

Performance Assessment Profile: San Francisco International High School

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Overview

San Francisco International High School is a small public school that exclusively educates recent immigrants, all of whom are or recently were English Learners. San Francisco International opened in 2009 and is a member of the Internationals Network for Public Schools, a nonprofit network of 22 schools in New York, Virginia, Maryland, and California. The vision of the Internationals Network is to “ensure all recent immigrant students have access to a quality high school education that prepares them for college, career and full participation in democratic society, thereby opening doors to the American Dream.”¹

The Internationals Network pedagogical model is based on the following five principles:

- **Heterogeneity and collaboration.** Students with different English proficiency levels, primary languages, and academic experiences work together closely.
- **Experiential learning.** Field trips, internships, and project-based learning, including the portfolio-assessment system detailed in this brief, take students outside of the traditional four walls of the classroom.
- **Language and content integration.** English language instruction occurs in the context of collaborative learning in content-area classes.
- **Localized autonomy and responsibility.** A representative leadership team makes major decisions affecting the school community.
- **One learning model for all.** All members of the learning community, including students and teachers, share constructive feedback in their respective peer groups.

Figure 1. San Francisco International High School at a Glance (2015–16)

Student Enrollment	302
Race/Ethnicity	61% Latino 30% Asian, Filipino, or Pacific Islander 5% White 5% Other
Low-Income Students	89% ^a
English Learners^b	98% Languages spoken: • Spanish – 64% • Cantonese – 18% • 15 other languages
Additional Information	Schoolwide, about 30% of students are unaccompanied minors, and 35% of students have experienced an interruption in their formal education. ^c

^a Does not include low-income students who have been reclassified as “fluent English proficient.”

^b Does not include English Learners who have been reclassified as “fluent English proficient.”

^c Unpublished data from San Francisco International High School, 2015.

Source: California Department of Education DataQuest.

¹ Internationals Network for Public Schools. (n.d.). <http://internationalsnps.org/> (accessed 9/15/16).

Performance Assessment at San Francisco International High School

Each semester, students at San Francisco International engage in a portfolio process by assembling a collection of work from their classes, reflecting on their academic progress, and presenting their knowledge to an audience. In the 9th and 10th grades, the focus is on synthesizing and evaluating learning in different subject areas. By senior year, students apply their skills to real-world issues. Engaging in this process prepares graduates to present and defend their thinking in college and career settings.

How the System Works

Performance assessment activities at San Francisco International take place during the last two weeks of each semester, when the entire school engages in a portfolio process. Tasks vary by grade level, culminating in a rigorous research paper and student-led group lesson by 12th grade. Students have multiple opportunities to revise their work.

Work Products

At each grade level, the portfolio process requires San Francisco International students to write about what they have learned and present their knowledge to an audience. In 9th and 10th grade, students synthesize and evaluate their learning in different subject areas by working with peers and teachers to select work samples and reflect on their progress in content-area classes. They then write a series of essays addressing their academic successes and challenges, and how their work connects to the school's values, their own life, and the broader world. The students choose which class they want to write about for each topic area and receive support from their teachers in structuring their essays.

In 11th grade, students assume more responsibility for the synthesis and evaluation process, and engage deeply with the academic content of their portfolio. They reflect on what they learned from each content-area class and then choose one class for which they write an independent essay explaining their understanding of the content; their successes and struggles; how their learning connects to broader society; and how they will apply their knowledge in the future. Again, they select work samples to accompany the essay.

The portfolio process culminates in 12th grade, when students apply their synthesis and evaluation skills to relevant real-world issues such as the California drought, immigration reform, or school discipline. Each semester, teachers develop a short list of topics that represent "social dilemmas" such as how to address tense relations between the police force and communities of color in the United States. Students learn about each topic and then select the research question they would like to investigate through a series of activities that demonstrate their mastery of critical reading, analytical writing, and public-speaking skills.

Reading and research activities include:

- **Research packets.** Students use reading strategies to complete four to six teacher-selected readings that provide a broad overview of the topic (includes at least one academic publication).
- **Independent research.** In the spring semester, students choose a specific aspect of their topic that they will research independently by selecting and analyzing one to three readings.

Written products include:

- **Research logs.** Students record bibliographical information for each document they read. They also identify key quotes and paraphrase main ideas in their own words.

- **Research paper.** Students write and revise a research paper that includes the history or origin of a social dilemma, a synthesis of different perspectives on the issue, and an argument for a plausible solution to the dilemma.
- **Works cited.** Students compile a Works Cited page in American Psychological Association (APA) style to accompany their paper.

Presentations

At each grade level, San Francisco International students present their portfolio work before an audience. In 9th and 10th grade, students present what they have learned in each class to their peers and teachers, with an emphasis on personal growth. In 11th grade, students again present to their peers and teachers (as well as family and community members, when possible), focusing on a deeper analysis of what they learned in a content-area class of their choice. Students in the audience might fill out a [presentation listening guide](#) as their peers present, noting items such as the presentation’s big idea or big question, or its three most important concepts. The listening guide also provides question prompts such as “Can you please explain _____ again?” or “What was the most fun part of _____?” Students pose these questions during a question-and-answer session after each student presentation, which allows the presenter to defend his or her knowledge and practice English language fluency in a more natural context than the formal presentation. In 11th grade, this session is centered on content-specific questions about the work.

In 12th grade, students work together in groups of three to four during the fall semester to deliver informative presentations about the social dilemma they studied, the various solutions they investigated, and the solution they recommend. In the spring semester, presentations are structured as “teach-ins,” in which students collaboratively teach a lesson on the social dilemma they analyzed in their research paper. To prepare for the teach-in, the presenters develop a lesson plan and supporting materials. They then lead teachers, staff, peers, and community members through a 40-minute collaborative, engaging discussion of their topic. For example, this could take the form of a [gallery walk](#) in which images are posted on the classroom walls, and participants walk around silently, take notes, and then discuss in small groups. Another possibility could be a jigsaw in which participants are first split into “expert” groups, with each group receiving a piece of text that is essential to the lesson. Participants are then placed into “jigsaw” discussion groups composed of one member from each “expert” group.

Grading

San Francisco Unified School District has created a [graduate profile](#) to prepare students for college and career success by developing the following areas of proficiency:

- Mastery of the core knowledge, critical thinking skills, and competencies outlined by the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).
- The knowledge, skills, and experience to navigate the real world and solve problems that arise in everyday life and in the workplace.
- The ability to navigate and engage in a 21st century global society that is more inclusive and interconnected, including exposure to or fluency in a language other than English.
- Strong interpersonal skills and the ability to positively influence and collaborate with others.
- The freedom, confidence, and ability to express their unique selves.
- A sense of purpose and sense of self.

The performance assessment process at San Francisco International supports these outcomes, although they are not explicitly incorporated into the rubrics used to grade student work. Students score the

9th- through 11th-grade peer presentations in a collaborative format. For example, a [chemistry presentation rubric](#) asks students to check a box every time the student presenting uses one of the listed vocabulary words correctly. Students also evaluate their classmates with a “thumbs-up” scale from zero to four for items such as “The student makes eye contact with the listener” or “The student tried to answer all the questions.” Teachers use more formal rubrics to grade student presentations. For example, an [11th-grade portfolio presentation rubric](#) assesses students on a four-point scale based on their content mastery and presentation skills. For each element, the presenter receives a numeric score that corresponds to the categories of advanced (4), proficient (3), satisfactory (2), or emerging (1). To score in the advanced category, a student must do the following:

- **Mastery of content.** Demonstrate a deep and nuanced understanding of the material by consistently pointing to examples and evidence, and eloquently use all relevant key vocabulary concepts while speaking.
- **Performance.** Speak loudly, clearly, and powerfully using academic English during the entire presentation and exude confidence while using appropriate body language.

Teachers score the 12th-grade research paper using a [rubric developed by the Internationals Network for Public Schools](#). The rubric is aligned to the Common Core State Standards and assesses student work as outstanding, good, competent, or needing revision on the following performance indicators:

- Thesis/Claim
- Evidence and Sources
- Analysis and Persuasion
- Effective Organization
- Implications and Context
- Language and Usage
- Presentation (for oral components only)

Figure 2 offers an example of different scoring levels for the Thesis/Claim domain.

Figure 2: Excerpt from 12th-Grade Research Paper Rubric

	Needs Revision	Competent	Good	Outstanding
Thesis/Claim CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. WHST. 9-12.1.A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizing idea, thesis/claim, or question is not clear • Introduction and the thesis it contains are not clear or comprehensible • Arguments lack coherence, clarity, or consistency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a comprehensible organizing idea, thesis/claim, or question (or it can be inferred), but not especially clear • Introduction presents thesis in a mostly comprehensible manner • Coherent but rarely complex or sophisticated arguments support organizing idea or thesis/claim in a mostly consistent manner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a clear organizing idea, thesis/claim, or question • Clear introduction presents thesis/claim in an engaging manner • Coherent and sometimes complex arguments consistently support organizing idea/thesis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a sharply defined, compelling organizing idea, thesis/claim, or question • Clear introduction presents thesis/claim in a highly engaging and compelling manner • Coherent, complex, sophisticated arguments consistently support organizing idea/thesis

The San Francisco International team has developed an additional 12th-grade presentation rubric that aligns the content in the Presentation domain of the Internationals Network rubric with four school values (including Content Mastery, Responsibility to Self, Responsibility to Group, and English Development). Figure 3 is an example of the different scoring levels for one element of Content Mastery:

Figure 3. Excerpt from 12th-Grade Presentation Rubric

	F (0)	C (2)	B(3)	A(4)
Mastery of Content	Questions are answered:	Questions are answered:	Questions are answered:	Questions are answered:
Answering Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Superficially • Inappropriately • Incorrectly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurately • Thoughtfully 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurately • Thoughtfully • Developing new ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurately • Thoughtfully • Effectively • Developing new ideas

Passing the portfolio is not a graduate requirement at San Francisco International. However, the performance assessment work makes up 10% of students’ semester grades in their content-area classes. The research paper and presentation each represent half of the total portfolio score.

Revising

The portfolio process at San Francisco International offers multiple opportunities for students to revise their work. In 9th and 10th grade, students use an essay planner to generate an initial handwritten draft for each content-area class. They then work with their teachers to revise the content of their essays and create a digital version using Google Docs. At this stage, teachers add additional comments in Google Docs. Responding to those comments, students create final polished versions of the essays.

In 11th grade, a similar process takes place, although students operate somewhat more independently. They first use an essay planner to create an initial handwritten draft in each class. They then type their essays in Google Docs and share the digital versions with their teachers for revision. The students then choose one essay to continue revising until they have a final digital draft for their portfolio.

In 12th grade, students revise their research paper independently at first. They then revise again with the help of a peer before going through a final round of revision with input from their teachers. If the research paper does not meet the minimum acceptable standards established by the Internationals Network rubric, 12th-grade students receive additional adult support to improve their paper until it is acceptable. Due to the logistics of the teach-in, there are no revision opportunities. Students work in small groups and receive guidance from their teachers in advance of the teach-in to ensure that they have the support they need to be successful.

School Instruction and Support

As with all Internationals Network schools, San Francisco International provides an intensely personal and supportive learning environment for its students. The school structures that help to facilitate the performance assessment process include the small size of the school (each grade level has no more than 100 students) and the block scheduling that allows students to spend a longer time in each class

period by alternating their class schedule on different days of the week. The emphasis on collaborative learning also helps students to develop their English language and oral presentation skills. A 12th-grade teacher says:

We use portfolio data [from the first semester performance assessment] in January to map out reading, research, and writing skills we want to teach as a team during the second semester.

Student supports include a small-group advisory course that focuses on relationship building among students and their advisors through community circle and other activities, providing a space to address academic and life challenges in a supportive environment. The portfolio assembly and presentation process takes place over several weeks each semester. Students have time to work on their content-area essays in 9th- and 10th-grade advisory, and all students have class time to polish their reflective portfolio essays. In addition, they receive a full week to practice and revise their final presentations prior to formally sharing their work with their peers and teachers.

What Is a Scoring Calibration Training Like for Teachers?

The San Francisco International High School teaching team has come together for a 55-minute professional learning session. During the first few minutes, the room buzzes with conversation as teachers engage in a “think-pair-share.” They discuss—first in duos, then in a large group—why it is important to spend time on portfolio scoring calibration. The room settles down as each teacher reads the following scenario:

Student X is a 10th grader, and this is his fourth round of portfolios. This is his first time doing the non-scaffolded version, using Target Notes and paragraph organizers. His behavior during portfolios was never office-worthy, but he did joke around and was distracted easily. This student was on time every day of portfolio prep but missed one day. Student X had all of his essays and had first drafts of all the essays. However, his changes to two of the essays were pretty minimal. His portfolio binder was disorganized (no page numbers), and essays did not follow the table of contents. He was also missing some class projects.

The adults in the room consider this contextual information as they review sample work from Student X and grade the work using a writing rubric. The team then spends 15 minutes talking about similarities and differences in the scores they assigned and the rationale for the decisions they made. Next comes similar practice using the rubric for portfolio presentations. This time, teachers spend five minutes watching a video of Student X presenting and silently grade the presentation using a rubric. Again, the team has 15 minutes to talk about similarities and differences in rubric scores and their reasoning behind the scores they assigned.

The session concludes with a short reflection period, with participants identifying any lingering questions to address in future professional learning sessions. While the teachers in the room will not necessarily walk away with perfectly aligned grading practices, they have had an opportunity to gauge their scoring in relation to their peers and to participate in a rich conversation grounded in student work.

Source: Professional learning materials from San Francisco International High School.

Scoring Calibration

In order to score student papers and presentations as fairly and consistently as possible, San Francisco International teachers participate in a grading calibration protocol each semester. This activity takes place during staff development meetings that occur in advance of the performance assessment period. The key here is consistency, as scoring calibration is always a work in progress. By setting aside regular time to reflect on student work together, teachers are able to fine-tune their scoring practices on an ongoing basis.

How Students Benefit

San Francisco International serves a diverse population of low-income, newcomer English Learners. The performance assessment system accommodates the needs of each student by allowing for individual agency (students choose the topics they focus on in the portfolio), practice and revision, and flexible levels of support from school staff. It also empowers students to demonstrate their growth and mastery of both the English language and academic content.

While standardized test scores fall below statewide averages, San Francisco International students perform near or above California averages for English Learners who have been enrolled in a United States school for less than 12 months. Graduation rates also fall below statewide averages, but the dropout rate is comparable when accounting for students who take longer than 4 years to graduate high school. Access to the A-G coursework (a sequence of courses required for admission to the University of California or California State University system) outpaces statewide averages. This is a remarkable accomplishment given the high-needs population the school serves. Most impressive is the college-access rate for San Francisco International students, with almost every graduating student receiving acceptance to an institution of higher education and nearly two-thirds of graduating students enrolling in a 4-year college (see Figure 4). For students who have been in the United States for a short period of time—many of whom are unaccompanied minors—this is a life-changing opportunity.

There are also important opportunities for social-emotional learning built into the portfolio process. By pausing each semester to consider what they have learned and how their knowledge connects to real-world issues, students are developing their ability to be self-reflective and identify their strengths and challenges. Principal Julie Kessler notes:

The benefit of midyear portfolios on the reality of the rest of the year cannot be overstated. Students turn into academics, advisories turn into families, and content teachers turn into teachers of writing. All of these changes are directly the result of the portfolios.

San Francisco International demonstrates that rigorous performance assessment activities are accessible to all student populations, provided that the appropriate support structures are in place to facilitate success.

Figure 4: San Francisco International High School Student Outcomes

	San Francisco International High	State Average
California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress^a 2015–16	11th-Grade ELA: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 23% standard met or exceeded • 18% standard nearly met • 58% standard not met 11th-Grade Mathematics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15% standard met or exceeded • 14% standard nearly met • 71% standard not met 	11th-Grade ELA: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 59% standard met or exceeded (15% for English Learners^b) • 22% standard nearly met (22% for English Learners^b) • 19% standard not met (63% for English Learners^b) 11th-Grade Mathematics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 33% standard met or exceeded (18% for English Learners^b) • 25% standard nearly met (17% for English Learners^b) • 43% standard not met (65% for English Learners^b)
Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rate 2014–15	69% (16% continued enrollment, ^c 15% dropout) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asian, Filipino, or Pacific Islander: 88% (8% continued enrollment,^c 4% dropout) • Latino: 51% (22% continued enrollment,^c 27% dropout) • White: 0%^d (100% continued enrollment,^c 0% dropout) • African American: N/A^e 	82% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asian, Filipino, or Pacific Islander: 92% • Latino: 79% • White: 88% • African American: 71%
A-G Course Requirements for UC/CSU Admission 2014–15	76% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asian, Filipino, or Pacific Islander: 85% • Latino: 57% • White: 100%^d • African American: N/A^e 	43% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asian, Filipino, or Pacific Islander: 67% • Latino: 35% • White: 50% • African American: 33%
College Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 98% acceptance, • 63% enrolled in a 4-year college^f 	74% ^g

^a Totals may not add up to 100 due to rounding. Schoolwide test outcomes are not broken down by English-Learner status in the same manner as statewide test outcomes, because nearly all students at San Francisco International are classified as English Learners. Therefore, schoolwide outcomes can be compared directly to the statewide outcomes for English Learners.

^b Enrolled in school in the United States for less than 12 months.

^c Recent immigrants may need more than 4 years to strengthen their English proficiency and accumulate the necessary credits to graduate.

^d Ten or fewer students.

^e There are no African American students enrolled at San Francisco International.

^f Unpublished data from San Francisco International High School for the Class of 2015.

^g 2008–09 California high school graduates enrolled in any postsecondary institution, whether located inside or outside the state of California, within 16 months of their high school graduation.

Source: California Department of Education DataQuest.