



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

Institute for Collaborative Education

Middle-High School M407

**345 East 15th Street
Manhattan
NY 10003**

Principal: Peter Karp

**Date of review: May 26, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Debra Freeman**

The School Context

Institute for Collaborative Education is a middle-high school with 485 students from grade 6 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 7% Asian, 16% Black, 16% Hispanic, and 55% White students. The student body includes 0% English Language Learners and 7% students with disabilities. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 95.5%.

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	Celebration	Well Developed
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	Additional Findings	Well Developed
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	Well Developed
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	Focus	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula and tasks are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, strategically integrate the instructional shifts, and emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills.

Impact

Curricula and academic tasks promote college and career readiness for all students, including students with disabilities, so that all learners demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's curricula is grounded in the theory that students engage in multi-stepped projects that are authentic to the discipline, and expose students to multiple perspectives from which to explore their own thinking along with peers. The projects involve data analysis, the research process and research writing, and preparing and executing oral and dramatic presentations. The purpose of engaging all students in project-based work across subjects and grades is to prepare all students, including students at varying skill levels, for their graduation requirement, project-based assessment tasks (PBATs). For example, a seventh grade project that connects math and science requires students to design a town and supply it with energy. The project is organized into five phases during which students collaboratively plan the design of the 10 buildings, calculate the town's energy needs, and conduct research to create a year-long energy plan. In the final phases, students advocate for their plans in letters to the mayor.
- Tenth grade humanities students engage in a "Grassroots Public Advocacy Project" for which they work collaboratively as members of a grassroots organization with an issue that they are to take action on. To prepare for this work, students engage in extensive research in order to convince funders to back the cause. The project involves multiple steps from providing an overview of the current state of the problem and studying public opinion polls, to engaging in street interviews and analyzing historical data to highlight how the situation evolved over time. The final two parts of the project are to identify three counter arguments to highlight the weaknesses in the case or discredit it, and to prepare a panel presentation.
- Graduation PBATs engage students in extensive research and writing that result in students defending their research findings before a panel of peers, families, and outside evaluators to secure their readiness for college-level work in all subjects. For example, the neuroscience PBAT is a year-long independent investigation into an issue of choice to make the case for how society will benefit from the research. The math panel presentation requires students to compile a portfolio of eight self-created math problems for which they justify their process, include relevant graphs and tables, and connect the concept to other math topics or to the real world in a 115-minute presentation. Students defend three of the eight problems selected by the panel on the day of the presentation. As one student offered, "We do a lot of presentations and even students who are not comfortable speaking in public get adept at it." Another student recognized that cooperating on group projects, "particularly with peers you might not work well with, is a big part of being college-ready because it gives us a lot of perspective on how others think and experience new ideas."

Area of Focus

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

Findings

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in professional collaborations that strengthen teacher practice and promote implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Teacher teams systematically analyze key elements of teacher practice, assessment data, and student work for students they share.

Impact

Teacher engagement in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations strengthens their instructional capacity and promotes implementation of the instructional shifts. Systematic analysis of student data and work products results in mastery of goals for groups of students and teacher teams are well positioned to increase their work's impact.

Supporting Evidence

- Department teams engage in ongoing revisions to curricula given that multi-stepped projects are designed to target individual students' interests and needs. Although students master the same project goals, the approach for accomplishing the work and students' ownership of the process look different for individual students. Therefore, department team discussions are grounded in students' work products and inform instructional decisions. For example, the twelfth grade department team examined student work from December's PBAT literature panels and recognized that students' thesis statements did not reflect an understanding of the connection between two texts. The team agreed to experiment with pairing books that lent themselves to such connections, and to determine if this would affect student performance. The team revised the process so that panels occur after papers are completed. These decisions provided a scaffold to support students' mastery of goals and improved instruction.
- Department teams engage in looking at student work weekly to identify students who are not meeting project goals, and to generate approaches for supporting the student in class or in advisory. Additionally, grade teams discuss student progress weekly to ensure ongoing communication with students to support their progress toward meeting standards. There is a 100% completion rate on all projects school-wide as a result of individualized support, recognizing when a redo of a task does not further learning, and giving students the opportunity to start fresh.
- During the Quality Review, members of the sixth grade team discussed their continuing work to embed with consistency the high school PBAT skills across middle school. As a result of this decision, sixth and eighth graders have engaged in three PBAT presentations to date. To build on this work, the team agreed to create a set of questions to ask students during their presentations. They shared specific skills embedded in each of their projects to generate trends such as interpreting, making meaning, or spotting patterns in data to decide upon a set of question to ask student panelists. Questions arrived at were "Why is this important to your learning and to society?" and "What questions are you left with?"

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-----------------------

Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers create assessments, rubrics and grading policies that align to the curricula and offer a clear portrait of student mastery. The school's common assessments create a clear portrait of student progress toward goals across subjects and grades.

Impact

Students receive actionable and meaningful feedback regarding their achievement, and teachers adjust curricula so that all learners demonstrate increased mastery of goals.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers base curricula adjustments on student work and assessments. A humanities teacher shared that after she and her co-teacher reviewed the sixth grade cycle projects, they realized that students were having difficulty understanding complex texts. They had intended to begin the *Julius Caesar* unit, but agreed that students needed more experiences with navigating nuanced texts to gain the skills necessary for reading Shakespeare. Similarly, science teachers adjusted the eleventh grade neuroscience PBAT to focus on the data analysis component. As a result of this focus, 60% of the students exceeded the standards on the data analysis component of the rubric, and there was a 34% decrease in students not meeting standards in this component.
- A middle school science teacher shared that after reviewing students' cycle project lab reports, while 76% of his students met standards, the teacher still wanted to ensure that all learners were ready for the upcoming data analysis project. The teacher returned to the student work to identify the specific skills students would need to meet the standards on the next cycle project. The teacher recognized that most students needed more clarity for improving reports or support with designing a controlled experiment, and recognizing the difference between control variables and control groups. To address this, rather than moving onto the next project, the teacher retaught the experimental method to ensure all students' readiness for meeting the standards on the next project. As a result of this adjustment, the administered formative assessments indicated students' clearer grasp of formulating a hypothesis and designing an experiment. Thus, students were prepared for continued work in designing their own experiments.
- Across subject areas, rubrics accompany all projects and assessments, and all students have a clear understanding of their purpose. As one student offered, "Rubrics are a set of expectations for the level of our work, and help us to see how we can go above and beyond on projects." In all student work reviewed, feedback was targeted and meaningful such as "For this paragraph focus less on specific studies and more on broader understandings.", "What exactly is misinformation?" and "You need to make a connection between the prior study and your investigation. How do their findings help you build your investigation?" One student shared that teachers not only offer feedback that is helpful, but also keep checking in to ensure progress. A second student offered, "We are not measured by what other students do, our work is based on what we do like making my thesis important." Students readily shared their next steps such as "make historical research captivating to the reader" and "I need to be precise." Additionally, teachers ask probing questions such as "Why is it [a projectile] reaching the same level of accuracy?" or in math "Find the pattern for every time you go up 50%" to push students to think about their work and how to improve it.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------	-----------------------

Findings

School leaders and staff effectively communicate a unified set of high expectations to students and their families connected to a path to college and career readiness.

Impact

Parents partner with the school to ensure student progress toward expectations, and all students receive clear, focused and effective feedback so that they own their educational experience and are prepared for their next level.

Supporting Evidence

- Students across grades are amply prepared for college and career given the school’s high academic expectations across grades and subjects. Therefore, it is expected that all students collaborate with their teachers to design individualized research projects. Projects are based on student interest, and in some subjects, there is the added expectation that the issue is grounded in social justice or human rights. Additionally, the expectation for all research projects is that students are exposed to multiple perspectives. Students work collaboratively on projects and must defend their learning and research findings in panel presentations at mid- and end-points each year. This is the school’s graduation requirement for all learners. Students noted that these projects “require us to analyze texts and ask each other challenging questions. We learn to think in different ways.” A student shared that if he “falls behind there is a closeness with the people who are teaching us. Without them I would be so far behind.” Consistent communication between students and teachers supports students throughout the project cycle. Additional support is also offered during students’ advisory class, which meets three times a week. As one student noted, “I loved my chemistry investigation because it was an experimental design with formal writing.”
- Parents are partners in the school community, and were instrumental in writing the grants that brought an indoor hydroponic garden to the school to further science exploration for students. The principal also credits their advocacy for keeping class size averages at 22.8. Parents partner with teachers and advisors on the Promotional Review Committee (PRC) to plan supports for struggling students. Discussions surface specific areas for support and the team develops action plans so that students reach mastery. Students who received this academic support saw grade increases ranging from 14% to 74% over the course of the year. Additionally, there were no declines in grades for any students. Therefore, when students defend their work on panels, parents do “double and triple duty” to communicate the value in what students have accomplished.
- Students begin the college process in tenth grade when they meet one-on-one with the school’s college advisor for an introduction to their path to college. The work to prepare students for engagement in the college process continues through high school until all students have been accepted into at least one college. Eleventh and twelfth graders attend *Future-bound* classes where they are engaged in all aspects of the college process from researching and applying to schools, to the college enrollment process. Additionally, students lead weekly Town Meetings to debate current issues and celebrate student accomplishments, and, during their last semester, seniors earn final graduation credits by participating in internships. As a result of the focus on preparing students for college-level work, 35% of high school students take at least one college course prior to graduation.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Well Developed
---------------------------	---------------------	----------------	-----------------------

Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best and student work products reflect high levels of student thinking.

Impact

The school's belief about how students learn best is aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and this is reflected in high levels of student participation and ownership.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's belief about how students learn best was evident across classrooms where students owned their learning and engaged in project-based work that inspired collaboration. In most classrooms visited, students took ownership of their work in collaboration with peers. For example, in a seventh grade class where tasks connect math and science, students were highly engaged in different stages of designing and running trials to test the catapults they built for the theoretical and experimental probabilities that a launched projectile will land on a target. The teacher made clear that groups had three options, to complete construction and predict the strength of the projectile, calculate theoretical probability, or begin running 100 trials. Students immediately joined their groups and participated in the project. For example, in readying for the trial phase one student asked his group "What if the projectile slides? Does that count?" and his teammate responded, "If it slides, for example it hits a firewall, it is the impact that matters."
- In a tenth grade chemistry class, all students were engaged in teams to form a soap company to meet the school community's demands effectively. Groups took ownership of different aspects of the project. For example, the science supervisory team researched and then created a test to make sure that all students understood the guidelines issued by the Food and Drug Administration. The research team organized the work streams and ensured that all deadlines were met, and the marketing team created a survey to collect consumer trends such as packaging preferences, or whether lavender was a desired ingredient. The team was also in charge of creating the purchase order for products needed to make the soap. Students took ownership of the entire process and held each other accountable for each team's responsibility.
- Classroom tasks offer students choice in what they study. Humanities students engaged in discussions to generate ideas for a public service announcement regarding a human rights issue of importance to them. One student whose group was working on advocacy for veterans shared that his grandfather was in the Korean War, and noted "Every 60 minutes a veteran dies." This drove his interest in the issue. All students had completed their research. They had also taken a trip to Washington, DC to meet with a non-profit group to learn how it operates. A second group focused on mental health issues. A student in this group shared that "Public perception isn't what it should be. People don't know that one in five Americans are suffering from mental illness, which most insurance does not cover. That's why these individuals are stigmatized." The group's plan is to propose a non-profit organization to address this issue. All students, including students with disabilities and high performers, engaged in rich discussions regarding issues that mattered to them.