

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 instructional 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](#), [Advance](#), and [A Shared Path to Success](#). The [2013-14](#) Expectations steered educational leaders and faculty as they enacted these new policies. The 2014-15 Expectations help programs reflect upon and refine their practice in order to strengthen the integration of these initiatives to prepare all students to graduate college and career ready. Implementation of the Expectations will support programs 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, directors, and field support staff have helped to define the following principles that underpin the 2014-15 Citywide Instructional Expectations:

- Programs 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 leaders make sense of multiple initiatives, including implementation of the Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core Learning Standards and the Quality Review Rubric;
- 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, Activities, and Research

In alignment with the Quality Review Rubric, these Expectations are intended to guide professional learning communities as they focus their efforts toward the goal of creating a rigorous and responsive learning experience for students and educators. 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 (www.schools.nyc.gov/academics/CommonCoreLibrary/About/InstructionalExpectations).

Summary of the 2014-15 Citywide Instructional Expectations

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

1. Ensure **knowledge of students** and their work, and use this knowledge as the starting point for planning;
2. Integrate practices that support the **instructional core** (1.1, 1.2, 2.2) and student progress; and,
3. Develop a culture of **collaborative professional learning** that enables program-wide and individual development.

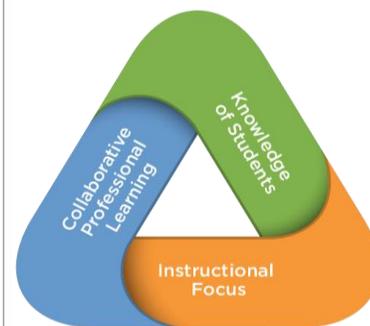
● Knowledge of Students

The work of leaders 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 program's ability to know students well. All students should experience rigorous instruction that is aligned with Learning Goals. It remains the responsibility of the classroom teacher to know how each student is progressing towards mastery of the content and the Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core Learning Standards. Further, it is the responsibility of the *leader* 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 his/her teacher. It is the responsibility of the teacher – or a teacher 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. Leaders should strategically align their program's work, including the instructional core, professional learning, and related supports based on authentic assessment of student strengths and needs.

Knowledge of students will emerge through the systems and structures employed by the school, including authentic assessment principles/systems, family communication and engagement, individualized education approaches, English language learner practices (grounded in oral language development and language acquisition processes), academic and personal goals for students, and guidance and support services for students.

Leaders will regularly examine evidence and monitor impact of this work throughout the year in order to refine practices that best support knowing students as learners to ensure their growth and success.



FOR A DEEPER LOOK

Primary Connections:

- [Quality Review Rubric indicators 1.1, 1.2, 2.2](#)
- [Serving All Students: Using an Authentic Assessment System](#)
- [Blueprint for English Language Learners \(ELLs\) Success](#)

Activities and Research:

- [Looking at Students' Current Thinking and Surfacing Gaps](#)
- [The Benefits of School-Based Social and Emotional Learning Programs](#)
- [Academic and Personal Behavior article](#)

● Instructional Core Focus

An instructional core focus is a priority that integrates curriculum, instruction, and assessment into a cohesive vision for strengthening student achievement. It is rooted in the school's needs and has a direct and evident impact on classroom practice. An instructional core focus is developed after examining multiple sources of information, including the strengths and needs of students as evidenced in authentic assessment data. The instructional core focus brings coherence to a program's learning goal-setting process, teacher and professional development and goals, and decisions about resource allocation. The instructional core focus is emphasized throughout the work of the program, including in program-wide professional development plans, teacher feedback cycles, and communication with families.

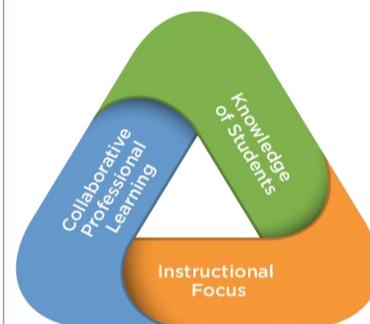
This year, leaders will refine or develop their instructional core focus to integrate instructional practices that are developmentally appropriate and support how students learn best. Instructional core focus should be responsive to the needs of all students and attend to the professional growth of all staff. In determining and refining an instructional core focus, leaders should consider:

- Existing learning goals and the program's mission and vision;
- Multiple sources of student work to analyze gaps between learning goals and what students currently know and are able to do, to assess impact of instruction, and to inform instructional adjustments;
- Students' development of [academic and personal behaviors](#);
- Teachers' strengths and areas for growth;
- Curriculum and instructional resources;
- Budget, human resources, time and facilities that support the specific needs of all students (e.g. teacher planning time); and,
- Essential structures, including teacher team planning to support implementation and ongoing monitoring of student progress in meeting learning goals.

Programs with a cohesive instructional core focus align curriculum, instruction, and assessment in all aspects of school practice and prioritize their work to align with learning goals. 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 that incorporate pedagogical strategies aligned to learning goals; and,
- Students engage and succeed in related work that supports them in meeting the appropriate standards.

Throughout the school year, leaders and teachers will monitor for evidence of impact on student learning and reflect on curriculum, instruction, and assessment implementation. This reflection will inform adjustments to practice and structures, in service of increasing student progress. An instructional core



FOR A DEEPER LOOK

Primary Connections:

- [Quality Review Rubric](#) indicators 1.1, 1.2, 2.2, 4.1
- [Common Core Instructional Shifts](#)
- [Academic and Personal Behaviors: Examples of Practice for Students, Teachers, and Schools](#)

Activities and Research:

- [Instructional Focus Development Tool](#)
- [Introduction to Universal Design for Learning](#)
- [Themes and Implications from Structured Interviews with Teachers and School Leaders on the District's 2013-2014 Citywide Instructional Expectations](#)
- [Research Briefs: Literacy and ELLs](#)

focus anchors the program's approach to all of its work including the strategic collaboration needed to do this work well.

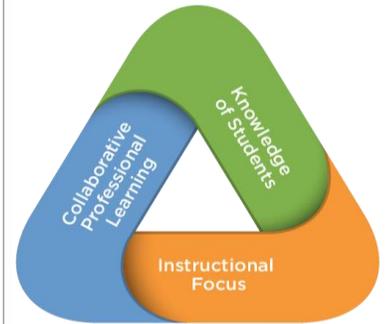
● Collaborative Professional Learning

As a key element of professional learning, collaboration supports both teacher and student growth. It is the collective responsibility of all members of the program 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 programs builds upon previous years' Expectations and New York City's focus on professional collaboration. Collaborative professional learning between school leaders, staff, families and communities increases the impact of strong instruction. In 2014-15, programs should develop systems and structures that foster collaborative professional learning in support of their learning goals and identified areas for teacher and student growth.

Teacher 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:

- Teachers engage in professional development and then bring instructional strategies back to colleagues;
- 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 support for students, for example [Response to Intervention](#), is implemented to ensure that all students' learning needs are met. Program leaders and teaching staff regularly analyze relevant authentic assessment data, student work, and anecdotal/observation notes to develop targeted interventions and engage in ongoing progress monitoring; and,
- Leaders review program-wide data in order to assess the impact of the instructional core focus across classrooms and plan adjustments.

Throughout the year, leaders 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)
- [Danielson's Framework for Teaching](#) components 1a, 1e, 4e
- [A Shared Path to Success: 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 core foci, and collaboration, leaders will support student achievement, promote greater program-wide instructional consistency, and foster a culture of learning throughout each program. Leaders will plan, implement and assess the efficacy of their learning goals and instructional core practices throughout the course of the year. Below is an example of how a program might integrate the Expectations into its practice.

SAMPLE TIMELINE

Spring 2014

- Identify multiple sources of student, teacher, and family information to assess students' current strengths and challenges
- Engage in team reflection and goal-setting processes to inform program-wide learning goals
- Plan for 2014-15 curriculum, instruction, assessment, teacher planning time, and staffing needs

Summer 2014

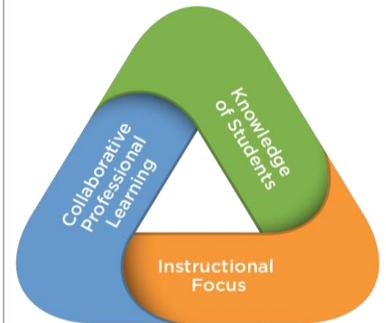
- Assess alignment between program structures, resources, and learning goals
- Plan structures and systems for collecting authentic assessment data student work samples, and other evidence of learning to measure impact of implementation of the activities outlined in the 2014-15 Expectations
- Plan structures for teacher collaboration and professional development to address identified needs

Fall 2014-15

- Communicate with families to assure partnership in your program's learning goals-setting and achievement
- Implement structures that support the program's knowledge of its students, including the instructional core focus, and establishing a culture for collaborative professional learning
- Gather and reflect upon evidence of student learning of content and the standards, students' social-emotional learning, and progress towards learning goals
- Make refinements to instructional core – curriculum, instruction, and assessment to ensure that students are on course toward meeting learning goals

Winter/Spring 2015

- Reflect upon and refine structures that support the learning goals and ensure that students are known, an authentic assessment system is being implemented, and teacher planning time is prioritized
- Regularly monitor evidence of the impact of instruction and school structures on learning goals, determine adjustments, and refine practices
- Engage in reflection and goal-setting processes to inform program-wide decision making, include all stakeholders – teachers, families, the communities, and program leaders



FOR A DEEPER LOOK

- [School Team Reflection Protocol](#)
- Parent Communication: [Resources for Learning at Home](#)