- Interdisciplinary teams meet two to three times per week to look at student work, conduct curriculum shares and identify interventions and common teaching strategies to increase student progress. One such team was observed supporting a teacher who presented the focusing question, “How do I get students to ask higher order questions?” The team followed a modified protocol which gave the presenting teacher time to contextualize her efforts to date, the team time to review documents provided, as well as an opportunity to reflect on the pedagogical challenge and offer suggestions. One such suggestion was to develop a task where students’ questions were grounded in the written work of their peers and specifically geared toward the theme of the written piece; for example: dealing with power.
- Teachers noted that they consistently share practices and protocols for English language development including identifying the best supportive partners for strategic group assignments, when and how to leverage native language support and focusing on the same skill across content areas.
- Teachers agreed that the collective efforts of teacher teams has had a direct impact on their approaches to student collaboration with a focus on ways to get students to talk with each other about their learning while acquiring English as a second language.