Quality Review Report

2017-2018

International School For Liberal Arts
Secondary School 10X342
2780 Reservoir Avenue
Bronx
NY 10468

Principal: Francine Cruz

Dates of Review:
January 30, 2018 - January 31, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Edward Hazen
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 School For Liberal Arts serves students in grade 6 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><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
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<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>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>Developing</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>Developing</td>
</tr>
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</table>
## School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<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>Area of Celebration, Well Developed</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, Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Systems for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</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, 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, 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>Additional Finding, Well Developed</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, Proficient</td>
</tr>
<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, Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Quality Indicator: 1.4 Positive Learning Environment

Rating: Well Developed

Findings

The school’s approach to culture-building, discipline, and social-emotional support are informed by the school’s belief statement. Support services allow staff, students, and families to collaborate in addressing all students’ academic and social-emotional needs and the adoption of positive habits.

Impact

The school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that contributes to a personalized learning environment in which all students know the adults well, resulting in social-emotional learning that supports the growth of students and results in the adoption of effective academic and personal behaviors that leads to college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The school’s approach to fostering an inclusive and supportive school environment that is conducive to learning is rooted in its Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) program that aims to promote positive interactions amongst students and staff and support the social emotional growth of faculty and students. Students are expected to exhibit attributes of the PBIS motto which is an acronym for the school’s name: Integrity, Service, Language, Acceptance (ISLA). School leaders and staff members reported that their belief is that students are most likely to achieve their full potential when staff supports their social emotional growth. Students reported that they feel that they are part of a community and that they have numerous opportunities to participate in schoolwide decisions through their involvement with the student council. Students reported that all grades six through twelve are well represented and that the council has been active in participating in school decisions. For example, students reported that they requested the school add a safe room for students who may be in crisis or having a conflict or issue inside or outside of school, or is exhibiting anxiety or under mental duress. The request was granted by school leadership. The safe room also now serves as an area for restorative justice circles to take place.

- The school has structures in place to ensure that all students are known well by at least one adult who encourages them to attend school every day and maintain a positive attitude. Teachers and school leaders have adopted a behavior rubric for which students hold themselves accountable to and are rewarded for making positive choices. Additionally, all teachers participate in a token system of rewarding students with “ISLA dollars” for positively interacting with one another and exhibiting good citizenship and effective personal and academic behaviors. Likewise, to ensure that students and their families are aware of the academic expectations for their classes, course syllabi are developed by teachers and shared with families so they are aware of the course goals and expectations for the major content areas and can track their child’s progress in their course work.

- The vast majority of staff members and students have been trained in effective implementation of the PBIS program. Additionally, staff and students were trained in using restorative justice circles as a means to provide therapeutic conflict resolution and promote the adoption of effective academic and personal habits. Staff and students are able to recognize symptoms of students in crisis and potential trigger behaviors so that they can intervene therapeutically by using de-escalation techniques and teaching students strategies they can employ to self-regulate their behaviors and make alternative positive choices. Teachers, students and parents reported that students are able to monitor their own behaviors and utilize the safe room if they are in need of a “time away.” As a result, students are adopting effective personal and academic behaviors. This was evidenced by a decrease in the suspension rate from twelve percent in 2015-2016 to seven percent in 2016-2017. Likewise, the graduation rate increased from seventy-one percent to seventy-seven percent over the same time period.
Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 2.2 Assessment | Rating: Developing |

Findings
Feedback to students does not consistently align to rubrics or provide specific, actionable next steps for improvement. Teacher monitoring of student understanding during lessons is not always visibly active and continuous, nor does it consistently result in an effective change in instruction.

Impact
Limited actionable feedback results in limited opportunities for students to improve the quality of their work products. The uneven ongoing checks for understandings result in partial adjustments to instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Across grade levels and subject areas, teachers use rubrics to assess student work. However, the level of actionable feedback for improvement provided to students varied from class to class. A review of student work samples indicated that students tended to receive feedback mainly on their writing tasks in their English Language Arts (ELA) and social studies classes. Moreover, feedback and scoring was not consistent across grades or classes and often did not always align to the rubric criterion itself. Students that had received scores of level two, level three, and level four, respectively had all received the same feedback statement from their teacher despite the range of their scores and depth of their writing: “Next time please add more details to your writing.” Students could not articulate how the feedback statement could help them move to the next level with their writing.

- All students stated that they use rubrics in most of their classes, but in a review of student work samples, none of the students had any with them nor could they articulate specifically how the rubrics could improve their work or identify examples of how teacher feedback and actionable next steps had resulted in improving their writing. Teachers reported that a goal for the current 2017-2018 school year was to help students learn the rubric so that they are aware of their progress in relation to the writing progressions. Teachers further reported that another goal “is to align our rubrics among classes” to create consistency and coherence across the school.

- Across classrooms, teachers inconsistently used ongoing checks for understanding to adjust instruction to meet the needs of all students. In a sixth grade ELA class, the teacher provided check-ins with groups working on argumentative essays to ensure that they were citing sufficient evidence to support their claim and took informal progress notes on their level of understanding and participation. However, this was not consistent across classes. In a tenth grade social studies class, the teacher called only on the same few volunteer students near the back of the classroom to share their answers to a do now activity. In an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, students were required to use accountable talk stems to promote group discussions during a modified gallery walk. When the teacher called on students to reiterate the directions for clarification, three out of four could not repeat them; however, the teacher continued with the exercise resulting in confusion for several students about the objective of the lesson. Further, teachers reported that “we have to improve assessment overall. The push this year is to give more frequent checks for understanding and to give formative assessments such as exit tickets so we can make changes to instruction within the lesson and day to day.”
Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Rigorous academic tasks are planned for all learners.

Impact

The curricula reflects planning, tasks with rigorous habits that build coherence across subjects and grades, and supports strategies for higher order cognitive engagement for all learners, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- To ensure implementation and alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards, the school leadership team and faculty opted to adopt the New York City Department of Education (DOE) recommended curricula across grades and content areas. For example, the school leader has implemented the Collections curriculum in English Language Arts (ELA) in grades six through twelve to build coherence and college and career readiness. Likewise, the school is following the DOE pacing calendars for social studies, science and writing. In addition, teachers use the Common Core Literacy Standards when preparing their lesson plans and setting lesson objectives to maintain rigor across grades and disciplines.

- To implement the instructional shifts across grade levels and subject areas, school leaders require that units of study and lesson plans include instructional outcomes that require students to think, collaborate, collectively problem solve, and engage in purposeful discussions and reflections on concepts and skills they are learning. The vast majority of teachers use a common lesson plan template that promotes the planning for rigorous habits and higher order thinking tasks. As a result, the instructional shifts were evident in a review of unit and lesson plans. Across grades and content areas, teachers plan tasks that require students to cite text-based evidence, make claims, and use accountable talk when participating in class discussions. For example, in a lesson in a social studies unit of study on the Compromise of 1850, students are required to work in inquiry-based groups to analyze primary source documents to make inferences and draw conclusions about the motivations of the North and the South and back their claim with sufficient textual evidence.

- School leaders have a regular cycle in place to review and revise curricula documents, unit plans, pacing guides, and lesson plans based on the analysis of student data and work products, so that lessons are accessible for all students. A review of curriculum documents and meeting agendas indicate that grade level teachers meet weekly to collaborate, to revise the curricula and to create supplemental instructional materials and resources. This is to provide multiple entry points into lessons for students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs), such as inclusion of specific instructional strategies in lesson plans, translated student materials, graphic organizers, guided notes, sentence frames, accountable talk stems, and discussion starters. Additionally, the majority of lesson plans reviewed included language objectives for the lesson to ensure that ELLs, who make up a significant percentage of the student body, have access to the curricula and are cognitively engaged.
Additional Finding

Quality Indicator: 1.2 Pedagogy
Rating: Developing

Findings

Teaching practices are becoming aligned to the school's belief about how students learn best. Pedagogy is inconsistently differentiated and does not consistently utilize strategies such as inquiry, cooperative learning structures, questioning, and discussions to promote high levels of thinking and engagement for a diversity of learners.

Impact

Across grades and content areas, teaching practices do not consistently leverage school identified best practices, resulting in missed opportunities to provide all students with challenging learning tasks that require them to use critical thinking, analysis, and problem solving. Tasks inconsistently encourage inquiry, collaboration, and ownership among students.

Supporting Evidence

- Across grade levels and content areas, teaching practices are inconsistently aligned with the school’s articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best as identified in the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP). Although the school’s leadership team identified differentiated instruction to ensure that teachers address students' individualized learning styles, needs and modalities, this practice was not observed in the majority of classrooms visited. In some classrooms, students had access to bilingual resources, manipulatives, graphic organizers and visuals and the language objective for the lesson was reviewed with students. However, this was not prevalent across the classrooms visited. In most of the classes, instruction was not differentiated to allow multiple entry points into the lesson, nor were there scaffolds or specialized instructional strategies or language objectives identified in many of the teacher lesson plans for students with disabilities or English Language Learners (ELLs).

- In some classes, students were provided with scaffolds such as bilingual materials, visuals, graphic organizers and accountable talk stems to engage all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities in challenging academic tasks. However, this was not consistent across classes. In a global studies lesson students' expected learning outcomes were identical and all students were provided with the same set of materials for the academic task. Further, the lesson plan did not identify entry points into the lesson and therefore none were provided to students at any point in the lesson. Similarly, in a co-taught ELA class in which students had to identify characteristics of haiku poetry, many students were observed struggling with the task. One teacher drew a Venn diagram to assist one student with identifying some traits, which would have benefited other students in the class. In the absence of multiple entry points or use of scaffolds, many students wrote no or limited characteristics on their worksheet. The section of the lesson plan template where teachers identify groupings and differentiation for the lesson was left blank.

- The level of structured group work that holds students individually accountable and the work of their team for equally participating at high levels varied across classrooms. In an eighth grade math lesson, students were asked to work in quads to solve a problem which required them to collaboratively plot coordinates on a graph; however, not all students participated with solving the group problem, and some students were overheard discussing topics unrelated to the task. Similarly, in an eleventh grade social studies class, students were directed to work collaboratively to draw conclusions about the Compromise of 1850 from primary source documents. Although the lesson was designed to be a student-centered cooperative inquiry based lesson to elicit high levels of discourse, the majority of the students opted to work independently and many students did not discuss their conclusions with each other.
Additional Finding

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

The school leader consistently communicates high expectations to staff, and staff provides feedback to parents on their children’s academic progress and path toward college and career.

Impact

Systems of accountability for staff and communication with families ensure that the students and their parents are aware of their language progression and progress toward college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The school’s leadership team communicates high expectations to the faculty and holds them accountable while providing the ongoing support that is required to meet those expectations and improve their professional practice. Professional and instructional expectations are shared with teachers at the beginning of the school year and during professional learning sessions and teacher team meetings. Teachers are supported in advancing their professional growth and aligning their instructional strategies and curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards through professional learning sessions that occur a minimum of once per week. A review of meeting agendas and sign in sheets indicates that professional learning sessions to make revisions to the curricula and implement initiatives aligned to the schoolwide goals such as PBIS have occurred. Teachers reported that the majority of the professional learning sessions align to the schoolwide goals and helps teachers meet those expectations.

- Teachers are held accountable to the schoolwide expectations through formal classroom observations by school leaders and by participating in intervisitation observations with their colleagues. Teachers reported that they have had several opportunities to observe their colleagues using specific instructional strategies that they can emulate in their own classrooms. In such cases, teachers often provide each other with actionable feedback to further their professional practice. Teachers reported that these practices has improved their pedagogy, which is supported by Advance teacher evaluation ratings, which indicates that 100 percent of teachers were rated effective or highly effective in the 2016-2017 school year.

- School leaders have structures to communicate high expectations to families that lead to college and career readiness for their children. Parents report receiving regular communications from the school, including information on the Common Core and college and career readiness, through a variety of means including parent-teacher conferences, emails, backpack letters, and phone calls. Parents and students reported that all teachers use online software that allows them to monitor their academic progress and communicate with their teacher. All parents overwhelmingly stated how pleased they are with their child’s language development and how well their progress acquiring English is communicated to families. While parents were appreciative of having several modes in which to communicate with the school they noted that additional information on upcoming events and school highlights could be added to the school website.
Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: 4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development | Rating: Proficient |

Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured inquiry-based collaborations that align to the school’s goals and improves student learning.

Impact

Increased instructional planning and collaboration have strengthened and improved teacher practices, and leads to progress toward goals for students across grade levels.

Supporting Evidence

- The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations to promote the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts across grades and disciplines. Departmentalized teacher teams are provided with two common planning periods in order to meet to analyze student assessment data and student work products to identify trends and make revisions to curricula to ensure accessibility for all students. For example, because the school is specifically designed to support English as a New Language (ENL) students acquire English. The need to collaborate to share protocols and strategies to support students in developing both their language and content skills is a critical focus of the teacher team work. A review of agendas and meeting minutes indicates that teachers meet to ensure the rigor of the instructional shifts while providing differentiated academic tasks, scaffolds, and identify language objectives for ENL students.

- Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work products to devise strategies for students to help close identified achievement gaps and ensure they are on track to pass their courses and their Regents exams. After a review of New York State assessment and common grade level assessment data revealed that students were struggling with reading and writing, writing across the curriculum, close read strategies and increased opportunities for students to engage in meaningful discussions became the prioritized instructional foci for the 2017-2018 school year. To that end, the majority of teacher team time has been identifying strategies to improve student progress in reading and writing.

- A sixth through eighth grade vertical humanities teacher team was observed using the ATLAS Looking at Data protocol to analyze students’ constructed responses on a common assessment to determine their progress toward mastery of the writing progressions standards and provide next steps to help them move to the next level. Teachers noticed that several students missed opportunities to elaborate more with their written responses and many did not use sophisticated language or academic vocabulary. Teachers compared their students’ data to other assessments the students had taken to determine individualized interventions and a “plan for success” to close their identified gaps. It was decided that students that had scored high in the speaking modality of the New York State English as a Second Language Test (NYSESLAT) would receive explicit teaching of the conventions of writing.