



East-West School of International Studies (25Q281)

Languages and Self-Expression: Preparing Students for a Global World through Multiple Learning Modalities

Principal: Benjamin Sherman
School Type: Intermediate and High School
Neighborhood: Flushing, Queens
Title I: Yes
Total Enrollment: 426
ELL: 71
Special Ed: 43
School Web site: www.ewsis.org

Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander:	53.3%
American Indian or Alaska Native:	0.5%
Black or African American:	20.2%
Hispanic or Latino:	21.4%
White:	4.7%

Principal’s Vision:

Principal Sherman’s goal is to prepare students for college and for a future in which Asia will continue to rise in global importance. He stresses that there is tremendous growth happening in Asia, but that schools are not giving this expansion the necessary attention. In addition to Asian language skills, Principal Sherman wants his students to acquire the technological skills necessary for a global world. He believes that in order to achieve “information literacy,” his students must learn to find and interpret information accurately through Internet channels. Technology gives East-West students access to distance-learning partnerships in China and London and facilitates their literacy skills in multiple languages. Multimedia tools also allow them to tap into their desire for self-expression and creativity.

Instructional Goals:

Literacy Skills through Self-Expression

The development of literacy skills is an integral component of every course at East-West. Principal Sherman stresses the importance of practicing reading and writing skills across disciplines. For example, students post on monthly online discussion boards about trips and events, and contribute to school blogs (powered by the blog platform Youth Voices, which is tailored to educators).

Teachers do not use specialized instructional software for literacy. Principal Sherman believes in “keeping things simple” and training students to use programs they will actually see in college or the workplace. Therefore, they mainly use the Google suite, the Microsoft Office suite, and blogs.



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Blogs and Voice Threads (a program integrated into Youth Voices blogs) are two of the tools used most frequently by East-West students for written and oral reflection. East-West has a school-wide blog (<http://youthvoices.net/school/east-west-school-international-studies-flushing-ny-usa/150>), and each teacher has his or her own class blog on which to post assignments. Some students also have individual blogs. Blogging integrates writing with reflection, discussion skills, and content knowledge. East-West students also post varied multimedia materials, from artwork to musical compositions to literature responses. Their teachers and classmates can give them feedback on their work in a collaborative process.

Using Voice Threads, students can record their responses to posted material. For example, a teacher may post a photo from a lesson on Korean painting, and students can verbally reflect upon the process: <http://voicethread.com/share/542827/>.

Many of the tools used to promote literacy at East-West also promote self-expression, which is particularly important during the challenging period of adolescence. For example, students learn about controversial topics, ranging from racism to homophobia, which they discuss with their classmates online. Principal Sherman allows students to self-monitor their blogs, and to write about issues that interest them. The public nature of the work is enough to create a sense of accountability amongst the students, and they have not posted inappropriate content.

Asian Language Literacy

As far as literacy in a second language, all school computers have Asian language options so students can type their assignments in Asian characters and read the school Web site in Asian translation. Students can also access dictation exercises that teachers have recorded with Voice Threads, and record their responses. By studying a foreign language that requires them to learn new characters and scripts, students develop better study skills. Principal Sherman believes that securing these skills gives students the confidence to do well in their other courses.

International Awareness through Distance Learning

The school has three Magic Jacks, which are telephone jacks that can be plugged into any computer and connected to a phone. For a fee of \$40 for three years, they can be used to call anywhere in the United States and Canada (or to another Magic Jack anywhere in the world). Principal Sherman lent one of these jacks to a partner school in London, and East-West has been communicating with the school for three years. Phone calls are also made to a school in China so students can learn from each other, expand their cultural awareness, and discuss different education strategies. East-West is currently working on a specific project through an Annenberg grant. Teachers in the London school identified 15 ELL children who were having difficulty with reading and writing. These students were connected with similar students at East-West so the teachers could problem solve and offer each other support. The teachers communicate with each other once a week and students communicate once a month.

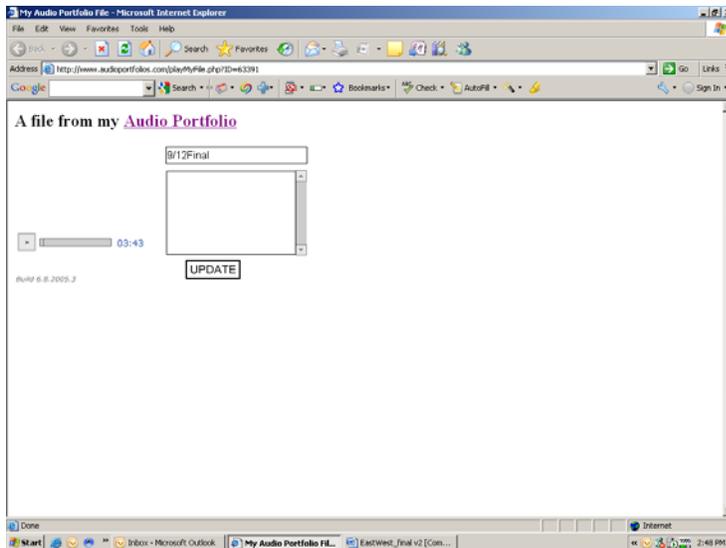
Student Engagement In and Out of the Classroom

East-West has a consistent attendance rate of 94.3 percent, which Principal Sherman believes is a result of effective classroom engagement. He cites high blog usage as an example of students engaging with each other and with course material.

In the classroom:

Multimodal Learning and Differentiation

Students are more engaged in lessons because technology allows teachers to diversify the classroom environment and differentiate learning. Teachers are able to plan a host of assignments that students can engage in during a single classroom period. An example of how this is done can be found in East-West's language classes. The school's global emphasis requires students to choose from Japanese, Chinese, or Korean courses. The students are often asked to write something in one of these languages, put on a set of headphones, and use Windows Voice Recorder to record their voices speaking what they wrote. Their recordings are then put into a sound file and e-mailed to the teacher for evaluation. This type of assignment involves multiple learning modalities and allows students to work at their own pace.



Program to e-mail teachers audio files

Out of the classroom:

Teaching Technology to Seniors

OATS (Older Adults Technology Services) is a program at East-West in which students are paired with older adults to whom they provide technology services and training at a nearby senior center. The students serve as consultants and conduct a "needs assessment" in order to determine the senior citizen's level of technology comprehension. Typically, students in eleventh grade (approximately 70 students in a community service class) work with senior citizens for a 3-4 month period to teach them how to use the computer. They may move on to teach more advanced skills, such as how to use Voice Threads. By teaching senior citizens, students develop their own technology skills that they can bring back to East-West. The OATS teaching experience is also a means of student empowerment.

In-Person and Online Mentoring

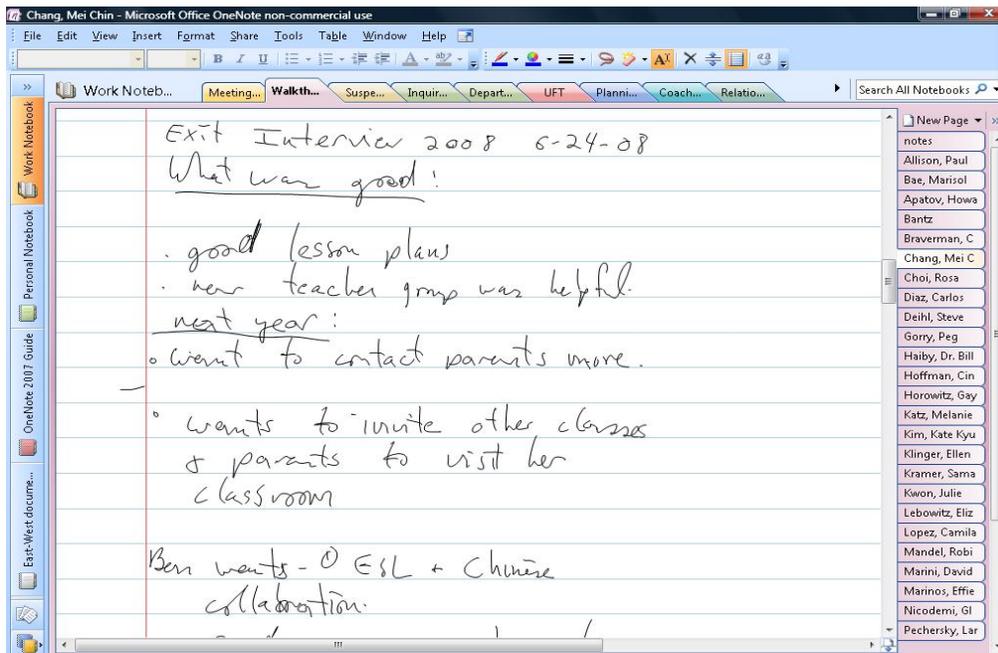
The East-West school has instated several optional programs involving technology and literacy. The i-Mentor program (<http://www.imentor.org/>) allows students to communicate with their mentors both online and in-person. The purpose of the program is to motivate students to stay committed to school and to improve their writing skills. i-Mentor provides supervised monthly events where students are able to meet with their mentors in person. Students also correspond with their mentors through weekly e-mails that are structured by writing prompts. NHK, a Japanese Broadcasting Corporation, produced a full-length feature about this program.

Administrative Goals:

Instructional Feedback for Teachers

One Note

Principal Sherman has a Lenovo X61 tablet that he carries around with him to take notes on classroom practices using Microsoft One Note. The software looks like a notebook with tabbed pages and sections. He is able to e-mail feedback to teachers within 24 hours because One Note automatically transforms his handwritten notes into text. This helps him monitor teacher performance through constant, well-organized feedback. The feedback serves as an ongoing challenge for instructors to be innovative in the classroom. Principal Sherman sees One Note as a perfect tool for principals, and has created a presentation to share it with his colleagues. One Note software can be used on a regular computer, as well, but Principal Sherman finds the handwriting feature of the tablet to be incredibly convenient.



Principal Sherman's observation notes, handwritten on his tablet computer, are automatically turned into type-written text with One Note software.

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Hoffman, Cindy - Microsoft Office OneNote non-commercial use

File Edit View Insert Format Share Tools Table Window Help

Calibri 11 B I U ...

Work Noteb... Meeting... Walkth... Suspe... Inquir... Depart... UFT Planni... Coach... Relatio...

10-31-08
Dear Ms. Hoffman,
Here is some feedback from my visit to your room today.

I observed that you have posted a particularly impressive exhibit of student work on the hallway wall outside your classroom. The work is in plastic pockets emphasizing the writing process. There are three samples for each piece of student work: a pre-writing piece, a first draft, and a final draft. Your comments and corrections guide the students as they strive to improve their writing, including calling their attention to such details as the correct way to write our school heading. I appreciate your efforts to improve our student's writing.

Here is a suggestion: Students could write reflections on what they learned from writing the assignment. A natural place to post these reflections would be in their blogs on our website. You could use the reflections to assess what they learned. Having the reflections online means that it would be simple for them to revisit the reflections in a few months when they have a few more writing assignments under their belts.

It is good to have you here.

Spoke to and emailed on 10-31-08

December 12, 2008

Second posting of samples of student work by Ms. Hoffman showing the writing process students go through in her classes, complete with three pieces of works in progress from ten different students.

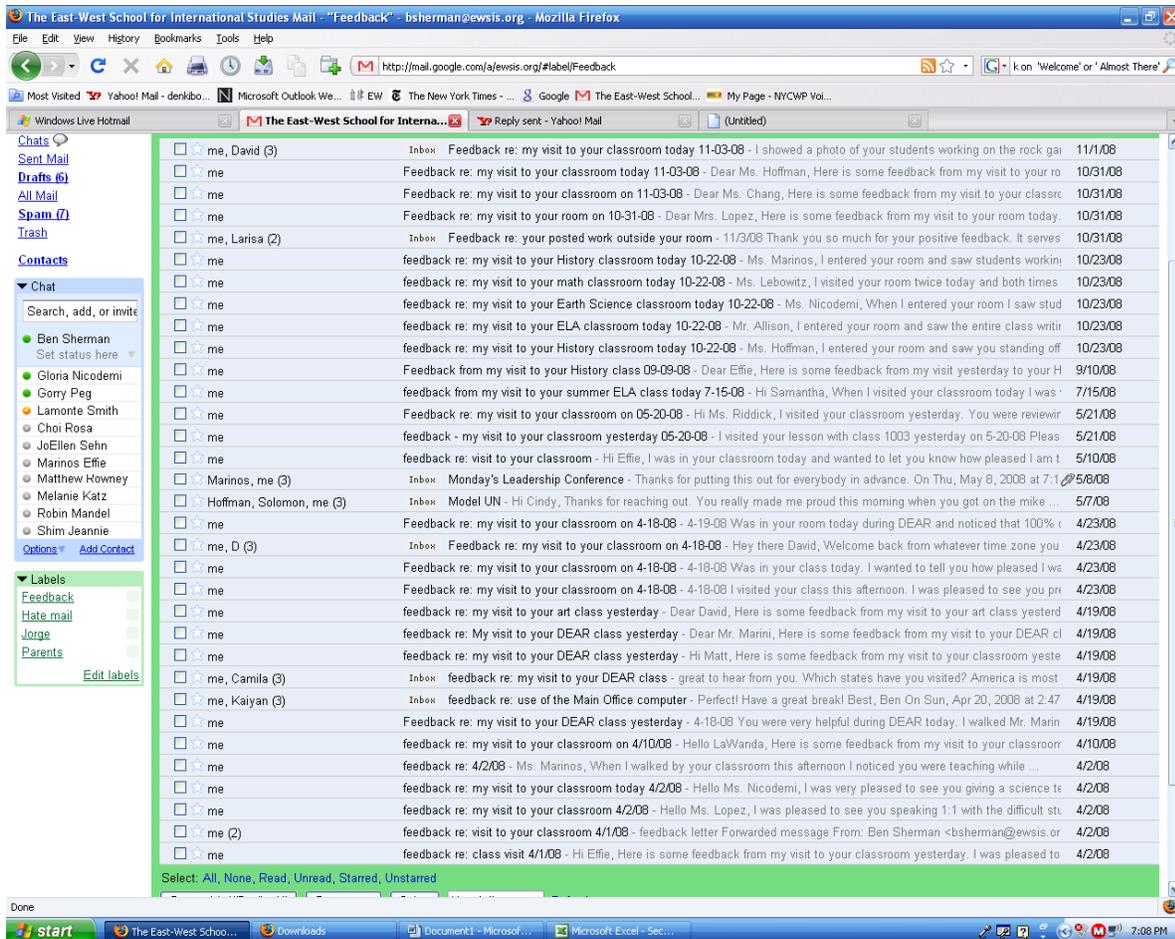
Search All Notebooks

New Page >>

- Chang, Mei C
- Choi, Rosa
- Diaz, Carlos
- Deihl, Steve
- Gorry, Peg
- Haiby, Dr. Bill
- Hoffman, Cin
- Horowitz, Gay
- Katz, Melanie
- Kim, Kate Kyu
- Klinger, Ellen
- Kramer, Sama
- Kwon, Julie
- Lebowitz, Eliz
- Lopez, Camila
- Mandel, Robi
- Marini, David
- Marinos, Effie
- Nicodemi, Gi
- Pechersky, Lar
- Rhi, Jounghye
- Rowney, Matt
- Sherman, Dr.
- Shim, Jeannie
- Tanaka, Masa
- Tauber, Aliso

He can then immediately e-mail the type-written observation feedback to the teacher.

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Feedback remains organized in the Principal's sent mailbox, as well as in the teacher's mailbox.

Communication and Collaboration:

In addition to the increased collaboration among students fostered by blogs, and the international partnerships made possible by the Magic Jack (discussed above), technology has improved the engagement of teachers and parents, both with the school and with each other. It has also extended student-teacher communication outside of the classroom.

Teachers Exchange Best Practices via Google Docs and Classroom Visits

Staff members actively contribute and assist in areas technically outside of their job description, and this commitment contributes to East-West's success in managing classrooms and students. Principal Sherman is strategic when hiring new staff and explains to interviewees that if they want to work at the school, they need to be prepared to be part of a community. This spirit of collaboration improves communication channels and allows the exchange of best practices. For example, teachers use Google Docs to post curriculum that can be shared amongst their department. In addition, Principal Sherman e-mails all teachers a weekly newsletter, "From East-to-West." There is always a section of the newsletter

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that shares positive feedback given to individual teachers with the rest of the staff. This is part of the school's theme of celebration, and also a useful way for the principal to direct teachers to their colleagues' classrooms to observe best practices and new, posted work. Staff members believe the school is functioning more effectively since the integration of technology. Principal Sherman adds that students benefit from more engaged teachers.

Parents Communicate with Each Other and the School

East-West has an incredibly active PTA that helps to support the school's vision. Parent communication takes place through the school Web site (www.ewsis.org), as well as through e-mails, phone calls, and Saturday morning PTA meetings (with minutes posted on the Web site for those parents who could not attend). The PTA also hosts the "Around the World Club," which allows parents and teachers to share their cultures through international food. Principal Sherman believes that if parents are involved in school activities, they will stay up-to-date on their child's progress.

The school's parent coordinator is responsible for updating the daily events, calendars, and information posted on the front page of the school's Web site. Principal Sherman (who initially created the Web site) also frequently updates it to display pictures and videos of students and to post announcements of events such as School Leadership Team meetings, exam schedules, and celebrations. Because the Web site is powered by Drupal, it does not require HTML code and is easy to update.

Magic Jacks not only facilitate international partnerships, but also help improve parent-teacher communication. Rather than use their own cell phone minutes to call parents from home, teachers can simply borrow one of the school's Magic Jacks during prep periods.

Expanding Learning into the Home

Students have individual log-ins to the Web site, so they can see all their courses listed on their personal pages. On each course page, there are homework assignments (new assignments appear in bold), files, and online discussion boards. Teachers can make comments on student work, upload new events to the calendar, e-mail students, and respond to e-mails from parents. All students and teachers have Gmail-backed @ewsis.edu addresses. This facilitates communication beyond the classroom.

Principal Sherman hopes to convince parents to purchase \$350 Dell netbook computers for their children in the fall (<http://www.dell.com/home/netbooks>). Rather than wait for parents to figure out how to purchase computers on their own, he plans to bring representatives to PTA meetings to explain the layaway plans; the computers can be purchased for \$15 per month, or even \$1 per day for a year. He senses that parents trust his vision and will work in collaboration to best meet the needs of their children.

The screenshot shows the website for East-West School of International Studies. The header includes the school's name in Chinese characters (自律) and English. A navigation menu on the left lists various sections like 'User login', 'Navigation', and 'Main Menu'. The main content area features a video player showing students in a classroom. Below the video are two tables: 'Announcements' and 'PTA News', both listing community events and a learning environment survey.

Title	Last Updated
Free or Low-cost Community Events April 20 - 26, 2009	04/21/2009 - 9:11am
Learning Environment Survey	03/31/2009 -

Title	Created on
Free or Low-cost Community Events April 20 - 26, 2009	04/21/2009 - 8:51am
Learning Environment Survey	03/31/2009 -

School Web site as a communication and information portal for the entire school community

Implementation of Technology:

Budgeting and Procurement

In order to acquire hardware, Principal Sherman often seeks out grants, donations, and pilot programs. He actively researches these opportunities and takes advantage of them whenever possible. For example, he recently received Reso-A money from his city councilman, and got permission (through an exception) to use it for 150 low-cost netbooks rather than for the typical package of 50 expensive Dells. Some of East-West's desktops were donated by Dell; Principal Sherman does not mind old, clunky monitors because they work with his thin client technology, described below.

Innovative Sharing and Maximization of Hardware

As a small school, East-West does not have the budget to purchase enough computers for every student. As a result, Principal Sherman has found innovative ways to make the most of the computers he has.

Fiddlehead Technology Turns One Computer into Several

East-West has 3-4 desktop computers in each classroom, which students use in rotation. The school also has desktop computers in the hallway for students to use at any time. Using a computer-sharing system called Fiddlehead (<http://www.myfiddlehead.com/>), Principal Sherman has set up multiple monitors that can all run simultaneously from a single computer tower. In effect, he has turned one computer into four. This is, of course, very cost-effective. Principal Sherman believes that having computers in the hallway and in the classroom is helpful for differentiating learning. He notes that some teachers have organized lessons so that four students work on writing projects on the classroom computers, while another group clusters around a computer conducting research, and other students write using the hallway computers.

Students have respect for the machines, and he has never had problems with vandalism, even when students are working independently in the hallways.

Thin Clients Replace Computer Towers

Thin clients are part of a different computing model that is not well-known in the school system. A thin client takes the place of a computer tower, and speaks directly to the central server. They cost approximately \$300, are not susceptible to viruses, do not need upgrades, and use low levels of electricity. Sixty ChipPC thin clients have been installed by a DOE technician (with donated monitors) in classrooms throughout the school. Principal Sherman likes thin clients because they are easy to install and maintain and have no moving parts or street value.

School Server

Principal Sherman also decided to set the school up with its own server. This allows the students to have individual accounts, log on anywhere in the building, and have their individual remote desktop follow them wherever they are. This server was set up two years ago to allow students to locate their information anywhere in the building and avoid having to save and transport documents. The server also allows for the use of thin clients.

Laptops

East-West has one cart of laptops, which is enough for a class of 30. The cart rotates around the school, and teachers need to schedule time to use it. The laptops are used frequently for writing and peer editing, as well as for Google Reader, a program that allows students to easily compile documents and news articles on a given topic with less of the distracting material that might pop up in a general search. A single laptop cart can be difficult to share, which is why Principal Sherman has relied on Fiddlehead and thin clients.

Staffing Roles Related to Technology

Principal Sherman is tech-savvy, and has taken a great deal of responsibility for technology in the school. He often updates the Web site and provides maintenance, and he works closely with a teacher to implement his instructional technology vision.

Teacher/ Informal Technology Coach

An East-West English teacher, Paul Allison, also serves as an informal technology coach. He was brought on board because he had a vision for integrating tech skills into English Language Arts. For example, he has every student use Google Reader for research and writing assignments. When students were reading *The Catcher in the Rye*, they logged on to Google Reader and found a series of articles related to the novel. Because Mr. Allison frequently used the laptop cart, his colleagues were initially frustrated that he was monopolizing the computers. When they realized what he was doing with the computers, specifically with Google Reader, his practices became contagious. He has now taught four teachers how to use media technology in their classrooms, and other teachers call him when they need help and instruction. He has even posted a highly engaging Google Reader tutorial on the school blog: <http://youthvoices.net/node/4915>

Tech Support

Part-time Tech Support Employee

In order to smoothly integrate technology into the school, Principal Sherman hired a tech support person who visits once a week for three hours after school to perform all necessary maintenance. Principal Sherman was able to get him “vendor status” from the DOE.

MOUSE Squad

East-West also has a MOUSE Squad (<http://www.mousesquad.org/>), which promotes student empowerment and allows students to serve as additional tech support for classrooms and staff. Students receive school service credit for participating.

Professional Development Driven by Teacher Needs

Principal Sherman required his teachers to attend a mandatory technology training two years ago, but it did not increase their engagement with technology, and teachers did not actually use what they learned. Principal Sherman then changed his practice to embrace professional development that is teacher-driven. He encourages teachers to identify needs and approach him about training opportunities that interest them; then he allocates funds for these trainings. Professional development is also provided on an on-going basis by the Tech Coach. When new technology is brought into the school, staff is provided with training either after school or by appointment. Then, technology spreads from teacher to teacher in a viral way.

Next Steps:

Netbooks for Students in the Home

As discussed above, Principal Sherman would like students to have \$350 Dell netbooks in the fall, and he is trying to encourage parents to purchase them. His rationale is that laptops would allow students to submit assignments electronically from home, and to store all their work in one place. He is also looking to integrate video games into the curriculum in order to help students develop strategic problem-solving skills. In an effort to re-channel funding, he is working on digitizing all textbook information. This would allow students to access all their readings online.

Laptops and Projectors for Teachers

In the same way that he does not ask teachers to share pencils and pens, he would like to give every teacher a notebook computer. He would also like to provide an LCD projector for every classroom so that teachers can simply pull down a screen and plug in their notebook as if it is second nature. Although East-West has a Smartboard, teachers have generally not found it as useful as projectors. The Smartboard takes some time to set up and maneuver in the classroom, but teachers can quickly set up LCD projectors simply by plugging them into their own laptops.

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Achievement Highlights:

In one year, East-West students (whole school aggregate) made a 17% gain in ELA and 6% gain in Math.

ELA

Year	Percentage of students earning 3 and 4
2007-2008	77
2008-2009	94

MATH

Year	Percentage of students earning 3 and 4
2007-2008	91
2008-2009	97

Contact Information:

You can contact Principal Ben Sherman at bsherma2@schools.nyc.gov, 718.353.0009.