Institute for Student Achievement
Evidence-based Whole School Reform for High Schools: The Truth is Out There

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Jersey City Public Schools

• 6 High Schools (9-12)
• 1 Secondary School (6-12)
• 1 Alternative Program (serving grades 6-12)

we offer comprehensive High Schools as well as district-wide selective programs to suit a range of interests and talents.

High Schools (open enrollment)
• 4- Comprehensive
• 3- Selective admissions process
• 1- Lottery process (Innovation)
Within these 8 High Schools sits a small STEAM school with the mission to inspire young people to become curious, committed, and independent life-long learners who embrace the skills and values to be innovative problem-solvers, prepared to overcome challenges that confront them and our world.
We envision students who imagine their world in new ways because of their exposure to interdisciplinary curricula anchored in real world challenges. We believe students learn best when their curiosity is stimulated and when they are motivated to engage in lessons that eventually lead such learners to \textit{speculation, experimentation, and innovation}. 
This is Innovation
A small diverse school of 318 Students
And
Staff
- 30 teachers
- 1 clerk
- 1 Crisis intervention teacher
- 1 guidance counselor
- 3 security officers
- 1 custodian
- 1 administrator

Teacher Leaders
- Leadership Team
- Team Leaders
- Department Leaders
- Class advisors
I joined Innovation in April of 2016 as the 3rd principal in two years, but the founding teachers and staff remain constant. There’s been very little attrition.
Organization Structures

• **Leadership Team**
  - School professional development plan
  - Analyze school data
  - Develop school goals,
  - Identify/Address school equity

• **Grade Level (team leader facilitates)**
  - Common goals (data/parental involvement)
  - Kid talk
  - Interdisciplinary planning
  - Naviance
  - Instructional rounds
  - Writing plan

• **Content area (department leader facilitates)**
  - Common goals (data/parental involvement),
  - Unit plans, feedback
  - Develop and analyze common assessments,
  - Discuss student work samples to norm scoring
  - Effective teacher feedback writing samples

• **Grade level class advisers**
  - Culture and climate (events and activities)

*weekly PLC
( 60 min-grade level, 60-min content)
In 2015-16 our PARCC data told a story, a story not unlike the story told in a number of urban schools around the country.

Both the district and state OUTPERFORMED Innovation on the PARCC Literacy and Algebra 1 Exams.
By the end of 2016-17, Innovation staff and students rewrote that story.

Innovation *OUTPERFORMED* all but 3 high schools in Jersey City (3 Exam Schools), and Innovation *OUTPERFORMED* the district and state on the PARCC Literacy Exam.

Innovation *OUTPERFORMED* the district in Algebra 1.
One’s tempted to say, “I have really good teachers.”

One is tempted to say, “I have really good students.”
College Preparatory Program

• What we did/do well
  • Utilize the coaches
    • Coaches met regularly with (core content) and specials teachers sought out advice
  • Operationalized rigor
    • Instruction (peer observations, Lookfors, PLCs)
    • Planning (peer review of lesson plans)
    • Student product (discussion, reading, writing, numeracy)
    • Charette
  • Reimagine college credit acquisition
    • 43 junior/seniors taking college courses at NJCU
    • 10 freshman students enrolled in Computer Arts A.A program at HCCC
    • 131 students enrolled in AP/Honors courses
    • Science lab at NJCU

• What we’re working on
  • Mathematical Reasoning/Thinking
  • Writing across content areas
  • Data to inform instruction
Continuous Professional Development

• **What we did/do well**
  • Give meaning to co-teaching/co-planning
    • As the ISA Leadership Coach said:
      • “If the lights are out, whose voice do you hear?”
      • If the sound is dampened, who do you see facilitating and most actively instructing.”
  • Grade-level and Content team regular meetings
    • Instruction (peer observations, Lookfors, PLCs)
    • Planning (peer review of unit plans)
    • Student product (discussion, reading, writing, numeracy)
    • Interdisciplinary development
    • Parent involvement

• **What we’re working on**
  • Strategies to support students in taking ownership of their own learning
  • Utilizing data to inform instructional decisions
Distributed Counseling

• What we did/do well
  • Advisory (This is a major tenant of ISA; every student needs an advocate.)
    • Naviance
    • Charrette Planning
  • Grade-level Team KidTalk
    • Identify interventions
    • Provide academic, emotional and behavioral supports
    • Review previously discussed students
  • Restorative Justice and Fairness Committee

• What we’re working on
  • Advisory (ongoing work)
  • Student portfolios
  • Student developing goals and tracking progress
Advisory Program

- **Monday** - Grade level curriculum (social-emotional)
  - Building healthy relationships, bullying/harassment, respect/self-respect conflict resolution, self-identity

- **Tuesday** - Naviance/Portfolios
  - Evaluate learning progress/academic achievement, reflection, revising academic work, evidence of STEAM activities, Interdisciplinary activities, awards/accomplishments, evidence of community service

- **Wednesday** - Enrichment/Intervention/Restorative Justice
  - SAT Prep, Khan Academy, PARCC, Brain Teasers, Student designed tasks, writing center

- **Thursday** - Charrettes/Community Service
  - Identify a problem and design a solution in regards to making Jersey City more socially and Environmentally responsible
    - Solution to a current issue
    - Rationale for proposal data driven
    - Include a website and coding/app/3D printing
    - Digital Art and blueprint
    - Business proposal, market research, cost analysis

- **Friday** - Check-in
  - Goal setting, track progress, reflection
Continuous Organizational Improvement

• **What we did/do well**
  • Hold each other accountable
  • Believe that good can be better
  • Share instructional strategies, activities, successes
  • Writing across the curriculum
  • Believe that Innovation can be best school in NJ....

• **What we’re working on**
  • Equity, Equity, Equity
  • AP gaps and stronger alternative paths for college credit (JCC, Hudson)
Programs and Initiatives for 2017-18

- Students take courses at NJCU (University partner) - Beyond Boundaries, 20th Century Middle Eastern, English Composition
- Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Environmental Science, and Scientific Research labs held at NJCU
- Partnership with NJCU Partnership with A. Harry Moore
- Advisory program
- Restorative Justice
- 100% Google Classroom implementation
- Instructional classroom visits facilitated by team leaders
- Grade Level common planning
- Department common planning
- Monthly parent nights hosted by grade level and department teams
- Positive Behavior Support (Wolf Dollars)
- Focused school-wide writing plan
- Several new courses offered (Music Tech, Web Design, AP Lit, AP Lang., AP Spanish, AP Physics, AP US, AP World, Env. Science)
- Honor Societies (National, Spanish, Social Studies, Math, ELA)
Innovation has one administrator. I can’t build a school alone. Can’t be everywhere. Can’t see everything.
But I can know almost everything that I need to know about the school.