



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2015-2016

**International Community High School**

**High School X334**

**345 Brook Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10454**

**Principal: Berena Cabarcas**

**Date of review: February 23, 2016  
Lead Reviewer: Gary Knight**

## The School Context

International Community High School is a high school with 483 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 5% Asian, 12% Black, 80% Hispanic, and 2% White students. The student body includes 74% English Language Learners and 2% students with disabilities. Boys account for 57% of the students enrolled and girls account for 43%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 83.4%.

## School Quality Criteria

<b>Instructional Core</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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 <i>Framework for Teaching</i> , aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
<b>School Culture</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	<b>Celebration</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff, and provide training for those expectations. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that systematically communicates a unified set of high expectations for all students and provide clear, focused and effective feedback and guidance supports.

### Impact

The school has developed a culture of mutual accountability and ensures that students, including high-need subgroups, own their educational experience.

### Supporting Evidence

- International High School is a part of the International Network for Public Schools (INPS) that serves a high population of English Language Learners (ELLs). As such, the school's expectations are based on the INPS principles, which are: heterogeneity and collaboration, experiential learning, language and content development, localized autonomy and responsibility, and one learning model for all. The school provides every staff member the principles along with its meanings, components of a successful INPS class and what to look for. For example, the document reviewed defined experiential learning for staff as, "expansion of the 21<sup>st</sup> century schools beyond the four walls of the school building that motivates adolescents and enhances their capacity to successfully participate in modern society." The components listed include: student engagement, project based activities and classroom environment. Based on the model, it was communicated to staff that they are to provide authentic learning opportunities where all students can participate at their own levels, and teachers are expected to set a positive tone and create a safe learning environment where students are encouraged to take risks.
- The school leaders also conduct professional development opportunities and provide staff a detailed plan for the school year's instructional focus. For example, the PD plan contains a targeted list of teacher performance outcomes, which includes differentiating for low literacy students in core classes. Throughout the year, teachers work collectively to address expectations through teacher conversations, shared experiences and best practices, which also presents opportunities for collegial support and staff holding each other accountable. Teachers also complete an end of year reflection activity to assess how their practices aligned to set expectations.
- In order to graduate, all students are required to complete Performance Based Assessment Tasks (PBATs) in which they demonstrate knowledge and skills by applying their learning to an experience beyond school, such as college or career settings. Students are evaluated and receive feedback on their presentation through a rubric and an oral portfolio evaluation document that captures targeted feedback, strengths and areas for improvement. For example, a PBAT document reviewed provided the following targeted feedback, "student presented literary elements. Next time, use and explain Tier III vocabulary by putting it into context and giving definition of terms." It also stated that the student made a personal connection to Israel and Palestine and real world connections were strong, however, counterargument needs to be stronger.

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best. Teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

### Impact

Teaching practices are informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and the instructional shifts, and all learners are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks. However, there are missed opportunities for students to further demonstrate higher order thinking skills in student work.

### Supporting Evidence

- Lessons observed demonstrated the articulated set of beliefs that their students are capable of high level thinking and that through effective scaffolding and structured activities students can learn. Classes visited included multiple strategies to engage a variety of learners including the use of technology to provide visual aids for the skills being taught, a language objective to address the English Language Learners, graphic organizers and scaffolds. For example, in a grade 11 English lesson the teacher showed pictures on the interactive white board of a businessman and asked the students what they saw in the picture, requiring students to use textual clues to make inferences. Students were provided an activity sheet to help support the completing of tasks. All students were actively engaged in completing the assignment. One student stated, “An inference is when the author doesn’t tell you exactly, but you figure it out.”
- Additional scaffolding was observed in a grade 9/10 lesson on the gods and goddesses of ancient Greece. The content goal was for students to read and annotate for information using the read/retell/respond protocol. An English instructional shift was observed as students were introduced to key vocabulary and academic vocabulary content. Students completed a Do Now activity to write their “wonderings” from the video they had viewed the day before. The teacher provided them a three-column organizer labeled: see, think, wonder. Students completed the wonder column with such wonders as, “Why is there no death in the Golden Age?” and “Why didn’t Kronos want his son to take his place?”
- Lessons included alignment to curricula and the Common Core Learning Standards. For example, a grade 9/10 math lesson engaged students in building a function that models a relationship between two functions. In an English class students were using their schema and textual clues to make inferences. Text complexity and text-based answers were planned for in all lessons.
- Although lessons observed included multiple entry points and students were engaged, higher-order thinking questions, while present in planning documents, were not observed across all classrooms. In some classes, students were asked to provide simple recall information, and in another class no questioning was observed at all. In one class, questioning provoked some higher-level thinking. For example, when reviewing the definition of ruler, posed the question, “What is the connection between a ruler used to measure and a person who rules?”

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. The curricula and academic tasks emphasize rigorous habits.

### Impact

The school makes purposeful decisions to build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students. Higher order skills are emphasized in curricula across grades and subjects for all learners.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school backward plans instructional units with the guidance of the consortium's Common Core aligned Performance Based Assessment Task (PBAT) rubric. Every teacher who teaches the same grade collaborates through the use of one document. They also present a written portfolio to their colleagues and receive feedback from each other. In addition, they are supported with an academic coach who helps them to develop and refine curricula.
- In an effort to build coherence, the school uses a common "Clarity Unit Planner" across all grades and subjects. It includes: understanding goal/essential question, and content knowledge/skills taught/assessed/outcomes. For example, a grade 11 unit on modern slavery addresses the following essential questions: Does society need tradition to survive? How do economics shape conflict? And what empowers people during time of crisis? Student outcomes are planned for based on the Common Core standards such as; Identifying the main idea or theme of a text or create an effective claim, citing relevant evidence and/or literary elements that support a theme or claim, and analyzing and connecting evidence to theme or claim.
- To further improve curriculum and instruction, the school has a vertical alignment plan for the teachers to use with performance indicators across grades and subjects. In addition, teachers on the leadership team articulated the need to further ensure that curricula emphasize rigor for all students. As a result, outstanding criteria were added to rubric to increase the level of cognitive engagement required of tasks planned for in curricula.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### **Findings**

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula. The school uses the assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subjects.

### **Impact**

The assessments provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. Results of assessments are used to adjust curricula and instruction.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- The school administers PBATS, end of unit tests, and writing assessments. A computer adaptive reading assessment is also used as a means of measuring student progress. Student outcomes are captured with the JumpRope, an online grading system. Students are exposed to rubrics and receive feedback that informs them of ways to improve. For example, students had to answer a Global History writing assessment on how artifacts teach us about ancient civilization in three to five paragraphs. The students were provided feedback on each part of their assessment with a rubric aligned checklist that informed them of how they did, including comments such as, "You can go into deeper detail in your second paragraph," "Write a description of your artifact in the third paragraph," and "Each paragraph [must] have a claim, evidence, analysis and link." This writing assessment also has a rubric that provides additional feedback.
- The school uses various rubrics across grades and content areas to support the monitoring and grading of student performance. Some examples of rubrics used are; Early Civilization Portfolio rubric, analytical essay, write a claim, support a claim, support a claim with evidence and analysis, and Science project experiment.
- Teachers track data from assessments and use what has been revealed about each student's performance to adjust instruction. For example, the school tracks students' PBATs progress across grades and measures student outcomes in terms of achieving competent criteria in identified skills. This information is then used to determine next teacher moves. An example of feedback for a teacher to help determine next steps for a student read, "Create deeper and more meaningful interdisciplinary connections in the humanities and STEM content area."

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

Teacher teams systematically analyze key elements of teacher work including classroom practice, assessment data and student work for students they share or whom they are focused. Distributed leadership structures are embedded so that there is effective teacher leadership.

### Impact

Teacher team analysis of data has resulted in shared improvements in teacher practice and mastery of goals for groups of students. Teachers play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school has six interdisciplinary teams that meet twice a week to analyze teacher practice, monitor student progress and review student data. Teachers review classroom practices and share ideas and strategies based on student outcomes. Teachers articulated that their practice has improved as a result due to sharing of resources and the opportunity to teach each other. As a result, teachers are better able to differentiate and more effectively group students to achieve desired outcomes. It was evidenced in multiple classrooms that utilize trans-language strategies, which are scaffolds to help emergent bilinguals learn English, were implemented as a means of differentiation through small group and pairing of students when possible.
- As a school that serves many students whose native language is not English, and based on data from English Language Arts Regents, teachers use a strategic reading program to assist students who need to become independent readers and assess progress through Reading Plus, an online literacy assessment. Based on reading summary data, 30% of the class had an increase in reading comprehension of 10% or more, 40% of a class increased a grade level in reading comprehension and 70% of the class increased at least one grade level in vocabulary. To master vocabulary in the Reading Plus Program, students must use context clues to infer meaning of new words and use the new words correctly in sentences 100% of the time.
- The school leader stated, “I don’t buy until teacher asks” to indicate that she provides teachers autonomy to make decisions that have a school-wide impact. For example, the Reading Plus program, which was based on teacher recommendation, started as a pilot program and now has grown to a full-fledged program. Teachers are also responsible for adding grading criteria to capture “outstanding” elements of a PBAT. In addition, teachers developed an interdisciplinary humanities unit that involves students going to the District of Columbia. Lastly, teachers deliver professional development sessions and are provided choices in external professional development options.