Quality Review Report

2017-2018

International Community High School

High school 07X334

345 Brook Avenue
Bronx
NY 10454

Principal: Berena Cabarcas

Dates of Review:
October 31, 2017 - November 1, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Buffie Whitfield
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 Community High School 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.

School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</td>
<td></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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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</table>
### School Culture

**To what extent does the school...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
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### Systems for Improvement

**To what extent does the school...**

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<tr>
<th>Area</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings
School administrators together with teacher leaders conduct frequent cycles of class observations and analyze student work to provide effective feedback to support teacher development. A strategic system is in place to manage professional development.

Impact
This system of feedback and professional learning is leading to improved student work products and has promoted and enhanced schoolwide instructional practices that support professional growth and reflection.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teacher leaders review teacher data from the previous year to develop an action plan for creating cycles of observation for the present school year. After a review of data, the cabinet inquiry team, comprised of school and teacher leaders, determined that using assessment in instruction would be a pedagogical focus for all teachers, including newly hired personnel. Based on ongoing observational data, the focus was revised and shifted to the design of the lesson and performance assessments for most teachers. Teacher leaders offer feedback and suggested support in writing lessons and planning tasks with the lens of ascertaining the rigor that is incorporated.

- A review of the feedback from teachers and school leaders indicates that student work and data is used to formulate next steps in instruction. The focus on the use of performance assessment was evident in one report where it recommended that the teacher consider having students reiterate and explain the concept before proceeding to another task. Similar feedback was provided to pedagogues to help them become highly effective in the various components of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. For example, the teacher was rated effective in Using Assessment in Instruction the next steps were to “use explicit self-regulation so students can provide peer feedback that is accurate and specific and advances learning.”

- The professional learning plan is aligned to the instructional foci, as well as teacher and student data trends from the cabinet inquiry teams. Intervisitations using lead teachers are provided to reinforce the school’s instructional focus of accelerating English language development and critical thinking and writing skills. Based on teacher goals and areas in need of growth, teachers are assigned to visit each other and reflect on their practices. A review of Advance data reflects increases in the areas aligned to the school’s instructional foci.
# Area of Focus

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

Assessment practices are aligned to the school’s curricula and incorporate the use of ongoing checks for understanding. However, there are some missed opportunities for students to receive effective feedback to accelerate their next learning steps.

## Impact

Performance based assessments provide teachers with feedback on students’ work across subject areas. Although most teachers address immediate needs of individuals or groups of students to accelerate their learning, in some subject areas, the adjustments result in some students receiving limited feedback, hindering their understanding of their next learning steps.

## Supporting Evidence

- Teachers circulated during small group discussions to assess for understanding and push student thinking. For example, during an Algebra class, the teacher paused to get a sense of what students understood by instructing them to respond to several quick prompts independently. She then checked for misconceptions. In a history class, the teacher provided students with exit tickets as well as questions to check students’ comprehension of the content taught.

- The school uses multiple assessments, including but not limited to, performance based assessments (PBATs), a mastery grading system, portfolio presentation, Regents, pre- and post-unit tests, and tasks that are aligned to the standards across all content areas. All stakeholders are informed of the administration of assessments via a yearlong calendar. Additionally, there is an online tracker to monitor student achievement of the standards so that teachers receive continual feedback relative to student achievement. Teachers use the information culled from the assessments to inform students of their progress and to schedule them for extra support via tutoring. Students feel the feedback given to them from the assessments, on their writing, and classwork is helping them to improve.

- Across the classrooms visited, academic tasks had an accompanying rubric. Students benefit from actionable feedback regarding progress in the midst of their struggle. However, students shared that sometimes the feedback does not “extend their thinking and encourage independency towards next steps.” When asked if they have ever used rubrics in class, students said, “We use rubrics in every class and get the rubric when we get the assignment.”
Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and content standards. The instructional shifts focusing on rigorous habits, such as deep understanding, application, and dual intensity are strategically integrated and are embedded coherently across grades and subjects.

Impact

Planned tasks result in coherence across grades and subject areas to allow students opportunities to demonstrate their thinking and promote college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- The school staff utilizes multiple resources to develop the curricula across subject areas. English Language Arts (ELA) and math unit plans support integration of a variety of instructional shifts. Instructional shifts in English Language Arts, specifically text complexity, academic vocabulary, text-based answers and literacy instruction are incorporated in all content areas. In math, the focus has been on curriculum that spirals from grade to grade and increases in levels of difficulty. Additionally, the math shift regarding rigor has been applied to all grades PBATS and require students to produce projects that relate math concepts to real world applications.

- A review of departmental unit plans reflects alignment in all subject areas to the Common Core and content standards. This year, department teams have made a concerted effort to spiral concepts across courses. Algebra, and geometry are sequenced to teach core concepts such as rational and irrational numbers starting freshman year. In ELA, text complexity and strategies to assist students with this concept are integrated across units including other content areas.

- Content area units reflect an emphasis on academic vocabulary and deep understanding. In a College and Career Readiness curriculum map, one task asks students to use feedback and self-assessment to improve their work. In an ELA unit plan, a vocabulary review would be conducted along with reading and annotation of a book. Throughout the unit, targeted vocabulary would be reviewed. In math, an algebra unit task requires students to explain in writing why a graph of a quadratic function is not a straight line. Additionally, vocabulary to be reviewed during this lesson included terms such as patterns, exponent, linear, exponent, and variable.

- Tasks and questions are aligned with high levels of thinking according to Webb’s Depth of Knowledge template. In a math lesson, students were asked multiple questions such as, “What are the different ways to generate research questions from the given math task? What are the characteristics and non-characteristics of mean absolute deviation, univariate and bivariate data?” In a Living Environment unit, students analyze data to determine the relationship between different organisms. In ELA, one task requires students to synthesize a series of events to be used as support for an argumentative research paper using multiple texts.
**Findings**

Across classrooms, teacher practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect a set of coherent beliefs about fostering linguistic diversity as informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and instructional shifts.

**Impact**

Teaching practices ensure that students are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in student work products.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The school community’s core belief regarding how students learn best centers on making curricula accessible to all learners through linguistic diversity in the classroom, referred to as translanguaging. To that end, ELA and Spanish dictionaries, computers, translation functions, scaffolds, content aims and language aims speaking protocols, table talk, native language, and transitional support are embedded in all lessons. School leaders report that these practices are resulting in positive effects from increased accountable talk activities, which engage all learners in using academic vocabulary. Across classes, teachers provided opportunities for students to share content in a language of a student’s choice. Teacher practice reflects the use of these practices. In an Algebra class, the teacher grouped students to engage in conversations to interpret functions and posed questions to help students to ascertain claims on the types of functions that were given. Students used aspects of the models presented to support their claims and came to consensus as to why they chose one function over another.

- In a history class, the teacher prompted students to engage with the documents they were to read by looking at the 14th amendment. Students, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners were able to use details from the text to support their answers and describe the central conclusion in both *Plessy vs. Ferguson* and *Brown vs. Board of Education*. In a Global History class, students described the effects of agriculture on humans and how the invention of agriculture changed the lives of Neolithic humans. All students use *Writing is Thinking with Strategic Inquiry* (WITsi) expanded sentence strategy to answer questions.

- In an Algebra class, students engaged in presenting their work collectively to justify the methods they used. Students critique the reasoning of their peers during presentations. In a Global History class, students shared their thoughts on what is the most important resource a civilization needs to develop and they cited evidence to support their claim.
Findings
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff through the school’s teacher leaders and teams. Staff members establish a culture for learning through the practice of student self-identification that systematically communicates a unified set of high expectations on college and career readiness for students.

Impact
The structures in place offer support and effective feedback, which result in a culture of mutual accountability for both staff and students to meet the schoolwide expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- Embedded as a driving force in the school culture is a student self-identification practice of whether they are meeting the requirements towards graduation and if they are college and career ready. Progress reports, including the new College and Career section, reflects the number of credits accumulated and attendance rate. Students who are identified as not meeting these requirements are required to meet with their guidance counselor. In addition, mentors are assigned to meet with students to follow up on assignments and other school-related matters. School-based support structures have led to an increase in the graduation rate, as well as in the number of students passing the Regents.

- Students are exposed to experiences to guide their future. Differences between jobs within career choices, certificates that are required and pathways available are including in the guidance supports provided to all learners. Additionally, students reported that the school offers a variety of ways to become college ready, including College Now courses, as well as engaging in research-based learning which exposes them to college-level work. During a student meeting, students explained their status using the tools or school-based resources and personnel that are available as supports towards increasing their credit accumulation or ensuring they are ready for life after graduation. All the students interviewed reported that they check the bulletin boards, use progress reports, College and Career Readiness reports, and online grading tools weekly to gauge their status. During conferences with guidance counselors and mentors, students reflect on their progress and set goals along with an action plan at the end of each marking period.

- Teachers reported that school leaders often communicate school-wide expectations through teacher team leaders across the school with a focus on assessment through clear learning objectives and student-centered opportunities. Suggested feedback includes the use of effective questioning for medial summaries during lessons. Teachers shared how the use of their school leaders’ feedback has led to an increase awareness of their pedagogical practice related to improving their formative assessment practices. A review of reports reflects an increase in teacher data focusing on these specific areas. Consistent with the Danielson Framework for Teaching, teachers reflect both individually and collaboratively on their teaching. Teachers confirmed that this ongoing practice set a high standard of professionalism and is resulting in improved teaching practices across grades and departments.
Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: | 4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development | Rating: | Well Developed |

Findings

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based department and grade level, professional collaborations that promote the Common Core Learning Standards. Teachers have key leadership roles that focus on improved student learning and pedagogy through systematic analysis of instruction, creation of syllabi, data, and student work.

Impact

Inquiry work has strengthened teacher collaborations resulting in schoolwide instructional coherence, effective teacher leadership, and improvement in teacher pedagogy.

Supporting Evidence

- All teacher teams, such as department, grade-level instructional, advisory, and co-planning teams are involved in inquiry-based collaborations. Teachers meet in their respective teams to work on their practice, analyze student work, and discuss specific instructional strategies to ensure collaborations improve their practice and progress toward student goals. Some teachers stated that because of meeting regularly they have seen growth in aligning curricula and instruction with the instructional shifts and Common Core Learning Standards as well as in the areas of differentiation. Teachers also shared strategies they use to encourage language development, such as translanguaging and incorporating the Frayer model to support vocabulary development. Additionally, the school leaders provided Advance-tracker data to show evidence of teachers improving in planning more effectively aligned to the Danielson Framework for Learning.

- During both teacher team meetings teachers referred to the strong voice they have in making school-wide decisions. Teachers shared that they meet weekly to discuss schoolwide and/or team goals to ensure coherence and consistency. There are teacher teams, such as department teams, and grade teams, which provide support for teachers and students. The department teams collaborate to write syllabi and unit plans that ensure literacy activities are consistently embedded in content courses across classes. The grade teams examine student work to identify characteristics or trends of an individual or group to determine where support is needed. Teachers brainstorm to make adjustments, decide actions to take, and execute unified team action plans. Teams meet to engage in analyzing lesson plans, student work, and debrief inter-visitations of their colleagues’ classes. They discuss findings and prepare feedback for the teachers they visited. Teachers agreed these visits are helpful in improving their own practice.

- The administration strongly supports initiatives led by teachers, including interdisciplinary projects that encourage teachers to work together across content areas and the mentoring of new teachers. For example, teachers work together to participate in attending trips, such as seeing the play Hamilton on Broadway. Department chairs and grade level leaders are able to collaborate across grades to make key decisions around curriculum, instructional strategies, inter-visitations and professional development of their colleagues. Teachers state that the principal trusts and empowers them to make decisions. They feel supported by the leadership and appreciate the opportunities to be creative within their subject and grade level assignments. This distributive leadership has engendered a culture of trust and mutual accountability for the entire school community.