Department of Education
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Quality Review
Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning
2013-2014

Quality Review Report

2013-2014

Innovation Diploma Plus

High School M404

145 West 84 Street,
Manhattan
NY 10024

Principal: Casey Jones

Dates of review: May 12, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Heidi Pierovich

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Innovation Diploma Plus is a high school with 182 students from 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 23% Black, 68% Hispanic, 7% Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 8% special education students. Boys account for 46% of the students enrolled and girls account for 54%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 61%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school community is dedicated to cohesively supporting its students resulting in a safe, nurturing, and productive learning environment that promotes students' personal and academic growth. (1.4)
    - In this transfer school, administration designed a class called community gathering/office hours for 25 minutes daily during period three, where advisory, homeroom, and study hall occur on alternating days. To promote student ownership and responsibility, periods three and seven are also allocated as teacher office hours, for student support on assignments. The school partners with the Community-based organization (CBO), Alianza Dominicana Catholic Charities (ADCC) that provides advocates who conduct the advisory supporting counseling and college/career advisement. Students agreed, "Not only is the school safe, but if you have an issue from outside the school or need help applying to college, the advocate will help you during advisory or periods three or seven." Parents shared that "the advocates help students handle stress, deadlines, develop paths to graduate, keep tabs on grades, assignment completion, passing Regents, and improving attendance. It's a family here." Additionally, the Academic Intervention Services (AIS) Team of teachers, counselor, social worker, dean, advocates, and CBO leader, holds Kid Talk meetings, discussing at-risk students to determine co-created student 'learning plans' that focus on social-emotional and academic growth. Several teachers agreed, "We know it is working because now the student is focused and performing well in class. Plus student's social-emotional behaviors are improving as evidenced by the anecdotal notations on the internal data tool." Therefore, each student is known well by at least one adult and the circle of teachers are aware of the student's challenges and successes, as expressed in the school's theory of action for success 'Innovation, Teamwork, and Resilience'. When asked about what happens if you are absent, students agreed, "The online program sends a call home right away, plus your advocate and teachers also call your parents. They always know if you cut, are late, or are in the building, but not in class." Parents concurred stating, "They have everything covered—phone, email, text, letter!" Students said, "The teachers actually care about us, like my teacher calls me to make sure I come to school." Students are active participants in the monthly town hall meetings where the community shares information, setting the tone for the upcoming month as well as problem-solving school improvement issues. To model meaningful student discussion, administration created a volunteer panel discussing the topic "Who owns the learning?" The panel discussion became heated as the audience voiced their opinions citing evidence. As a result, students' voices are not only respected but they are an integral part of the school improvement efforts, thus positively impacting students' academic and personal behaviors.
- School leaders effectively involve members of the school community in developing data-driven goals and action plans to improve teacher practice and close the achievement gap. (3.1)
    - School leaders and staff analyzed student data to develop long- and short-term specific, measurable, assignable, realistic, and time bound (S.M.A.R.T.) goals embedding each in every action plan, starting with the Comprehensive Education (CEP), the Department Learning Plans (DLP), and Individual Learning Plans (ILP) for teacher goals. Both the DLPs and ILPs are also aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the Common Core Learning Standards

(CCLS). For example, based on data analysis, the school leadership and staff created the school-wide goal to implement the instructional shift to show growth in students' ability to provide written arguments with cite-based evidence, from analysis of complex informational texts. To ensure that the school meets this goal, each department has incorporated it into their DLPs, plus in teachers' ILPs and performance tasks. Teachers use the data tool to sort and analyze student attendance, punctuality, academic, social-emotional, and personal competencies or work habits. The school's focus on streamlining a set of S.M.A.R.T. goals has demonstrated a marked improvement trend in closing the achievement gap from 8.9 of 16 in 2011-12, to 10.4 of 16 in 2012-13 on the school progress reports. Goals are not only created, but also continually monitored and revised. At the end of each trimester staff present reflections and results of the DLP to the whole staff meeting called Step Backs. Teachers stated, "After the 'Step Backs' we revise our DLPs and then administration discusses the modifications." As a result, the school continually revises the short list of goals based on student data. To support teacher growth, administration conducted a teacher survey regarding implementing the Danielson Framework and the results requested reinforcement on questioning and discussion techniques, assessment creation, and goal-setting. As a result, the professional development plan reflects these requests, plus weekly feedback surveys support continual improvement.

- School leaders use data from classroom observations to provide teachers clear, actionable feedback and support that result in elevated pedagogical practice. (4.1)
    - Using frequent cycles of visits and debrief sessions the administration observes teachers, providing effective, actionable feedback and next steps that are tied to clear expectations. To ensure timely feedback, the debrief sessions occur within two days of the observation. Teachers stated the debrief session is, "a reflective discussion where we talk about what went well, or 'glows', and what could be improved, 'grows'," and discuss the artifacts, including the exit ticket and student data to demonstrate analysis, impact and reflection. Together administration and teachers capture the debrief session in a continuous "collaborative planning log". Teachers stated, "Each 'glow' and 'grow' has a strategy waiting in the wings to help us," including visiting supportive staff or material. One teacher shared and others agreed, "As a new teacher this has been the best professional development." The administration models methods for providing actionable feedback with next steps, so teachers can provide it to students. Additionally, using the Advance and their Google systems for tracking teacher progress, the administration tracks progress towards ILPs. As a result, teachers state that the feedback, "we get is on what to improve, how to do it and to revise an instructional strategy by the next visit." Therefore, administration provides teachers with clear expectations for teacher practice and teachers demonstrate improvement toward DLPs and ILPs.
- School leaders and staff align curricula with the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and develop tasks that are rigorous in order to increase achievement for all students. (1.1)
    - To build coherence across grades and subjects, a school-wide goal is to demonstrate student growth in writing argumentative essays with cite-based evidence supporting claims and counterclaims by analyzing complex informational texts. For example, in a living environment project-based assessment, a science teacher revised the task and rubric to include the English language arts CCLS standard regarding incorporating precise claims and counterclaims in the argumentative essay. Teachers stated, "We incorporate the essay across subjects so all students have the opportunity to

improve in writing argumentative essays." In addition, each department purposefully focuses on particular power standards that are aligned to the CEP, DLPs, and ILPs to build coherence for all students. For example, in social studies the power standard is "CCLS RH 11-12.1: cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole." In the math department, based on student data they adopted the CCLS mathematical practices (MP) MP1: make sense of problems and persevere in solving them; MP4: model with mathematics; and MP6: attend to precision. Thus, the school intentionally provided all students with access to engaging and coherent curricula that provides college/career readiness skills for all students.

- Since the school changed to trimesters, teachers must plan within each trimester to include five to six, two-week long modules. Each module includes one or two mini-performance tasks. Across subjects and grades, curricula review of lesson plans, performance tasks, and common department rubrics show revisions based on student work results. For example, a teacher revised a global history lesson to 'chunk' the text for close reading and inserted space for question responses and the department-wide standards-based rubric. This method supported successful student achievement so that the entire history department adopted it. In an algebra class, the teacher revised a project-based task on stained glass windows to include symmetry as a requirement in the design, as her class was more advanced than previously. As a result, teachers refine and plan curricula and academic tasks to provide all students with access to cognitively engaging tasks.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine pedagogical practices across classrooms including supports and extensions for diverse students in order to ensure that all students are consistently engaged in meaningful, higher-level discussions. (1.2)
  - The school has adopted common teaching strategies that include close reading, chunking text, turn-and-talk, flexible grouping, guided practice, group work, rubric reflection, exit tickets, and computer-based research and skills practice. In a math class, the teacher determined, based on data analysis that the class had exceeded the standards so then provided an extension. However, from a review of classroom visits, it is not evident that meeting the needs for advanced students is a routine across the vast majority of classes. Across the classes visited, most teachers provided multiple entry points and scaffolds for struggling students using the aforementioned instructional strategies as well as graphic organizers, visuals, graphs, annotating text, and 'think-alouds'. This support is evident in most, but not yet across the vast majority of classes. For example, in many classes, students worked in groups. However, in a few classes although students were 'grouped' they did not collaborate; but instead, all completed the same work individually while sitting together. A student stated and others agreed, "We always sit in this same group and the groups never change." In a few classes some students finished before others, without a next step or advanced challenge to pursue. As a result, across classes CCLS-aligned performance tasks engage struggling learners, however high performing students were not strategically provided opportunities that engage them in appropriately challenging tasks at a level optimal to advance them from their current level of performance.

- The school incorporates strategies that promote student discussions. Although questioning and discussion are a new focus for the school year, in most classrooms visited, teachers are implementing higher levels of Depth of Knowledge (DOK) questions that lead to student-to-student discussions. In some classes, teachers used discussion as an exit ticket after answering questions following a close read. Some used it to provide students deeper access to the content. For example, in an English class, the teacher posed several questions, including, “Do you think it is really worth it for the character to go there?” and “Is she going there willingly?” In response, one student voiced her opinion with a textual citation and another student responded with a question to the first student who, in turn, answered her peer. Yet, this led to multiple questions from many students to the teacher, without following a structure to conduct student-to-student discussion. However, even in some classrooms where teachers posed DOK 3-4 questions there were several attempts to bring students into a discussion. Yet, it remained a volley between teacher and student often without requiring students to fully explain the rationale behind their answer. As a result, even though higher-order questioning and student discussions occur across classes, it is not yet evident that all learners take ownership of their learning.

- Refine assessment practices to more effectively use data to inform adjustments to curricula and instruction leading to positive impact on student progress. (2.2)
  - The school is in the first of a three-year plan implementing a standards-based grading system using an internal data tool to monitor and support revising curricula. This new grading system provides teachers, students, and parents with clear expectations for meeting standards academically and behaviorally. To show growth using the standards-based grading system, each department creates and implements pre-/post-assessment for skills and standards. In each class visited, posted student performance tasks or essays with department-created standards-based rubrics attached showed teachers’ actionable feedback, such as “well written essay--more outside information and analysis needed,” and “good job but you need more sources.” However, this feedback did not span across a vast majority of classes, with a few samples of check marks on the rubric and scores with encouragements like, “great explanation” and “great details”. As a result, the actionable feedback does not offer a clear picture of student mastery across a vast majority of classes.
  - Departments created common assessments and rubrics, especially for exit tickets. For example, the history department created an embedded rubric, stating meets/does not meet standards, into the class work as a student self-reflective exit slip. In this class and most others, students were able to state their next learning steps. This was not the case in some classes who used exit slips, thus it is not yet across the vast majority of classes. Additionally, during class work, to check for student understanding, teachers moved from table to table answering individual student questions and/or checking-in. However, it was not evident across a vast majority of classes that teachers used these questions or check-ins to adjust the lesson in the moment. As a result, not all students are always aware of their next learning steps.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Innovation Diploma Plus	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score			X	
Instructional Core				
To what extent does the school regularly…	UD	D	P	WD
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?			X	
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?			X	
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?			X	
School Culture				
To what extent does the school …	UD	D	P	WD
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations?			X	
Systems for Improvement				
To what extent does the school …	UD	D	P	WD
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?			X	
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?			X	
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?			X	
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			X	
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?			X	

Quality Review Scoring Key

UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed