Quality Review Report

2016-2017

International High School at Union Square
High school 02M438
40 Irving Pl.
Manhattan
NY 10003

Principal: Vadewatie Ramsuchit

Dates of Review:
December 15, 2016 - December 16, 2016

Lead Reviewer: Michele Ashley
The Quality Review Report

The Quality Review is a two-day school visit by an experienced educator. During the review, the reviewer visits classrooms, talks with parents, students, teachers, and school leaders and uses a rubric to evaluate how well the school is organized to support student achievement.

The Quality Review Report provides a rating for all ten indicators of the Quality Review Rubric in three categories: Instructional Core, School Culture, and Systems for Improvement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Celebration** to highlight an area in which the school does well to support student learning and achievement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Focus** to highlight an area the school should work on to support student learning and achievement. The remaining indicators are identified as **Additional Finding**. This report presents written findings, impact, and site-specific supporting evidence for six indicators.

Information about the School

International High School at Union Square serves students in grade 9 through grade 12. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at [http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm](http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm).

School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Quality Ratings continued

### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings
School leaders and faculty ensure curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and content standards and purposefully integrate academic vocabulary and non-fiction text across grades and content areas. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact
Leaders and staff make purposeful decisions that build coherence across content areas and provide access for a diversity of learners so that the curricula engage all learners and promote college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The curricula are teacher-created across all content areas and align to the Common Core and content standards, as well as the core instructional principles of the International Network for Public Schools (INPS). The INPS model incorporates key principles including heterogeneous student grouping, collaboration and experimental learning, student autonomy, and the integration of language and content. Across content areas lesson plans reviewed include the aligned Common Core and/or content standards, content and language objectives, key vocabulary, and the integration of non-fiction resources. For example, algebra and trigonometry lessons include extensive lists of the math vocabulary to be introduced to students and the language objectives require students to use the academic language in their oral and written responses.

- Lesson plans require students to practice college readiness skills including writing from sources and citing text-based evidence. A social studies lesson requires students to determine what constitutes verifiable evidence from a variety of resources and then incorporate the “well-attributed” evidence to their persuasive essays. A science content objective states that students will be able to communicate their understanding of acid rain giving reasons and supporting them with evidence from documents. The language objective for this lesson states that students will be able to present their ideas to their classmates orally and through a slide presentation.

- Across grades and content areas, teachers plan and refine lessons based on student language proficiency levels and formative assessments from previous lessons. Teachers include scaffolds and small group instruction based on student language and academic needs. Academic supports include heterogeneous grouping and same-language partners, visuals, leveled and translated texts. A math lesson includes plans for differentiation for English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities. The lesson states that the teacher will assign students with differing levels to groups with higher achieving students, ELLs will partner with a peer for translation and students with independent education plans with receive additional time for completion or take short breaks as needed to refocus. A history lesson includes plans for the teacher to model for students how to add verifiable information to their claims. A science lesson includes plans for the teacher to review presentations with small groups to ensure they are prepared and that the presentation aligns with the presentation rubric.
Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings

School leadership supports the development of teachers through monthly observations and feedback cycles and uses observation data to effectively design and facilitate professional development. Leadership has yet to strategically plan for more frequent cycles of observation that include peer observations or strategically address the professional development needs of individual and teams of teachers.

Impact

Current observation and professional development practices provide teachers with effective feedback, next steps and support, however, feedback has yet to reach the frequency and level of detail needed to elevate teaching practices schoolwide.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leader conducts “evaluative” and “non-evaluative” observations of teachers. All observations are followed by thirty-minute face-to-face feedback sessions in which the school leader reviews student work and provides recommendations for instruction. Leadership and teachers shared that leader feedback leads to adjustments to teacher practice, however, data from the informal observations has not yet been analyzed, limiting the promotion of schoolwide improvements, and the strategic use of this data to impact teacher practices. Peer observations and peer feedback on instruction is occurring but is not yet a consistent observational practice.

- School leadership reviewed observation data from 2015-2016 to identify trends. The data revealed that more teachers rated developing in Danielson Framework for Teaching Domain 3 about instruction than in any other domain. Based on this data, school leadership identified instruction as an area of focus. The 2016-2017 instructional focus states that students will engage in formal and informal assessments that lead to actionable feedback and data that will drive instruction and support them in achieving learning goals. School leadership is monitoring data from this year’s observations to inform professional development sessions scheduled for 2017. The 2016-2017 professional development calendar includes plans for a Reflection on the Instructional Focus and Next Steps. Limited analysis of this year’s data hinders school leadership’s ability to make informed succession plans or create a transparent system for managing professional development.

- Leaders have also aligned fall 2016 professional development to the instructional focus. Professional development topics have included best practices in classroom assessment, giving effective feedback, looking at student work as feedback on teaching and learning and the use of accountable talk strategies. At the time of the review, leadership had conducted two non-evaluative and one evaluative observation for new or developing teachers. Most teachers rated effective had received one non-evaluative and one evaluative observation. Although leadership provides new and developing teachers with more frequent observations and professional development, there is no evidence of a strategic system for managing or targeting the professional development of these teachers or that the professional development provided has resulted in the improved quality of student work products for students in these classes.
Additional Finding

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings
Teaching practices align to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs linked to the principles of the INPS model. Across classrooms teaching strategies provide multiple entry points for all learners.

Impact
The integration of language and content and consistent use of scaffolds provide access to the curricula, engage all learners in challenging tasks and provide opportunities for all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities, to demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- The INPS model promotes the principles of heterogeneity, collaboration and the integration of language and content. These principles were evident throughout classrooms visited. Across classrooms students engaged in content using their native language, worked in heterogeneous groups and collaborated to complete appropriately challenging tasks. In a math classroom, an ELL student raised his hand to share a response to the math problem. When he encountered difficulty explaining his process in English, the teacher invited him to come up to the board and show how he solved the problem. In an English classroom, students worked in small groups to add text-based evidence to persuasive writing. In a social studies classroom, the teacher assigned students to native language groups for support and students responded to question prompts in their native language before using language translation software to translate their responses to English.

- Across classrooms, teachers incorporate the use of non-fiction resources, the citing of text-based evidence, as well as strategies to increase reading and mathematical fluency. Teachers assign small groups of students to work independently on their reading and mathematical fluency using Reading Plus and DeltaMath. Teachers also assign new readers and students with interrupted formal education to targeted reading and math programs designed to meet them at their reading level and increase their reading levels and fluency over time. In an English classroom, students were engaged in Reading Plus activities. Students explained that the online program is helping them to increase their vocabulary for the ELA Regents. Students took notes on questions they got wrong and were actively engaged in the process. One student cheered when he completed two sections above 80 percent proficiency, another student noted that she had passed the Regents but wants to take it again and get a higher score.

- Across classrooms, teachers use questioning, prompts and graphic organizers to push student thinking and engage all students. Teachers use language partners and small group work to support students in sharing their thinking with peers. Across classes visited, teachers asked pairs and groups of students high-level questions that pushed them to think more deeply. In a math classroom, the teacher asked partners who had different responses, “Can you both be correct?” This question pushed the pair to test both solutions. In a history class the teacher asked students, “What is the writer trying to get you to believe?” In this lesson students re-read the text to verify the writer’s evidence. In a science classroom the teacher asked students, “How can we use a carbon dioxide probe to make or confirm our predictions about carbon dioxide levels in various locations?” This question pushed students to think of locations throughout the city where they could test for high and low levels of carbon dioxide.
### Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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#### Findings

Teachers use and create rubrics and assessments aligned to teacher-created curricula and New York State Regents assessments, and follow a schoolwide grading policy. School leaders and faculty use common assessments to determine student progress toward grade level expectations.

#### Impact

Teachers use data from common assessments to obtain actionable feedback and provide students with verbal and written feedback that includes targeted next steps. Teachers make adjustments to curricula and instruction based on student data.

#### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers create portfolio rubrics for all assignments included as portfolio documents. Portfolio documents are graded student assignments selected for inclusion in content specific portfolios of independent student work. Teachers supplement rubric assessments with oral and written feedback as students create assignments to submit to their portfolios. Verbal and written feedback includes next steps for students to make improvements in their assignments. Verbal feedback is critical for many of the students new to English and relatively unfamiliar with print materials. Teachers provide students with multiple opportunities to apply feedback and improve their work. A 2016 portfolio project tracker lists students’ names and the components of the project completed and submitted for review. Once students submit all sections of a project they receive additional teacher feedback for final revisions before submitting the final draft.

- Across classrooms, student work provides evidence that teachers give written feedback on student work that includes descriptions of student strengths and suggestions for improvement. Teachers make notes on student drafts that ask questions, provide compliments and recommend next steps. Teacher feedback on a social studies assignment stated that the essay is well organized with several different claims and supported with multiple sources. It also recommended ways to make the paragraphs stronger, which included making sure all of the evidence provided supports the claims, introducing and explaining the sources used and adding more content vocabulary. A comparison of drafts and final products demonstrates that students apply teacher feedback to their work.

- A review of 2016 Regents data revealed that student writing has made progress but students across the grades are having difficulty reading complex text on their grade level. Based on this data, school leaders and faculty identified a curricular focus on reading in all content areas. Schoolwide, teachers have supplemented lessons to include reading opportunities. In addition, faculty identified the Reading Plus program to build student fluency and comprehension across the grades, and increase stamina and student exposure to grade level text. Teachers will also administer Reading Plus benchmark assessments at the beginning, middle and end of the year.

- Reading Plus assessments provide summary data for individual students that include current and target comprehension and vocabulary levels, as well as, mastery levels on Common Core Readiness skills. At the time of this review there was a professional development session scheduled for December 19, 2016 to review the Reading Plus summary data across all grades.
### Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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#### Findings

School leaders communicate high expectations to the entire staff through professional development and a committee structure. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations for all students.

#### Impact

Consistent communication and support holds teachers accountable for student learning. Ongoing and detailed guidance from teachers and staff prepares students for the next level.

#### Supporting Evidence

- School leadership shares high expectations with the entire staff through faculty meetings, professional development, and a committee structure. Currently there are ten committees that meet with and report to school leadership and support schoolwide goals. Committee foci include professional development, team leadership, advisory, personnel, operations, vertical discipline, portfolios, interdisciplinary teams and student support. Committee leaders share key information with vertical teams during team meetings and professional development sessions. Faculty reviews the committee structure each year to support new initiatives and revised school goals. This year, faculty created two new committees to support the schoolwide focus on instruction and the social emotional needs of students: the Assessment, Curriculum and Instruction Committee and the School Culture and Climate Committee.

- Teacher teams communicate high expectations to students through the portfolio process. Portfolio rubrics and exemplars provide models of high-level student work and teachers expect all students to meet those expectations. Teachers post due dates for all components of portfolio documents in classrooms and provide students with high-level samples and supporting resources. In one English classroom portfolio components and due dates were posted on a bulletin board and student nametags indicated students’ stages of completion. Posted in each section were “outstanding examples” created by students and below the bulletin board were support materials for portfolio assignments.

- Teacher teams communicate expectations for college and career readiness through the advisory curriculum, mentorships, guidance support and a College and Career Student Handbook created by faculty and staff. Advisory classes include lessons on career preparation and college readiness. Grade eleven and twelve students receive a copy of the College and Career Handbook which includes key information on the college application process. Seniors receive one-on-one mentoring and individual meetings with college counselors. At the time of the review, 58 students had applied to College Now courses and 60 percent of the seniors had applied to college. Based on the New York City Department of Education School Performance Dashboard, the college readiness index increased from 29 percent in 2015 to 33 percent in 2016, the four-year graduation rates increased from 54 percent in 2015 to 75 percent in 2016, and the post-secondary enrollment rate increased from 34 percent in 2015 to 51 percent in 2016.
Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

Teacher teams consistently analyze student portfolios and assessment data for students across the grades. The school committee structure creates multiple opportunities for distributive leadership.

Impact

Professional collaboration and the sharing of best practices have resulted in improvements in teacher practice and progress for groups of students. Committees have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Content and grade level teams consistently analyze student work from portfolio- and teacher-created assessments. During the science team meeting, teachers analyzed student samples from the 2016 science portfolios to norm their assessment practices and plan adjustments to instruction. After analysis teachers determined that students did not fully represent bias in their science portfolio projects. The team attributed this to the fact that they did not effectively teach bias within the scientific model. The team shared ideas on new ways to teach bias in science and made plans to share this information with other content teachers so that the term can be reinforced across content areas. Teachers selected “confirmation bias” as their focus and brainstormed possible lessons for the next unit. Teachers shared that their work together has improved their capacity to design effective lessons plans. A review of lesson plans demonstrates that the majority of teachers have aligned their lesson plans to the schoolwide template.

- Across teams the focus of meetings is to review student work and plan for revisions to instruction. A review of team and committee notes provides evidence that teachers consistently review student work and assessment data for students they share and plan for adjustments to instruction. Teachers have also begun to review unit plans and portfolio outlines plans to provide peer feedback. The social studies team used data from the trends in previous student portfolios to plan for the 2016-2017 senior history project and provided written feedback on its strengths and ways to improve the content. One teacher noted that the introduction of the lesson establishes the context for inquiry by linking current events to structural issues in American history and adds that the team can unpack the criteria further to guide the selection of resources and the identification of the academic language needed. School leadership and teachers shared that collaboration and teamwork has also led to progress for groups of students. The percentage of students passing the ELA Regents has increased from 2015 to 2016, increasing from 25 percent to 45 percent.

- Through the committee structure, school leadership has provided opportunities for teachers to build their leadership capacity in leadership roles on a variety of committees and as content and grade team leaders. In these roles teachers are encouraged to share their voices, opinions and expertise on a variety of topics that affect student learning. Members of the Portfolio Committee make key decisions on the content and criteria for student portfolios and graduation requirements. Members of the newly formed Assessment, Curriculum and Instruction Committee help select supplemental curricula such as the Reading Plus and Delta Math curricula, which are now used schoolwide.