



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning**

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

Innovation Diploma Plus

High School M404

**145 West 84 Street
Manhattan
NY 10024**

Principal: Daniel Storchan

**Date of review: January 21, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Rosemary Stuart**

The School Context

Innovation Diploma Plus is a high school with 199 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 1% Asian, 34% Black, 62% Hispanic, and 3% White students. The student body includes 2% English Language Learners and 12% students with disabilities. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 61.0%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
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	Additional Findings	Proficient
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 <i>Framework for Teaching</i> , aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	Focus	Proficient
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	Additional Findings	Proficient
School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	Additional Findings	Well Developed
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	Celebration	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

All teachers engage in inquiry-based collaborations that have strengthened instructional capacity and promote alignment with the Common Core Learning Standards. Teachers have an integral role in key decisions.

Impact

There is schoolwide instructional coherence and increased student learning and achievement across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers meet weekly in departmental, inquiry, and advisory teams. School leaders note that teaching practice has improved, particularly in the planning of Common Core aligned lessons, the delivery of differentiated instruction, and grouping students. These improvements are reflected in feedback to teachers in the formal and informal observation process.
- A departmental teacher team was observed discussing a lesson plan in global history and geography presented by one member of the department. Team members questioned the presenting teacher to determine the extent of the opportunities that had been provided for students to talk to each other. They also explored how the teacher monitored student responses. The teacher shared the tool she uses to record the progress her students make from lesson to lesson and module to module and other team members indicated they would use the tool to determine if it improved their practice. They referred to Hess' *Cognitive Rigor Matrix* to analyze the questioning strategies outlined in the plan.
- Teachers regularly participate in intervisitations with their fellow teachers and provide feedback to each other on what they learned. Prior to some intervisitations, teachers prepare plans to identify students on whom to focus during the visit. One teacher suggested that a colleague include vocabulary acquisition activities in future lessons to support students as they "tackle difficult texts independently."
- Teachers researched and proposed that the school adopt the asynchronous instructional model that allows students to complete coursework at their own pace and it was adopted across departments to provide individualized course options for transfer students.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Teaching practices reflect a strong belief in how transfer students learn best and instructional strategies provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact

Most learners are engaged in challenging tasks although there are some lost opportunities for high quality instructional supports and extensions.

Supporting Evidence

- Students self-pace through course modules under teacher supervision using online curricular resources according to their individual readiness levels. Teachers provide guidance and feedback in accordance with Domain three of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. One teacher uses exit tickets to give students a chance to reflect and share what they are learning.
- Students engage in instruction that is individually tailored to the deficits in their course credits needed for graduation. The growing practice of delivering curricula through asynchronous online courses allows the school to meet the needs of newly enrolled students who require credits in courses that other students may not require.
- Many lessons are organized to provide differentiated activities for students at differing ability levels and this practice is creating coherence across the school. In a math class, one station labeled “recovery” was set up for students who have missed instruction, who are newly enrolled in the course, or who need remediation in the content. The station labeled “developing” was for students who are building their skills, and a third station, “product”, was for students who are demonstrating mastery of the content.
- Teachers lead professional development on questioning and promoting classroom discussion and the teachers report that they are hearing more frequent use of accountable talk stems and higher-order conversations in classroom discussions. However, in some classes there were lost opportunities for rich student-led discussions. In one class, students identified and discussed literary terms and rhetorical devices used to analyze text. The teacher asked students to identify which device would be the best for a select group of texts but then proceeded to lead the students in the exploration. In another class, students referred to texts and notes to verify information during small group discussions.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders ensure curricula are aligned to the Common Core, include the instructional shifts, and emphasize rigorous habits for all students.

Impact

Curricula promote higher order thinking skills and college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Tasks and texts are reviewed to ensure they are aligned with the Common Core Learning Standards. Teachers use a tool to focus their attention on addressing the instructional shifts such as increasing text complexity and analyzing tasks to ensure they require students to support claims with evidence.
- Teacher`s create curriculum resources to meet the graduation requirements for transfer students of all ages and stages of college readiness. These courses are available to students through Schoology, an online learning management system, so that “school is open twenty-four-seven” according to the principal. Students who have other obligations, such as a job or caring for their children, can still complete their course work and make progress toward graduation. The school offers courses that blend teacher-led and technology-based instruction that is asynchronous, allowing students in the same course, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, to work at their own pace.
- The school leaders and teachers are focusing on the inclusion of writing skills into unit and lesson modules in science and math in order to emphasize the development of rigorous habits in all content areas. For example, teachers include literacy skills in the rubrics that are based on the science content standards. Tasks in math lessons require students to defend their thinking when explaining their solutions.
- Many lesson plans include differentiated activities. One plan includes the use of a text that has been adapted to provide different levels of support so that one version includes directions on how to annotate text to be used with students who had not yet mastered that skill. Lesson plans include essential questions, such as, “How does power shape society?” and “Is it ever justified to use a weapon of mass destruction?”

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teachers create common assessments and rubrics that are aligned to the school's curricula and are used to determine student progress toward graduation goals.

Impact

Assessment results provide actionable feedback to both students and teachers regarding student achievement and are used to adjust curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers created and administered a school-wide argumentative essay with an associated rubric. The rubric outlines characteristics of good argumentative writing such as supporting claims with three or more pieces of text evidence and using transitional words to create unity within and between paragraphs. The rubric is well known by all students and they refer to it as a tool for improving their writing.
- Interim unit assessments are often similar to prior State assessments in order to provide authentic preparation for success on Regents exams, which are often the only remaining graduation requirement for many transfer students. In one class, students analyzed the feedback on a practice test to help them develop test-taking strategies and skills.
- All courses of instruction are designed in modules with a ten-day cycle of instruction and assessment. One teacher shared that after analyzing the results from a module assessment, an inquiry team determined a mastery-based assessment from the prior trimester needed to be revised and differentiated to include additional scaffolds for specific groups of students.
- All students must complete a culminating performance based assessment that includes preparation of a self-reflection, a research paper, a resume, a post-secondary readiness plan, and a personal website. Preparation of this final project is a key element of the school's support for college and career readiness. The final presentation to a panel of educators and students must include at least two of these elements.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders partner with parents, communicate a unified set of expectations for college and career outcomes, and provide clear guidance and advisement supports to all students.

Impact

Young adult students own their educational experience and make progress toward meeting their identified graduation goals.

Supporting Evidence

- Students believe the school brings “something new to the table” for young adults who have struggled and failed at other schools. They indicated that this school represents a last chance for students who want to graduate and that the key to success is to be open to the opportunities the school provides. Students agreed that the focus on argumentative writing is preparing them for college level work.
- Teachers, parents, and students expressed the belief that students at this school are taking responsibility for their lives by enrolling in this transfer school. One teacher stated that, “When they walk out these doors, the world treats them like adults.” Parents expressed optimism about their child’s future and confidence in their ability to overcome obstacles to graduate and matriculate into college.
- The principal tracks the progress students make toward graduation on a chart in his office. The chart is updated each trimester to reflect grades and credit accumulation and after each administration of the Regents exams. The tracker indicates what course credits and Regents exams are needed for individual students and anticipates their target graduation date.
- Parents of senior students attend a conference with the principal to review their individual plan for graduating. The parents sign the form that indicates the anticipated graduation date and outlines what coursework needs to be completed.
- Students stated they are strongly supported in their college search by their advisory teachers who help them with college and financial aid applications. In this school year, 155 students have received college advisement services and 29 students have already submitted college applications.