Department of Education
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

2014-15
Citywide Instructional Expectations

The Citywide Instructional Expectations set the annual instructional priorities for the New York City Department of Education, foster citywide conversations about school practice, and direct educators to resources and guidance to successfully address these priorities.

The 2011-12 and 2012-13 Citywide Instructional Expectations guided schools as they prepared for the significant new demands of the Common Core Learning Standards and Advance. The 2013-14 Expectations steered schools as they enacted these new policies. The 2014-15 Expectations help schools reflect upon and refine their practice in order to strengthen the integration of these initiatives to prepare all students, including students with disabilities and English language learners, to graduate college and career ready. Implementation of the Expectations will support schools in building coherence among their culture, structures, and instructional core and support them in reaching the benchmarks for school quality described in the Quality Review Rubric.

Conversations with teachers, school leaders, and field support staff have helped to define the following principles that underpin the 2014-15 Citywide Instructional Expectations:

- Schools need time to reflect upon and refine their practice;
- Selecting only a few high-leverage actions to deepen the ongoing work of preparing students for college and careers helps schools make sense of multiple initiatives, including implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards, Advance, and A Shared Path to Success;
- Using a common language and building a shared understanding of high-quality instruction enhances New York City educators' ability to communicate and align resources within and across schools; and,
- The Expectations and the specific tools referred to within them are backed by research and reflect how New York City schools have successfully implemented new instructional policies over the past three years.

FOR A DEEPER LOOK

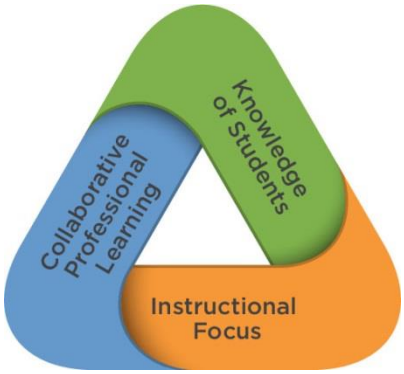
Primary Connections:
In alignment with the Quality Review Rubric, these Expectations are intended to guide school communities as they focus their efforts toward the goal of creating a rigorous and responsive learning experience for students and educators.

Activities and Research:
Throughout the Expectations, there are links to highlighted resources that can help educators as they plan, implement, and make adjustments to practice throughout the school year. Additional resources, including case studies from New York City schools, are available on the Common Core Library.

Summary of the 2014-15 Citywide Instructional Expectations
Schools have been working hard to address these priorities in order to best meet the needs of their own communities. In the 2014-15 school year, schools will reflect on previous years' successes and areas for growth in order to create and refine strategic plans that best support their students. **Specifically, the 2014-15 Citywide Instructional Expectations call on schools to:**

1. Ensure **knowledge of students** and their work, and use this knowledge as the starting point for planning;
2. Integrate policy into an established, clearly articulated **instructional focus**; and,
3. Develop a culture of **collaborative professional learning** that enables school and individual development.

Knowledge of Students



The work of schools is to support students to demonstrate academic and personal growth, achieve at their highest levels, and be afforded opportunities for college and career participation. The success of that mission depends on a school's ability to know its students well. All students should experience rigorous instruction that is aligned with school-wide goals for preparing students for success in college and careers. It remains the responsibility of the classroom teacher to know how each of his or her students is progressing towards mastery of the content and standards. It is the responsibility of the *school* to ensure that each student's academic and social-emotional development and progress toward meeting the benchmarks for college and career readiness are well known and addressed.

In 2014-15, school leaders will ensure that systems and structures are in place so that each student is known well by at least one staff member. It is the responsibility of that staff member – or a team – to be able to clearly articulate the student's development, including how a student is progressing as an individual, as a learner, and as a member of the community in order to coordinate student support services and to advocate for that student. Schools will strategically align their work, including their instructional focus, professional learning, and related supports based on regular assessment of student strengths and needs.

Knowledge of students will emerge through the systems and structures employed by the school, including student conferences, family communication, the individualized education program process, English language learner program selection process, academic and personal goals for students, and guidance and support services for students. Schools will regularly examine evidence and monitor impact of this work throughout the year in order to refine practices that best support knowing students to ensure their growth and success.

FOR A DEEPER LOOK

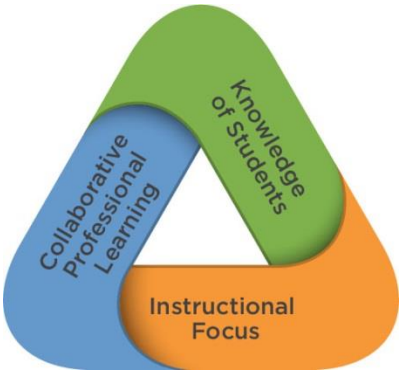
Primary Connections:

- Quality Review Rubric indicators 1.2, 1.4, 2.2, 5.1
- Danielson's *Framework for Teaching* components 1e, 2a, 2d, 3c, 3d
- Guide to Quality Individualized Education Program Development and Implementation
- Blueprint for English Language Learners Success
- Guidance for Prekindergarten Programs

Activities and Research:

- Looking at Students' Current Thinking and Surfacing Gaps
- "The Benefits of School-Based Social and Emotional Learning Programs"

Instructional Focus



An instructional focus is a school-determined priority that integrates multiple initiatives into a cohesive approach to strengthen student achievement. It is rooted in the school's needs and has a direct and evident impact on classroom practice. An instructional focus is developed after examining multiple sources of information, including the strengths and needs of students. It brings cohesion to a school's goal-setting process, comprehensive education plan, teacher and administrator development goals, and decisions about resource allocation. It is emphasized throughout the work of the school, including in school-wide professional development plans, the observation and feedback cycle, and communication with families.

This year, schools will refine or develop an instructional focus to integrate their beliefs on how students learn best, respond to the needs of all students, and attend to the professional growth of all staff. In determining and refining an instructional focus, schools should consider:

- Existing school and staff goals, mission, and vision;
- Multiple sources of student work to analyze gaps between instructional goals and what students currently know and are able to do, assess impact of instruction, and inform strategic instructional adjustments;
- Students' development of academic and personal behaviors;
- Teachers' strengths and areas for growth;
- Curricula and instructional resources;
- Budget, human resources, time, and facilities that support the specific needs of all students; and,
- School structures, including teaming and programming options, to support implementation and ongoing monitoring of impact.

Schools with a cohesive instructional focus embed it in all aspects of school practice, and they prioritize activities aligned to the focus. Evidence of implementation is visible in the work of all members of the school community from school leaders to students. For example:

- School leaders provide focused feedback to teachers as part of formal and informal observation cycles and coordinate internal and external professional development opportunities to support teacher development;
- Teachers plan, reflect upon, and refine classroom practices to incorporate pedagogical strategies aligned to the focus; and,
- Students engage and succeed in related work that supports them in meeting the appropriate standards.

Throughout the school year, teams will monitor for evidence of impact and reflect on implementation. This reflection will inform adjustments to practice and structures, in service of increasing student progress. An instructional focus anchors the school's approach to all of its work, including the strategic collaboration needed to do this work well.

FOR A DEEPER LOOK

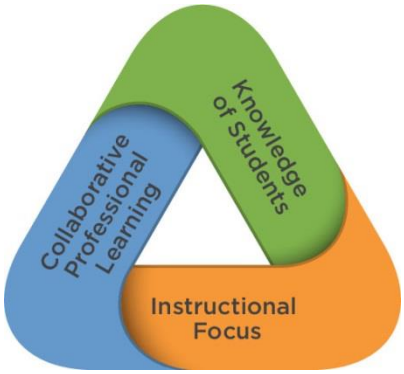
Primary Connections:

- Quality Review Rubric indicators 1.1, 1.2, 2.2, 4.1, 5.1
- Danielson's *Framework for Teaching* components 1a, 1e, 3b, 3c, 3d
- Common Core Instructional Shifts

Activities and Research:

- Instructional Focus Development Tool
- Academic and Personal Behavior resources, tools, and research
- Introduction to Universal Design for Learning
- Summary of "Themes and Implications from Structured Interviews with Teachers and School Leaders on the District's 2013-14 Citywide Instructional Expectations"
- Research briefs: Literacy and English Language Learners

Collaborative Professional Learning



As a key element of professional learning, collaboration supports both teacher and student growth. It is the collective responsibility of all school members to engage in professional collaboration that serves the needs of their students. The culture of reflecting on and refining practice to drive the work within schools builds upon previous years' Expectations and New York City's focus on inquiry. Collaborative professional learning among school leaders, staff, families and communities increases the impact of strong instruction. In 2014-15, schools will refine and develop systems and structures that foster collaborative professional learning in support of their instructional foci and identified areas for teacher and student growth.

School teams that work together to study and implement prioritized instructional practices have a strong impact, not only on student learning, but on their own professional learning. Professional collaboration can happen in a variety of ways, including:

- Colleagues from similar content areas or grade levels meet to look at the standards and to coordinate when each standard is addressed in the year;
- Teachers engage in professional development and then bring instructional strategies back to vertical and horizontal teams;
- School leaders support teachers' reflection on their practice and development of pedagogical strengths based on identified areas for growth by providing professional learning opportunities, facilitating inter-visitations, and modeling a commitment to their own learning goals and strategies;
- Targeted intervention teams, for example Response to Intervention, pupil personnel, or special education school implementation teams, comprised of administrators, teachers, and other staff regularly analyze relevant screening and diagnostic data, student work, and observation notes to develop targeted interventions and engage in ongoing process monitoring protocols; and,
- School cabinets review school-wide data in order to assess the impact of the instructional focus across classrooms and plan adjustments.

Throughout the year, schools will analyze multiple sources of information to assess the impact of professional learning and inform the refinement of collaborative structures and practices. The impact of this collaboration will be seen in classroom practice and related student work.

FOR A DEEPER LOOK

Primary Connections:

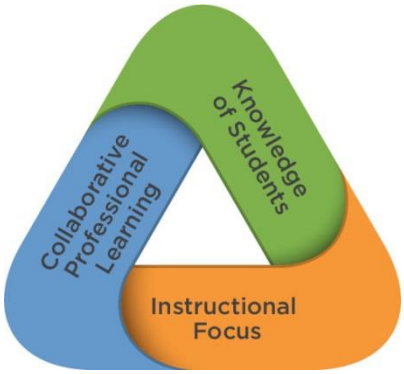
- Quality Review Rubric indicators 1.3, 2.2, 4.2, 5.1
- Danielson's *Framework for Teaching* components 1a, 1e, 4e
- A Shared Path to Success: Guidance for School Implementation Teams

Activities and Research:

- A Rationale for Protocols
- Professional Learning resources on the Common Core Library
- Recommended literature and other leadership development resources on the Leadership Library

Planning for Success

By prioritizing knowledge of students, instructional focus, and collaboration, schools will support student achievement, promote greater school-wide instructional consistency, and foster a culture of learning. Schools will plan, implement, and assess their instructional practices throughout the course of the year. Below is an example of how a school might integrate the Expectations into its practice.



SAMPLE TIMELINE

Spring 2014

- Identify multiple sources of student, teacher, and school information to assess current strengths and areas for growth
- Engage in team reflection and goal-setting processes to inform school-wide decision-making
- Select an instructional focus with input from school stakeholders informed by identified trends
- Plan for 2014-15 curriculum, assessment, scheduling, purchasing, and staffing needs
- Engage appropriate teams in the planning process, for example, the special education school implementation team plans for how the needs of students with disabilities will be addressed in the upcoming year

Summer 2014

- Assess alignment between school structures, resources, and instructional goals
- Assess composition, purpose, and effectiveness of current school teams to make strategic adjustments
- Plan structures and systems for collecting evidence and monitoring impact of implementation of the activities outlined in the 2014-15 Expectations
- Plan structures for teacher collaboration and professional development to address identified needs

Fall 2014

- Communicate with families to assure partnership on the school's instructional priorities
- Implement structures that support the school's knowledge of its students, its instructional focus, and its culture for collaborative professional learning
- Gather and reflect upon evidence of student mastery of content and standards, students' social-emotional learning, and progress towards graduating high school college and career ready
- Implement course corrections in areas such as academic intervention services and staffing

Winter/Spring 2015

- Reflect upon and refine structures that support the expectations that students are known, an instructional focus is being implemented, and collaborative professional learning is prioritized
- Regularly monitor evidence of the impact of instruction and school structures on school-wide outcomes, determine adjustments, and refine practices
- Engage in team reflection and goal-setting processes to inform school-wide decision-making

FOR A DEEPER LOOK

- School Team Reflection Protocol
- Serving All Students: Checklist for Organizing Resources (CORe)
- Parent Communication: Resources for Learning at Home