PICCS

Partnership for Innovation in Compensation for Charter Schools

PICCS Profiler

PICCS HCMS Continuum

Career Ladder — Preparation — Recruitment & Retention — Induction & Mentoring — Evaluation — Ongoing PD/Professional Growth — Performance Management

Effective Practice
Student Learning Outcomes

Recent findings from an independent evaluation suggest that NYC charter schools participating in PICCS are making headway in aligning core school functions—recruitment, induction, professional development, evaluation and compensation—to support and develop strong educators. Otherwise known as a Human Capital Management System (HCMS), this systematic approach to educator talent organization ensures that schools measure, reward, and support effective teaching and leader practices that are grounded in a vision of instructional improvement.

This work is being supported by PICCS' five-year Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grant, which is the third funding award for PICCS since 2007. PICCS provides charter schools with a framework, guidance, and resources to cultivate professional policies and practices that support continuous growth for teachers and administrators and that lead to improved student outcomes. Through PICCS, schools make increased connections between teaching and learning by facilitating practices such as data-driven decision making, professional learning communities, and distributive leadership. All activities and resources are grounded in well-researched theory and best practices.

The progress demonstrated by the five schools (see list of schools below) in year two is the topic of this issue of the *PICCS Profiler*—a research brief focused on providing periodic updates about key findings from a multi-year evaluation conducted by Measurement Incorporated (MI). The report begins with an overview of the schools' implementation status and alignment of their HCMS with their vision of improvement. Following are key findings on the individual components of the system. All data were gathered from administrator and teacher surveys and site visits to the schools that occurred in the spring of 2013.

Schools participating in the 2012 grant include

- Imagine Me Leadership Charter School
- Inwood Academy for Leadership Charter School
- John Lavelle Preparatory Charter School
- New Dawn Charter High School
- Tech International Charter School

Overall HCMS Alignment

In year two of the grant, NYC PICCS schools had the foundation of their HCMS in place—near unanimous agreement of a vision of instructional improvement that was frequently communicated and that guided school programs (see **Table 1**). Equally important is that nearly all teachers understood the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to realize the vision.

Table 1
Vision of Instructional Improvement
Percent Reporting "Agree" and "Strongly Agree"

	Teachers	
	Agree	Strongly Agree
School has a clear vision of instructional improvement.	50%	44%
School's programs and practices are guided by this vision.	51%	43%
The vision of instructional improvement is frequently communicated to staff.	47%	45%
Teachers support and agree with the vision of instructional improvement.	51%	44%
Teachers are aware of the knowledge, skills and competencies needed to realize the vision.	52%	41%

What schools were still working on in year two, however, was aligning school processes into a fully functional HCMS. To this end, PICCS was viewed as a vital resource. Put by one administrator, "There wasn't a system before so we are starting at ground zero…PICCS provided us with the roadmap and structure. It has 'ready-made' structures to implement. They had the resources that our school needed to effectively implement Danielson, for instance."

For most schools important preparations were necessary. These included 1) communicating the process to the teaching staff, and 2) closely examining all school functions to identify areas that were not working in alignment with the vision. Expressed in this statement made by an administrator, "At our school, I emphasize to staff the three pillars: professional development, Danielson, and PBCS…we are also looking at all systems and 'weeding the garden' so to speak."

Administrators rated their schools' level of implementation of the primary HCMS components in years one and two of the grant. These ratings will be tracked during the five years of the grant in order to assess the schools' progress toward overall alignment. Administrators rated the extent of implementation on a 6-point *stage of implementation* scale using the corresponding rubric.

Descriptions of Stages of Implementation
Stage 1. Not Implementing: We do not have this procedure/practice(s) in place and have not discussed it yet.
Stage 2. Under Development/Planning: We are planning to implement this procedure/practice(s) and are allocating the needed resources— human, physical, and financial— to implement it with fidelity.
Stage 3. Early Implementation: We are beginning to use this procedure/practice(s) but implementation is inconsistent/uneven because we're still learning about it and mastering the logistics.
Stage 4. Routine Implementation: We have this procedure/practice(s) in place and our approach is organized and consistently used with no major gaps.
Stage 5. Refinement: We have this procedure/practice(s) in place but are making changes/revisions to improve its alignment with other HCMS components.
Stage 6. Sustained: We have systemic, aligned and effective implementation of this procedure/practice(s). It is an integral part of the way we do business and fully aligned with other human resource functions.

Table 2 summarizes the schools' level of implementation in year two, comparing it to year one in most areas.[1] Several noteworthy findings can be gleaned from the table. One, all HCMS components showed growth and improvement from year one to year two. Specifically, 85% of the key elements moved up one level of implementation. Two, several HCMS components—educator evaluation and professional development—were at relatively high levels of implementation by year two, i.e., Stage 5. In other words, schools not only had practices in place, but were also making refinements to improve overall alignment with HCMS.

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[1] Ratings represent the median level of implementation reported across all five schools. Items changed from year 1 to year 2 to better reflect PICCS HCMS model; therefore some items were not measured both years.

Table 2
Level of Implementation of PICCS HCMS

	2013	2014
Recruitment and Hiring		
School partners with reputable universities and/or talent recruitment organizations with demonstrated success in obtaining top talent.	3	4
School identifies and actively recruits educators with *specific performance competencies* necessary to produce high levels of student achievement.	n/a	4
School uses meaningful data to detect and forecast personnel needs and develop hiring goals accordingly.	n/a	3
Induction and Mentoring		
The program uses a collaborative coaching model.	3	3
Participation in the program is a minimum of three years.	2	3
The program is informed by student growth targets and professional practice rubrics.	n/a	3
Educator Evaluation		
Evaluation observers are certified to conduct evaluations to ensure proper implementation and inter-rater reliability.	3	4
A minimum of two observations are conducted on each eligible teacher.	4	5
Evaluations are reviewed by at least two certified people to ensure congruence between student growth and professional practice measures.	4	5
Professional Development		
PD content is designed according to identified needs based on educator evaluation results and student performance.	n/a	5
PD is ongoing (throughout the school year).	5	5
PD provides teachers with opportunities for active learning.	4	5
Performance Management and Career Lattices		
Teacher evaluation performance is aligned to retention.	4	5
Performance-based pay is tied to annual teacher evaluations.	3	4
Performance-based stipends are tied to teacher leadership positions.	3	4
School has differentiated levels of teaching positions.	2	3
Differentiated teaching positions have annual PBCS increases within each level.	2	3

The remainder of the Profiler dissects each of the HCMS components, presenting data on perceptions of implementation quality and fidelity from both administrators and teachers.

Recruiting and Hiring

For the 2013-2014 academic year, the schools were comprised mostly of teachers who were relatively new to the field *and* new to the schools. Specifically, principals reported that about 59% of their teachers returned from the previous year, requiring them to replace almost half of their staff. To corroborate, teachers reported that they had, on average, worked at the school for less than two years. The mean years of teaching experience was 4.95 (ranging from 0 to 26 years), again pointing to a relatively newer set of teachers.

Overall both administrators and teachers reported sound recruitment and hiring procedures in their schools. For instance, administrators used a variety of sources to recruit teachers. Chief among them were advertisements placed in newspapers, universities or on job boards. Other widely used sources were teacher recruitment fairs or websites. Employee referrals were also used by most.[2]

Evaluation data also reveal that schools were active in hiring staff well before the start of the school year. **Figure 1** shows that the majority of the hiring (67%) occurred between the months of May and August. Indeed, half of teachers were hired between May and July, giving schools ample time to fill teaching positions and provide orientation to new hires. Similarly, the majority of teachers were active in their pursuit of a teaching position, with 80% applying before the start of the school year (January to August).

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[2] Data taken from principal survey

Figure 1
Teacher Applying and Hired by School
Comparison of Months
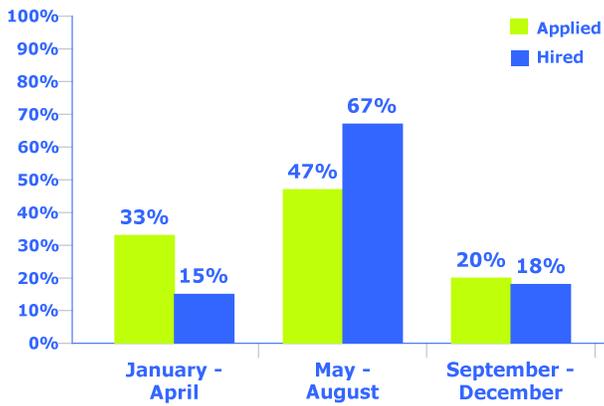
Equally important, newly hired teachers reported that they were informed of performance expectations, the school's vision, and other important pieces of information that would have helped them decide whether or not they would make a good match to the school. **Table 3** lists these variables and the percent of teachers who *agreed* and *strongly agreed* with the statements. More than 8 out 10 teachers received an explanation of the performance requirements of the position and the school's vision and approaches to instruction. About 7 out of 10 reported that the school's teacher performance evaluation process, performance-based pay structure, and career ladder opportunities were clearly explained.

Table 3
Teachers' Experience with Hiring Process
Percent Reporting "Agree" and "Strongly Agree"

	Teachers	
	Agree	**Strongly Agree**
The performance requirements of the position were made clear and explicit.	44%	44%
The interview(s) included an explanation of the school's vision and approaches to instruction.	44%	41%
The school's policies and procedures on how teachers are evaluated and what is expected were clearly explained.	36%	42%
The school's performance-based pay and career ladder opportunities were clearly explained.	38%	32%

Induction and Mentoring

With a relatively large number of new teachers hired last year, the provision of induction and mentoring opportunities seems imperative. Through the grant, PICCS and schools have been crafting a 3-year, comprehensive induction program for new teachers. While this program was still in the development phase in year two, teachers were benefitting from some form of induction in their schools. Specifically, 17% of teachers indicated that they participated in an induction program. Moreover, 86% had been in the program for one year or less and 14% had been in the program for three years.

Inductees were asked to indicate the frequency with which they participated in a variety of activities, which are listed in **Table 4**. Chief among these were weekly (or more frequent) support and guidance on essential teaching responsibilities such as planning, instruction, curriculum and classroom management. While some of the activities, such as meeting with the school principal and attending PD occurred less frequently, it should be noted that very few teachers (less than 10%) reported *no* participation. Indeed, nearly all teachers reported *at least* monthly participation in each of the activities listed.

Table 4
Induction Experiences
Percent Reporting "Weekly" or "Daily" Exposure

	Teachers
Worked with other teachers on planning activities.	93%
Received support and guidance on instructional strategies.	79%
Received support and guidance on curriculum content.	64%
Received support and guidance on classroom management.	57%
Observed classrooms with experienced teachers.	46%
Participated in a PLC.	43%
Met with curricular specialists to discuss teaching.	36%
Attended in-service/professional development workshops.	23%
Met with school principal to discuss teaching.	21%

Moreover, all teachers reported that they were either "moderately" or "very" satisfied with the induction opportunities. Nearly all (93%) perceived it to be a valuable experience.

Educator Evaluation

The cornerstone of the PICCS HCMS model is performance evaluation. It provides a meaningful measurement of individual teacher performance and draws upon multiple measures including observations of professional practice and student growth measures. The model also makes clear expectations of effectiveness, facilitates collaboration between teachers and administrators, and serves as a basis for identifying appropriate professional development.

Both teachers and administrators reported sound educator evaluation practices in their schools, which is consistent with the high level of agreement over the vision of instructional improvement. Specifically, **Table 5** shows that the vast majority of teachers either *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with statements relating to the timeliness, fairness, communication, and consistency of the observation process.

Equally noteworthy is that nearly all *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that the results of the observation and their performance were used constructively. There was also widespread agreement that the observation process provided valuable, evidence-based feedback on teacher

performance, which was used to improve instructional practices.

Table 5
Quality of Educator Evaluation Procedures and Use of Results
Percent Reporting "Agree" and "Strongly Agree"

	Teachers	
	Agree	Strongly Agree
Perceptions about procedures		
The conference was a two-way conversation.	45%	45%
Observers have been appropriately trained to ensure inter-rater reliability.	46%	42%
The evaluation activities and schedule are communicated to teachers.	35%	25%
The proficiency ratings are fair and accurate.	54%	58%
Performance feedback is given in a timely manner.	43%	43%
Procedures used are consistent and objective.	45%	40%
Perceptions about use of results		
Results of the evaluation identify specific areas for teacher growth.	37%	53%
Results of the evaluation are used to improve instructional practice.	42%	48%
I received evidence-based, improvement focused feedback and guidance on my performance as a teacher.	49%	39%
The conference dialogue and information helped to improve my instruction.	49%	40%

Administrators, for the most part, were confident in their abilities to carry out teacher performance evaluations. As seen in **Table 6**, most administrators felt that they were *well prepared* or *completely prepared*. Indeed, most reported that they were *completely prepared*, meaning that they could share their knowledge with others.

Table 6
Administrators' Educator Evaluation Skills
Percent Reporting "Well" or "Completely" Prepared

	Administrators
Conducting classroom observations in a timely manner.	87%
Identifying and documenting appropriate evidence of teacher performance.	86%
Accurately discerning effective and ineffective teaching.	87%
Engaging in evidence-based, improvement focused conversations with staff.	87%
Encouraging and facilitating a two-way dialogue with staff during conferences.	87%
Using teaching evaluation data to identify school improvement needs.	100%

Student Learning Objectives (SLOs), another component of educator performance evaluations, received general support from teachers though less so than the observations (see **Table 7**). Certainly, there is room to improve the process and how it is used to discuss student learning.

Table 7
Perceptions of SLOs
Percent Reporting "Agree" or "Strongly Agree"

	Teachers	
	Agree	Strongly Agree
Having SLOs in place has helped me focus more clearly on my planning, instruction and assessment.	46%	17%
The SLO process has made conversations with my supervisor about student learning more relevant and substantive.	49%	15%
The SLO process has made conversations with my colleagues about student learning more relevant and substantive.	52%	16%

Professional Development and Growth

In PICCS' HCMS model, teacher performance on professional practice measures serves as the basis for developing professional growth plans. Ideally, teachers and supervisors collaboratively identify areas of focus for improvement as well as supports and resources that lead to teachers' growth in practice. In the PICCS model, these supports and resources are provided through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and onsite coaching where emphasis is placed on building data-driven instructional skills and content area knowledge relevant to the Common Core Standards.

Creating these professional development pathways was a large focus in year two of the grant. Displayed in **Figure 2** a little more than half of teachers (57%) reported that they had created an individual growth plan with their supervisor that identified areas of focus for professional growth; this is up 9-percentage points from last year (48% of teachers).

Figure 2
Individual Professional Growth Plans (IPGP) and Aligned PD
Comparison of 2013 and 2014
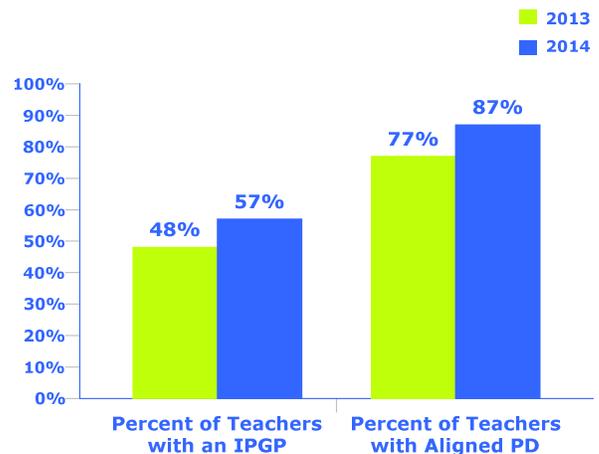
What's more is that the majority of teachers (87%) reported that they were provided with professional learning opportunities that were aligned with their growth goals, which was also an improvement from last year (see **Figure 2**). Equally impressive is that teachers gave high marks to the quality of professional development opportunities. For instance, more than 9 out of 10 agreed that professional development was appropriately timed and provided teachers

opportunities to collaborate and learn from colleagues (see **Table 8**). The large majority also agreed that PD afforded them ample opportunities to improve their current practice and knowledge.

Table 8
Teacher Perceptions about Professional Development
Percent Reporting "Agree" and "Strongly Agree"

Professional development...	Teachers	
	Agree	Strongly Agree
was appropriately timed.	68%	25%
included ample opportunities to directly incorporate new techniques into my instruction.	57%	25%
allowed ample opportunities to work on improving current practice.	57%	26%
increased my knowledge of content and pedagogy relevant to my teaching assignment.	60%	26%
helped me improve my professional practice skills.	56%	33%
provided opportunities to collaborate with and learn from teachers in my school.	51%	41%

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) were prevalent form of PD in the schools but had not increased from the previous year. Fifty percent of teachers reported participation in a PLC in year two, which met, on average, weekly; slightly more teachers participated in PLCs last year. What did increase, though, is the percent of teachers who felt that their teaching practices had benefitted from participation in a PLC. As seen in **Figure 3**, 80% reported benefits in year two compared to 72% in year one.

Figure 3
Teacher Participation in PLCs and Those Reporting Benefits to Teaching
Comparison of 2013 and 2014
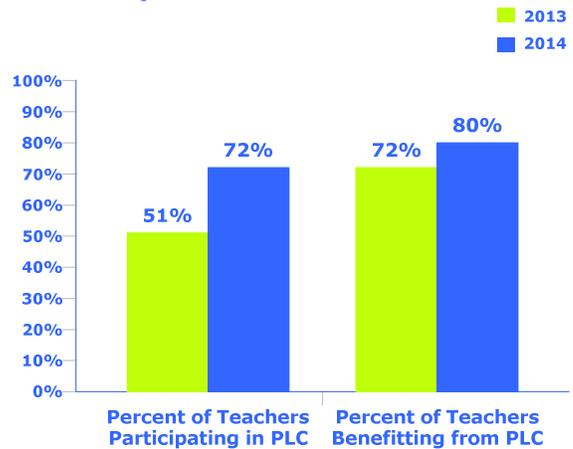
Table 9 lists the types of discussions that occurred during PLCs. They mostly centered on identifying problems of practice and using student data to better understand the needs of students and identify appropriate instructional strategies. In at least one school, PLCs were also used to provide turnkey training from teachers who attended PD outside of the school.

Table 9
PLC Discussions
Teacher Reports

	Teachers
Using student data to continuously improve instruction.	85%
Sharing best practices around data use.	78%
Using data to identify a problem of practice.	73%
Developing and understanding the SLO process.	58%
Using data to analyze instruction to address a problem of practice.	55%

Literacy and Math Coaches were also made available to teachers in year two of the grant. While a smaller group of teachers (27%) reported working directly with Coaches, most (87%) felt that their teaching had benefitted from this support. For instance, in open-ended survey items, teachers explained that coaching had helped them to improve their lesson plans, their assessment of student learning and their ability to differentiate instruction, to name a few.

In one school, both teachers and administrators lauded coaching as a great way to provide direct support to the large number of new teachers in their school. Teachers would send their lesson plans to the Coach ahead of her visit, which allowed her to not only provide feedback to the teacher on the plan, but also to hone in on relevant pieces while she was onsite and observing the teacher. Debriefing sessions were beneficial as Coaches were able to share relevant resources with teachers and help them to "unravel instructional challenges in the classroom." It was a well-received model and "teachers were very responsive to it because it was customized and individualized to the teachers' needs," according to the administrator.

Another administrator also explained the real value of coaching. He felt that his newer staff was in need of content-based professional development. As he put it, "Differentiation can't happen unless you know the content. They need to know multiple ways to explain the content." He would like a continued focus on building a deeper learning and understanding of not only literacy and math, but also science and social studies.

Finally, professional development was provided around the teaching standards espoused by Danielson's Framework for Teaching (FFT). Universally, schools commended the quality of this PD, which was provided by Paula Bevans, an FFT training consultant. In one school, for example, she focused on "checks for understanding." She had the staff involved in deep discussion and she pushed them to think about what they were and weren't doing. Teachers discussed their challenges and she presented solutions and creative ideas for approaching instruction. Subsequent to her trainings, teachers were motivated to meet with each other regularly to discuss the rubric and to build consensus around effective practice.

Performance Management and Retention and Career Lattices

Also part of HCMS, PICCS supports schools in their effort to align educator evaluation performance (i.e., HEDI rating) with salary increases. Performance-based salary increases are awarded to teachers with ratings of "Effective" or "Highly Effective." The goal is to increase and retain the number of teachers with these ratings in the school and to support their

growth through the 5-level differentiated teaching system.

In conversations with administrators, most agreed that their schools' performance-based compensation plan was in progress, with more work needed in defining and setting up career lattices. "It's a big paradigm shift for teachers," said an administrator. "We have done pre-work on it and the push behind that was the RTTT grant that the state received. But we need to work out the nuts and bolts."

One school, in particular, had been implementing their PBCS plan and career lattice system for the past two years, having benefitted from participation in PICCS on a previous grant. They were using SAM coaching, a leadership-building resource provided through the grant, to set the foundation for their system. As a result, administrators were implementing a distributive pattern of leadership whereby teachers with special skills were given positions of instructional and fiscal management. By doing so, the school provided opportunities for teachers to "grow their skills" and move into positions of greater responsibility, setting the infrastructure for career lattices in the teaching profession. The general sentiment was that staff was hopeful and confident that they could improve their HEDI ratings. They felt that the support and guidance that they received from PICCS had been invaluable. Indeed, many saw their PBCS as "an opportunity to outshine DOE schools."

Concerns about PBCS cited by staff, notwithstanding, centered mostly on the measures of effectiveness. Some felt that the measures were imperfect and needed tweaking in order for teachers to feel more confident about their validity and reliability. One administrator identified the new state assessment system as an example. Moving students to an online assessment format, coupled with different standards, resulted a in dip in performance. Also, while some teachers viewed an ineffective rating as an opportunity to grow, others felt it was a stigma. Administrators will need to ensure that supports are in place to allow for growth and improvement, particularly with a large group of inexperienced staff.

Conclusions

The Human Capital Management Systems approach is burgeoning in the field of education and these five schools are at the forefront of the work. Most noteworthy is that strategic efforts were being made at the schools to align practices and procedures into a functional and effective HCMS. Simultaneously, communication of the core components of the system was being provided to a relatively new staff—both to potentially new hires and to their current staff. Communication is crucial to building buy-in, particularly for educator effectiveness and alternative pay schedule reform, which challenge deep seated traditions.

The schools should also be commended for ensuring that educator evaluation practices were sound and that teachers felt that they were benefitting from valuable feedback and guidance. The schools are encouraged to continue to strengthen inter-rater reliability in the observation process and to help teachers make better connections between SLOs and instruction. These efforts will pay off as teachers and administrators build a common language and understanding of effective practices.

Finally, the schools are moving steadily ahead in aligning professional development resources to enable teachers to improve their practice and skills. Improvements in the development of individualized professional growth plans and making connections to PD were seen in year two. Equally important, teachers perceived the opportunities as valuable and impactful to their practice. In PLCs, teachers benefitted from discussions with colleagues, primarily about how to use student data to address instruction. Direct coaching support was much needed and appreciated by schools, which were comprised of a large number of teachers new to the field.

Areas where more work is needed fell primarily in the categories of performance management and career lattices. Admittedly, administrators were taking more care to ensure that the system that they put into place was sound and defensible. Uncertainty over the measures, especially with the Common Core assessment being relatively new, was a legitimate barrier. Ensuring that the PBCS is aligned with, and reinforces, the schools' vision of instructional improvement is vital. This will help teachers to better see how current, conventional fixed-cost pay systems are disconnected with the schools' priorities. Indeed, this sentiment was shared in one school that had, consensually, developed a performance management system that teachers saw as "an opportunity to outshine" the traditional system.

About PICCS

The *Partnership for Innovation in Compensation for Charter Schools* (PICCS) is a *Teacher Incentive Fund* program that seeks fundamental reform in teaching and learning by combining performance-based incentives with research-based tools to help teachers customize instruction and improve student outcomes. PICCS is led by the Center for Educational Innovation – Public Education Association (CEI-PEA).

About the Evaluation

Since 2008, Measurement Incorporated (MI) has been conducting independent evaluations of all PICCS grants. The current evaluation is designed to provide both formative and summative information on each of the program's goal areas to guide strategic decision making.

Information from this report represents the second of five years of study. Data was obtained from online surveys of participating teachers and school leaders and site visits to each of the five schools.

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