Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Inwood Early College for Health and Information Technologies

High school 06M211

650 Academy St.
Manhattan
NY 10034

Principal: Samona Tait

Dates of Review:
May 18, 2017 - May 19, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Daisy Concepción
The Quality Review Report

The Quality Review is a two-day school visit by an experienced educator. During the review, the reviewer visits classrooms, talks with parents, students, teachers, and school leaders and uses a rubric to evaluate how well the school is organized to support student achievement.

The Quality Review Report provides a rating for all ten indicators of the Quality Review Rubric in three categories: Instructional Core, School Culture, and Systems for Improvement. One indicator is identified as the Area of Celebration to highlight an area in which the school does well to support student learning and achievement. One indicator is identified as the Area of Focus to highlight an area the school should work on to support student learning and achievement. The remaining indicators are identified as Additional Finding. This report presents written findings, impact, and site-specific supporting evidence for six indicators.

Information about the School

Inwood Early College for Health and Information Technologies serves students in grade 9 through grade 11. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm.

School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</td>
<td>Area</td>
<td>Rating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Quality Ratings continued

### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Developing</td>
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<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations for career and college readiness, professionalism, and instruction to the entire staff. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations for all students.

Impact

School leaders provide staff with professional development and have an effective system of accountability for those expectations. Students receive ongoing and detailed feedback and advisement preparing them for their next level.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders communicate high expectations to the entire staff through traditional memorandums and emails. In addition, each morning, school leaders hold a school community huddle in the cafeteria where students gather for breakfast. School leaders share expectations for achievement, highlight the instructional focus, share best practices, and build the school community by recognizing teacher practices and personal accomplishments. After the huddle, the staff faces students and shares similar information for high expectations as well as any other information that students may need to know as they prepare for college, such as dates for taking the SAT exams or dates for the upcoming student internship.

- Teachers stated that school leaders clearly communicate the mission of the school to ensure that students are well prepared during the middle school years and take advance courses so they can begin to earn college credits as soon as possible during their high school years. The goal is for students to graduate with a college associates degree at the end of high school. To accomplish this, the school’s instructional focus emphasizes lesson planning, unit development, and assessment. Professional development is consistently aligned to these targets. A review of the professional development calendar indicates that mathematics professors from CUNY Guttman Community College led sessions in curriculum development addressing algebra and statistics’ concepts needed for college level work. In addition, teachers receive professional development from College Access: Research & Action (CARA). These sessions build a common language for the types of readiness skills that students need in order to be college and career ready.

- In a conversation with students, it was shared that the entire staff communicates high expectations to them from the moment they get accepted to the school. One student stated, “It sounds silly, but this is an early college school so from the moment you step into the school in sixth grade you are really in college and they pay for it!” Students also spoke about their opportunities for certification in digital media technology through the Career and Technical Education Program (CTE), which provides them with opportunities to learn hardware and software installation, network, and health information technology that leads to an applied associate degree. Students benefit from the mentoring by employees from the school’s partners, Microsoft and NY Presbyterian Hospital. Job shadowing opportunities and paid work experience allow them to understand work force expectations and gain experience that prepares them for their careers.
**Area of Focus**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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**Findings**

School leaders are piloting a mastery based assessment approach, which has resulted in some rubrics that are loosely aligned with the school’s curricula. They are developing in their use of common assessments and ongoing checks for understanding, which are inconsistently employed.

**Impact**

Rubrics provide limited feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. Common assessments are inconsistently used to adjust curricula, thus leading to less effective instructional adjustments to meet student needs.

**Supporting Evidence**

- In a meeting with school leaders, they shared they are in the process of refining assessment practices across the school. With the curricula work still being developed, school leaders are administering various common assessments such as mock Regents, Document Based Question (DBQ) Essays, and online assessments to provide them with information about student performance, but have yet to decide how these various data points will be used for adjusting curricula and instruction. The school’s priority is focused on the ability of students to demonstrate analysis across all subjects. Instructional checkpoints align to analysis for these common assessments. A look at common assessment bar graphs appears to show growth from one assessment to another. However, a close look at the data indicates that changes are really connected to the number of students taking the exam than to student progress. The lack of consistency in ensuring that all students participate in common assessments also limits the use of this data.

- School leaders and staff are making decisions about the rubrics that best align to each subject. This has resulted in the use of different online rubrics along with scoring rubrics being used as feedback for students. Scoring rubrics are designed for grading and limit feedback to students as they do not provide actionable feedback. For example, a DBQ scoring rubric addressing the criterion of analysis at a performance Level 4 states, “Supports the theme with relevant facts.” At a Level 5, the description reads, “Richly supports the theme with relevant facts.” This description does not provide students with the clarity of language needed to be used as a next step. Also, while subject rubrics provide students criterion aligned to content standards, this is not the case with project based rubrics. Many of these rubrics focused on appearance and creativity and not on the content or technical skills required by the task. Furthermore, a review of feedback showed that much of the feedback focused on spelling or grammar. In the case of math feedback, the teachers’ feedback is extensive and individualized to each student, but would provide the teacher with limited student performance data as the feedback was not rubric based.

- Checks for understanding were seen in four out of nine classrooms. In an integrated Algebra 1 math class, a teacher asked students what a regression line meant and waited for a student to volunteer. In an Algebra II class, the teacher asked students to show a “fist to five” hand motion on their understanding of the math problem. In a Living Environment class, the teacher walked around checking on student progress and took notes on a clipboard. In an English class, the teacher asked students to reflect on a question presented at the beginning of the class and write their response on a post-it note. She stated that she would look at the response after class. Assessments did not lead to mid-lesson adjustments in any of these four classes as a result of these checks for understanding.
Additional Finding

Quality Indicator: 1.1 Curriculum  
Rating: Proficient

Findings

In designing their own curricula, school leaders and faculty have ensured that the curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits.

Impact

School leaders are building coherence by prioritizing standards. These “power standards” are closely aligned to college and career readiness and use the instructional shifts as both access and support for rigorous tasks for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- The Global History unit on nationalism, industrialism, and imperialism lists the aligned Common Core Learning Standards and indicates that students will use close reading and annotation to read primary and secondary documents and locate text based evidence in order to write an argumentative essay. An Algebra unit on exponential functions and the use of regression models addresses the Common Core concepts of “making sense of problems and persevering in solving them.” This unit includes the math instructional shift called “application” which requires students to demonstrate different types of mathematical procedures and operations for the concept without prompting. While some units and lesson plans are more detailed and developed than others, all units and lessons are aligned to the Common Core and reflect the use of the instructional shifts, including a focus on the use of academic vocabulary. These standards were deliberately selected by the school as “power standards” to support their focus on increasing rigor.

- Academic and curricula tasks promote rigorous thinking and are aligned to Level 3 of the Webb’s Depth of Knowledge protocol. A Living Environment unit on genetics asks questions that require students to use reasoning and application to explain how molecular evidence can be used to determine evolutionary relationships among plant species. In an Algebra II unit, students engage in understanding of how sequences and series relate to each other. In an English unit on The Great Gatsby, students choose a gender or use a Marxist lens and interpret the book from that perspective to examine gender roles in the text.

- Unit and lesson plans across grades and subjects reflect planning multiple entry points in order to provide access to high levels of thinking for all students. While some units are more developed and provide more targeted supports, all units and lesson plans indicate that students are tiered by performance or instructional groupings. Scaffolds include graphic organizers, templates for recording notes, sentence stems, bold or abridged texts, or the use of technology such as graphing calculators and several online programs that provide students with more individualized instruction.
Additional Finding

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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Findings

Teaching practices are becoming aligned to the curricula and the belief that students learn best when engaged in annotation and discussion. Teaching strategies, including questioning and the use of scaffolds, inconsistently provide entry points into the curricula as seen in student work products and discussions.

Impact

Teaching practices reflect the use of the instructional shifts and an understanding of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. However, classroom discussion reflects uneven levels of student participation and uneven demonstration of higher-order thinking skills in student work products.

Supporting Evidence

- There is an inconsistency as to how texts, close reading practices, and annotation are used across classrooms. In a Socratic seminar during an English class, students used close reading to gather notes and build background to enable them to engage in a discussion on the influence of societal norms in the novel, *The Invisible Man*. However, in a US History class, students participated in a gallery walk of World War II propaganda posters describing what they were seeing. When asked about the pictures of women planting victory gardens or rationing food, students did not understand the context or reference and were unable to make the necessary connections between the posters and the war they were depicting. Students stated that they had not read any related text on the subject.

- Although a review of lesson plans demonstrated that teachers had planned for scaffolds, they were seen in only two of the nine classrooms visited. In a grade nine class on biodiversity, the teacher held all students accountable to both sides of the argument by providing them with note catchers, varied organizers, a copy of the rubric, a set of texts as well as sentence frames. All students had read and annotated the text and engaged in peer feedback. In an Algebra II lesson, the teacher provided students with tiered tasks. The sequence in which he called on students ensured that student conversations built foundational skills. He used questions to promote thinking, and invited students to challenge and explain their answers to deepen their thinking. Most students were engaged and were able to demonstrate higher-order thinking as they justified their own thinking. However, this was not the case in a Global History class discussing Nazi Germany. While students understood the movement for Nationalism in Germany, they did not understand how this movement led to the Jewish Holocaust. Students spoke about this genocide as though it was a one-day event following World War I. In a Living Environment class, the teacher asked a series of leading questions; however, students did not respond. Students did not understand pertinent vocabulary, such as the word molecule or the meaning of the acronym DNA.

- Work products reflect uneven levels of student thinking. In many classes, student work stayed at a basic level with the exception of mathematics where the work was tiered. Most students’ essays were comprised of simple sentences describing or explaining a concept or idea with the length of the essays limited to two or three paragraphs. Developing a thought, a thesis, or critiquing and analyzing an idea was not in evidence in the work reviewed. In general, students paraphrased what the teacher had explained, and in some classes, students worked on packets that required a one sentence response or fill in the blank.
Additional Finding

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

School leaders support the development of all teachers, including those new to the profession through cycles of formal and informal observations. Feedback provided accurately captures strengths, challenges, and provides next steps.

Impact

Effective feedback results in positive growth for new teachers. School leaders make informed decisions regarding professional development and succession plans.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers are provided feedback through 4 cycles of observations guided by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. The feedback from these cycles also includes the analysis of student work and data. Leaders engage in frequent learning walks targeting a specific domain and give teachers specific formative feedback as well. While all teachers receive feedback from all these cycles of observations, teachers who are new to the profession and teachers on a support plan, receive more frequent formative feedback. School leaders consistently provide actionable and effective next steps resulting in improved teacher practice. For example, a new teacher struggling with classroom management implemented the recommended next steps from an observation and in the following report, the school leader stated, “It is great to observe your growth in instructional management. The response your students have to your cues and redirection demonstrates progress.”

- Feedback emphasizes building strong lesson objectives, student engagement, and feedback to students. Observation reports indicate that feedback captures the teacher’s strengths and challenges while providing them with clear actionable recommendations. For example, one report stressed the teacher’s progress in developing a measurable aim for a lesson and the use of student choice while addressing the need for planning a more effective role for the paraprofessional. Recommendations on how to best use the paraprofessional were included. This pattern of providing feedback was consistently evident in all reports reviewed.

- Since the school is still growing into its full complement of grades, the school continually has new teachers. The principal uses the data from teacher observations and surveys to ensure all teachers’ needs are met and provide the necessary support for their professional growth. Although the school has a number of new teachers each year, the principal identifies teacher leaders from the new faculty members to lead the work at the school and effectively provide for succession. One of the English teachers was selected to support her colleagues and as a result of her work and validation from the *Advance* teacher observation platform, she was recently appointed as the assistant principal of the school. Analysis of data from the *Advance* Platform indicated many teachers received a rating of ineffective in the area of lesson planning and questioning techniques. As a result, school leaders attended professional development on curriculum mapping and assessment so they could then provide the necessary training for the teachers at the school.
### Additional Finding

<table>
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<th>Quality Indicator</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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</table>

#### Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured teacher led professional collaborations that include inquiry work. Teachers use a cool and warm feedback protocol when analyzing student work for students they share.

#### Impact

Although teachers meet to support the school goal of curricula development aligned to the Common Core, their inquiry work is still developing and has not as yet resulted in the consistent improvement of teacher practice.

#### Supporting Evidence

- One of the school foci is ensuring that student work display analysis. To that end, teachers across disciplines collect work samples to gauge progress towards this foci. In a social studies team meeting, teachers used a protocol where one teacher presented student work from a thematic essay and was provided with warm and cool feedback on the work. The team had agreed to provide feedback on students’ ability to demonstrate analysis in their writing and the use of peer feedback. During the cool feedback stage of the meeting, teachers shared that the peer feedback was not helpful as it was too critical and did not offer next steps. Additionally, the teacher peers agreed that the samples presented to them did not show evidence of analysis. Teachers did agree that the student work contained enough information to receive a pass score on the Regents, but it would not reflect the school foci. While the agenda stated “Next Steps: Implementing feedback from today’s meeting,” teachers decided to collect another sample of student work to analyze but did not specify what revisions would be made to curriculum or instruction to ensure that future work products demonstrated analysis.

- As many of the teachers are first year or teachers on an improvement plan, the use of inquiry is still developing across the teams. School leaders provide guidance by sitting in on teacher team meetings in order to strengthen teacher’s lesson planning to ensure they provide opportunities for students to demonstrate higher-order thinking. However, as observed across classrooms, there is still inconsistency in task and lesson development that underscores that this work is still in progress and developing.

- Much of the teacher team work focuses on building a school curricula to meet the addition of grades as the school grows. The school is still in the process of drafting a six-year scope and sequence framework for curricula, instruction, and assessment that incorporates both the Common Core and the College and Career Competencies as well as College Access Research and Action to bridge grade six to an associate degree. This is reflected in the Professional Development Learning Plan which guides the use of teacher team work. This plan indicates that much of the work is in curricula development and ensuring that teams are building alignment and coherence with these various programs. Furthermore, a review of teacher team notes reflect that teachers meet frequently addressing curricula building, advisory, kid talk, and academic intervention services for students. There was limited evidence that teachers are consistently engaged in conducting item analysis of student work to inform revisions to instruction.