



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

International High School at Union Square

High School M438

**40 Irving Place
Manhattan
NY 10003**

Principal: Daniel Walsh

**Date of review: March 4, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Vivian Orlen**

The School Context

International High School at Union Square is a high school with 326 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 14% Black, 43% Hispanic, 11% White, and 32% Asian students. The student body includes 85% English language learners and 6% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 88.0%.

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	Focus	Developing
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	Developing
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	Developing
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	Additional Findings	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	Celebration	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry based professional learning that promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards. Distributed leadership structures are in place.

Impact

Structured professional collaborations result in strengthening the instructional practice of teachers. Leadership structures ensure teachers have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has an interdisciplinary team structure led by faculty team leaders who facilitate the scheduling of portfolio assessment schedules, provide peer feedback from inter-visitations as well as instructional support, and ensure students are known well by facilitating teams in analyzing student performance and determining appropriate supports. Faculty participate on committees that address advisory planning, professional development for all staff, hiring and support of new teachers, as well as restorative justice.
- Faculty and staff that include guidance counselors and social workers meet on multiple teams eight times a month. Interdisciplinary teams engage in a student based discussion using a kid talk protocol every Monday. Wednesday meetings are used to analyze student work and adjust curricula and instruction in relation to the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. Vertical subject teams meet twice weekly in common prep periods to design projects, align rubrics, and discuss student progress.
- During a grade level teacher team meeting observed, faculty discussed increasing their instructional capacity regarding the school's instructional focus centered on Danielson 3C student engagement and language development for English language learners. Every teacher participates in scheduled inter-visitations with their teams both as observer and as host. Teachers develop individualized goals for the instructional focus in their practice and feedback provided by peers specifically addresses those areas.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Curricula and academic tasks emphasize rigorous habits and higher order thinking skills inconsistently across subjects and for specific groups of learners. Curricula and tasks reflect planning to provide students access to the curricula.

Impact

Cognitive engagements for all learners and particularly English language learners is uneven due to inconsistencies in curricula, academic tasks, and planning for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- An Integrated Algebra lesson plan on solving equations had a learning activity purposefully planned with heterogeneous groups. Each group received a different algebra problem to solve and color-coded leveled roles for each student. For example, student two used the equation to draw a visual representation labeling all sides and student four found the length of each missing side of the polygon. However, in reviewing lesson plans this practice of specifying roles and/or strategic access points within groups was not consistently evident.
- While all units and lesson plans contain both content objectives and language objectives, the language structures associated with the content objectives are not fully aligned across subjects. For example, a Global Literature unit on Macbeth listed language objectives that included using key vocabulary to summarize and analyze events in the play and to accurately use quotation marks in citing lines. While these objectives support the content objective of referring to source information, it is unclear which language objectives align with supporting a diversity of learners with the higher order content objective of creating an argument assessing Lady Macbeth's plans in Act One.
- While all units and lessons incorporate the use of driving questions that target higher levels of thinking using Webb's Depth of Knowledge, their application of driving questions varied across classrooms. For example, a Global History course had a single driving question for a lesson "To what extent was the interaction between civilizations of the 15th century a positive or negative transformation for the world?" that had a specific context of 15th century Spain in the lesson. However, a visual arts class plan listed seven driving questions that were not all addressed in the learning activities, creating a lack of clarity.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to the instructional focus and a set of beliefs about how students learn best informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Across classrooms, teaching strategies including questioning and scaffolds for English language learners inconsistently provide multiple entry points.

Impact

Across classrooms, students were unevenly engaged in appropriately challenging tasks resulting in uneven demonstration of higher order thinking skills.

Supporting Evidence

- Although the principal spoke to a focus on students working collaboratively and using peer-to-peer partnering as a support for strengthening the speaking skills of English language learners in all classrooms, these practices were not consistently observed across the majority of classrooms visited. For example, all students in a math class were completing the same math assignment even when many students reported not understanding how to solve the problems. Given that there was limited student engagement, there were limited opportunities for students to practice speaking with one another.
- Although the principal, teachers, and students described a focus on revision and citing evidence in writing and speaking, this practice was not consistently observed across the majority of classrooms visited and not always effectively implemented when observed. For example, in an upper level English class, students had completed a unit on August Wilson and were engaged in peer editing. However, students were not clear on the revision process and the criteria by which they needed to provide feedback.
- Across classrooms visited, students were completing worksheets and/or answering factual based questions. Scaffolds to encourage greater student participation were inconsistently offered. For example, in only three out of eight classrooms visited were students grouped with intention and purpose.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use assessments and rubrics that are becoming aligned with the school's curricula. The school is developing their use of common assessments to measure student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas.

Impact

Although assessment results are starting to be used to adjust curricula and instruction, overall variation in tools and in their analysis limits feedback to teachers and students.

Supporting Evidence

- The school is working with International Network for Public Schools and the New York State Performance Consortium to develop portfolio projects using graduation ready criteria with rubrics designed with discipline specific thinking skills. The faculty has begun work to align project assessments vertically to better ensure students are able to meet the demands of the projects as they move to the next level.
- International Network for Public Schools (INPS) and faculty recently designed new rubrics for grades nine and ten so that the criteria for promotion from "lower school" to "upper school" are more consistent and transparent for students and teachers. These rubrics have been in use since February 2015 within academic classes, and will be used for the first time school-wide for portfolio presentations in June 2015.
- Student work products displayed in classrooms and hallways did not consistently include rubrics with targeted feedback from teachers on next steps for how students could improve. Although students spoke to how they use rubrics for assignments and how teachers will offer them next steps, they shared that most of the time the feedback was inconsistent and limited to long term project work.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations connected to the Danielson Framework for Teaching to the entire staff and provide training for those expectations. Teacher teams and staff consistently communicate high expectations for all students and offer ongoing guidance and supports to help students prepare for their next level of learning.

Impact

There is an established culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff and students and provide supports to achieve those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- All upper school students receive weekly college readiness workshops with guidance counselors with grade 12 students receiving individualized college counselling. The school has also established a French language College Now course with the French Consulate at LaGuardia Community College. Further support for college access is provided by two International High School at Union Square graduates who were hired to provide year-round support to current students in navigating admissions, seeking financial aid, and registering for classes.
- Every student has advisory across the school. Advisories meet regularly in small groups providing guidance and support within a vertically aligned curriculum that builds career and college awareness, and reinforces academic and positive behavioral expectations, as well as social emotional learning. The advisor is the main point of contact between family and school and acts as the student advocate in coordinating needed attendance and guidance supports.
- High academic expectations are communicated through the school's portfolio process. Teachers serve on panels for upper school students with upper school students serving on panels for lower school students. Students present college ready content papers and projects twice a year, receive feedback, and revise their work utilizing the feedback, often re-presenting their work to meet mastery level standards.
- The principal communicates high expectations to staff via weekly communications and the staff handbook. Trainings are regularly provided to staff multiple times through the year by the INPS and the New York City Writing Project (NYCWP) to address aspects of the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shift expectations from the Common Core. For example, INPS conducted a three-day training for all staff in August that included the topics of student engagement through scaffolding of tasks and language development. The NYCWP conducts monthly trainings and have included accessing complex text strategies, process writing, and writing across disciplines.