



This evaluation research brief summarizes survey and site visit data on implementation from five NYC charter schools that are participating in the PICCS Human Capital Management System (HCMS) Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grant. As expected and similar to previous PICCS grants, year three implementation in NYC showed progression, though unevenly. Schools were focusing their efforts on several key components of the HCMS model, namely educator evaluation and professional development. This focus was driven by need due to the fair number of new and inexperienced teachers on staff.

What was different and clearly an improvement over previous PICCS grants was the greater availability of onsite resources and supports to both administrators and teachers. Without exception, the knowledge, attention, support, and guidance that Site-Based Specialist Mae Fong provided to the NYC schools was highly regarded and appreciated. Moreover, the Literacy and Math Coaches, SAM, and Instructional Rounds received similar ratings. Other components of the grant, however, could benefit from more attention and amendments from both parties (i.e., schools and PICCS) in order to increase their utility and effectiveness.

Data collected for this report is part of an independent evaluation of the PICCS HCMS TIF grant that is being conducted by Measurement Incorporated. The findings in this brief are organized by the main HCMS components of the grant, which are bulleted below.

## HCMS Components<sup>1</sup>

- Educator Evaluation
- Professional Development
- Performance Management and Career Lattices
- Induction and Mentoring

## Educator Evaluation

In year three of the grant, the educator evaluation practices in NYC PICCS schools remained sound. Similar to last year, the vast majority of teachers were in agreement with the quality and usefulness of the evaluation process (**Table 1**). For example, nearly all teachers reported a two-way dialogue with their supervisor where they received evidence-based and improvement focused feedback on their performance as a teacher. Most teachers also gave high marks to the timeliness of feedback and the consistency of the evaluation procedures.

Most impressive this year was the marked increase in the percent of teachers who reported that the evaluation activities and schedules were communicated to them. In 2014, only 60% of teachers were in agreement whereas 90% reported agreement in 2015. Statements made by

<sup>1</sup> Recruitment and Hiring is another component of PICCS' HCMS that is not addressed in this report. Rather, information on schools' recruitment and hiring practices are reported in their HCMS Indicators Chart.

administrators during interviews corroborated the improvement, with most citing that communication efforts had increased this past year.

**Table 1**  
**Quality of Educator Evaluation Procedures and Use of Results**  
*Percent of Teachers Reporting “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”*

	2014	2015
The conference between my supervisor and me was a two-way conversation.	90%	91%
I received evidence-based, improvement focused feedback and guidance on my performance as a teacher.	88%	90%
The evaluation activities and schedule was communicated to me.	60%	90%
Performance feedback was given to me in a timely manner (i.e., w/in a week of observation).	86%	89%
Procedures used were consistent and objective.	85%	87%
Teachers were provided with adequate training and resources to ensure their understanding of the evaluation process.	N/A	84%

In a similar vein, nearly all administrators were confident in their ability to perform important evaluation tasks, with little change from last year (Table 2). Since 2014, a notable 15% increase in certified observers was evident, however. Specifically, 40% of administrators reported that they were certified observers in year 3 of the grant compared to only 25% last year.

**Table 2**  
**Administrators’ Educator Evaluation Skills**  
*Percent Reporting “Well” or “Completely Prepared”*

	Percent of Administrators
Identify and document appropriate evidence of teacher performance	95%
Engage in evidence-based, improvement focused conversations with staff	92%
Use teacher evaluation data to identify school improvement needs	92%
Conduct classroom observations in a timely manner	84%
Accurately discern effective and ineffective teaching	84%
Encourage and facilitate a two-way dialogue with staff during conferences	83%

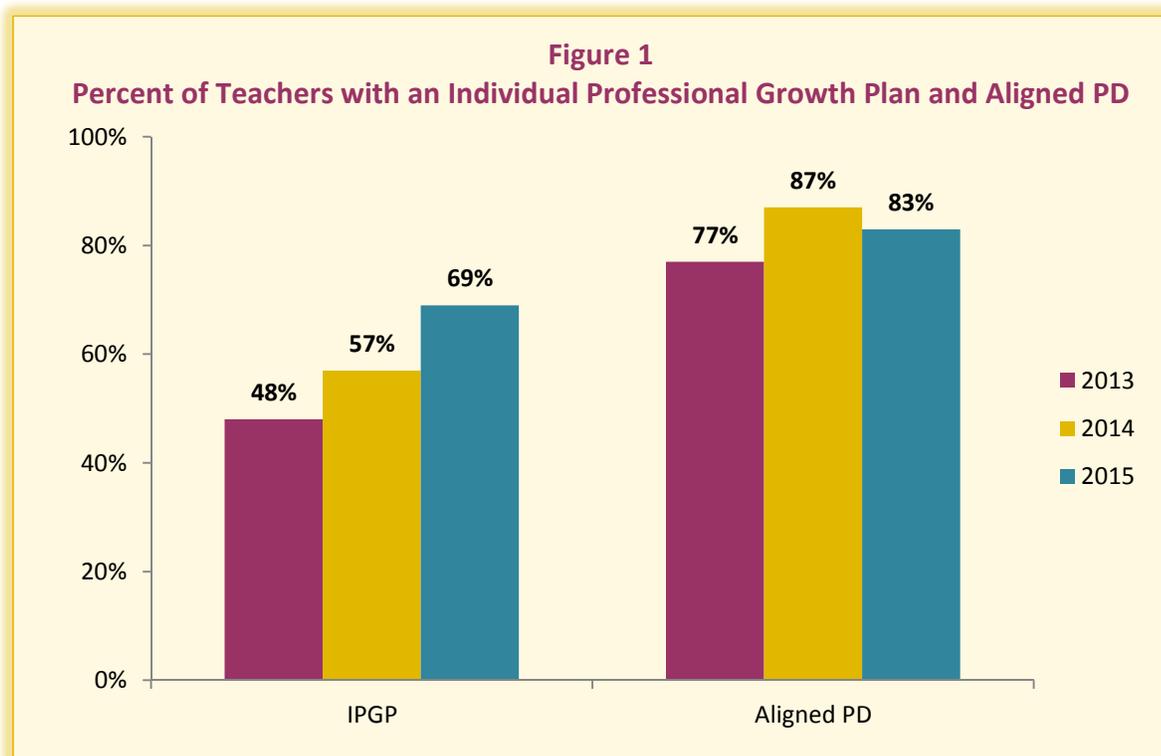
Other improvements around the evaluation process this year compared to last year centered on the use of the evaluation data. During site visits, administrators described the various ways in which they were engaging teachers in dialogue about their practice and taking deeper dives into

the different domains. *“We feel this gets better each year. Citing evidence for each domain forces us to look at our practices very closely,”* said one administrator. In one school, for instance, observation data led to a greater focus on the assessment and questioning components of the Danielson model. Put by the administrator, *“We credit PICCS for forcing us to look at this.”* In several other schools, there was greater focus on planning, said another administrator. *“Part of our focus this year is on explicit planning. The better you plan your lessons, the better you will execute them.”*

Data walls displaying the teachers’ scores were widely used and served as a visual reminder to administrators of the strengths and areas of needed focus of their staff. The scores were also used for planning and informing professional development planning, coaching, and PLCs.

## Professional Development

Professional development had equal emphasis in year three, as it was perceived as a natural complement to the evaluation, according to administrators. Indeed, an increasingly percent of teachers reported that they developed an individual professional growth plan (IPGP) with their administrator over the past three years (see **Figure 1**). This past year, 69% of teachers had an IPGP compared to only 48% in year one of the grant.



Moreover, most teachers reported that they received professional development that was aligned with their needs. While not reported in the figure, most administrators also verbally reported satisfactory alignment of PD to their needs. The PD supports and resources provided through the grant to both teachers and administrators are described in this section.

## Coaching

One of the most highly regarded and valued professional development resources of the grant, according to the PICCS schools, was the coaching support in Literacy and Math. While the work with Coaches last year was characterized more as “relationship and expectation building,” this year the schools reported deep support from the Coaches and great improvements in the math support, in particular (Literacy Coach was well regarded both years).

Administrators described the Coaches as strong, knowledgeable, credible, and not afraid to intervene to redirect teachers. For example, an administrator described one Coach as, *“consistent with her feedback. She will not let poor instruction get by. If she sees something that is amiss, she intervenes.”* Another added, *“She can work with all teachers, including difficult teachers in a very productive way. This is exactly what we need to help our teachers to make improvements.”*

Administrators greatly appreciated the regular and ongoing communication from Coaches. Summarized by one administrator, *“We have direct conversation with the Coaches and they understand our needs. We get reports from them that are biweekly or at least monthly. We know exactly who is being seen, what were the objectives, and the outcomes. I also have one-on-one sit downs with consultants to get a verbal account of the work that they do.”* Another administrator added, *“The detailed reports that I get from the Coaches is so beneficial to me and also serves to inform the teachers’ evaluations.”*

Administrators also appreciated the flexibility of the Coaches and their level of understanding of the schools’ needs. *“Our Literacy Coach has worked with us for 2 years. She knows our expectations and she keeps me well informed of her work. She doesn’t come in with her own agenda. She is very flexible.”* Another stated, *“Their passion meshes with our goals; they understand our vision.”*

According to survey data, 39% of teachers worked one-on-one with Coaches, which was up from 27% last year. On average, teachers worked with the Coaches 15 times throughout the school year. The concentrated time with fewer teachers was not happenstance; rather administrators were strategic about pairing Coaches with teachers who were inexperienced and/or who showed weaker performance on the Danielson rubric.

Based on the data, coach support fell into two general camps: curriculum and instructional support. In terms of curriculum support, the Coaches assisted several schools in refining their ELA and math curriculum. One administrator said, *“She [Literacy Coach], has been phenomenal for us. She goes above and beyond and did the lion’s share of work in refining our curriculum last summer. This year she spent time calibrating and progress monitoring the changes.”* In another school, the Math Coach re-examined the curriculum with teachers and helped them to revamp Algebra and Geometry, which was the school’s weakest area at the middle school level.

Examples of the different types of instructional support were aplenty. The Coaches modeled instruction to teachers, conducted observations, and provided PD on NY Engage curriculum. They worked with teachers on improving instructional strategies such as questioning and discussion techniques to encourage more student led discussions (i.e., open-ended and exploratory questions of learning opportunities in math; use of questioning “what, how, and why are we doing this activity?). They also spent a great deal of time coaching teachers on how to plan lessons, and

improve consistency and organization (via use of graphic organizers). Finally, teachers credited their Coaches for helping them to analyze data and to create and conduct module work assessments.

Without exception, the intensity, the face-to-face interactions, and the format of the coach support is making a difference. On the survey, 83% of teachers indicated that their teaching had benefitted from the onsite coaching support. Interview findings included many positive statements made by teachers, which are bulleted below.

- My teaching has changed as a result of coaching by using quick formative assessments such as Do Now.
- She helped me to see the big idea and teaching math by *doing* instead of seeing it done.
- My teaching was much more focused and I have better discussions with my students.
- I became more fluent in conferencing with students and making sure I am leaving evidence with the students.

### ***Instructional Rounds***

Instructional rounds were piloted in year two of the grant and continued into year three. During the pilot year, the rounds were conducted externally, with each school hosting a round on a quarterly basis. This year the schools instituted the rounds internally as well.

The instructional rounds were highly regarded on several fronts. One, schools reported that it was beneficial to see what other schools were doing and how they were dealing with various issues that are common across the schools. Two, as put by one administrator, *“it is the one area in PICCS where there is a genuine opportunity to work with the other schools. It is mutually beneficial for all of us. We can truly be on the same page and learn from each other.”*

The consultants supporting the work of the instructional rounds received high marks too. One administrator had this to say, *“Working with Tom is a revelation. He makes you think differently about everything you say. He is so precise with his language. He chooses his words so carefully so that there is no misunderstanding about what he is saying. I am modeling my conversations after him.”*

### ***Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)***

PLCs provided a regular forum for collaborative discussions around data, which was a focus for most of the schools this past year. According to survey reports, 71% of teachers participated in PLCs on a weekly basis. **Table 3** shows the various ways in which PLC time was used for data discussions.

**Table 3**  
**Focus of PLC Discussions**  
*Percent of Teachers*

	Percent of Teachers
Sharing best practices around data use	77%
Using student data to continuously improve instruction	77%
Using data to analyze instruction to address a problem of practice	62%
Developing and understanding the SLO process	57%
Using data to identify a problem of practice	53%

The external evaluation showed that 72% of teachers reported that their teaching practices have benefitted from their participation in PLCs.

### ***School Administrators' Management (SAM) System***

SAM coaching was also perceived as beneficial to most participating administrators. They reported that it helped them to increase their productivity and instructional leadership time. One administrator said, *"It teaches me to take more control of my day vs letting my day control me."* Another said, *"I have greatly improved my ability to discern what is important from what is urgent. I started at 50% of my time on instructional leadership and now I'm up to 70%."* Similar to the coaching support, administrators appreciate the insights and feedback on their instructional skills from the consultant.

It should be noted that only one administrator gave mixed reviews of SAM, however, admittedly, this administrator felt that it was a service that was not of high need to him.

## **Performance Management and Career Lattices**

All schools had a performance-based salary schedule with differentiated teaching positions in effect this past school year that was communicated to all staff.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, 84% of teachers reported that they understood the annual performance-based increases and 74% understood the criteria for the differentiated teaching positions.

Moreover as part of the differentiated teaching position structure, all schools had a fledgling aspiring teacher program in year three.<sup>3</sup> In several schools, aspiring teachers were recruited in-house and included people who had worked for the school in different capacities such as teaching assistants and after school staff. In two schools, aspiring teachers were recruited via advertisements outside of the school. According to administrators, aspiring teachers participated in various "induction like" activities such as co-teaching, mentoring, lesson planning, PICCS induction

<sup>2</sup> Some schools used AIR consultants to assist and provide feedback on salary schedules and SLOs; however, it should be noted that administrators gave mixed reviews to the support. The general consensus--AIR was not responsive in their feedback and support in a timely manner.

<sup>3</sup> Lavelle has had an operational aspiring teacher program since the grant's inception that is well incorporated into their HCMS.

program, etc. Most aspiring teachers were on staff full-time. Finally, all schools reported that aspiring teachers were evaluated using the Danielson FFT.

## Induction/Mentoring

New from PICCS this past year was a formalized induction/mentoring program, which in most schools ran alongside their own program. According to the survey data, 25% of NYC teachers participated in induction, which is up from 14% last year. Administrators reported that inductees participated in both PICCS induction as well as their own schools' program.

**Table 4** compares the median frequency of teacher participation in various induction experiences in 2014 and 2015. In 2015, the most frequent was working with a mentor teacher, which occurred on a weekly basis. For all remaining activities, inductees' participation was about monthly. In some cases, such as PLCs or receiving support and guidance on classroom management, teachers' participation could have been several times a month (as indicated in the table as monthly or more).

For most activities, the frequency of participation in years 2 and 3 of the grant was similar. The two exceptions were support and guidance on classroom management and instructional strategies, which decreased from the median frequency of weekly to monthly or more. In other words, last year inductees reported that they received support and guidance on classroom management and instructional strategies on a weekly basis whereas this past year, inductees were more likely to receive this support several times a month.

**Table 4**  
**Teacher Participation in Induction Activities**  
*Median Frequency*

	2014	2015
Work with a mentor teacher (in school or online)	N/A	Weekly
Participate in a PLC	Monthly or more	Monthly or more
Receive support and guidance on classroom management	Weekly	Monthly or more
Receive support and guidance on instructional strategies	Weekly	Monthly or more
Receive support and guidance on curriculum content	Monthly or more	Monthly or more
Meet with the school principal to discuss teaching	Monthly	Monthly or more
Engage in a Learning Path on EduPlanet	N/A	Monthly
Meet with curricular specialists to discuss teaching	Monthly or less	Monthly
Attend professional development workshops	Monthly or less	Monthly or less
Observe classrooms with experienced teachers	Monthly or more	Monthly or less

When asked if the program was tailored to their needs, 71% of inductees reported to a moderate or great extent. However, only 53% of teachers were moderately or very satisfied with their experiences, which were down significantly from last year when all teachers (100%) reported satisfaction. A deeper dive into comments made by teachers and administrators revealed some areas in need of improvement.

- Teachers and administrators expressed concerns over the time requirements of both programs. In the words of several teachers, *“There was a lot to do online and little structure, which made it difficult to complete (along with 3 graduate courses)”* and *“I was extremely overwhelmed as a 1<sup>st</sup> year teacher and was unable to utilize the resources to their capacity.”* Similarly, an administrator pointed out that teachers who needed induction were also pursuing a master’s degree and other credentials, making it difficult to participate in all activities.
- Teachers and administrators expressed concerns over the format and timing of the webinars and online mentors. In some instances, the webinars were offered at inconvenient times (i.e., during testing or vacations). Moreover, online mentors were from California and the time zone difference made it difficult to connect with teachers on the East Coast. Furthermore, the mentors didn’t understand the nuances and climate of NYC schools and students.
- Several administrators suggested that face-to-face mentoring was better for teachers and suggested that more time be allocated to their Coaches, who could spend more one-on-one time with new teachers.

## Summary

The PICCS HCMS grant is undoubtedly challenging participating NYC charter schools to create and implement new ways to evaluate, compensate and support educators. These schools are rising to the challenge. School administrators have a clear sense of their school’s strengths and weaknesses and have focused their efforts on fostering a culture of collaboration, growth, and direction toward improvement.

Administrators also had good insights into the PICCS resources and how they could best meet their needs. This sentiment was best expressed in a statement made by one administrator, *“On the continuum of theory and practice, I admit that administrators have too much focus on practice and not enough on theory. I get it... PICCS should bring us somewhere in the middle. For example, the instructional rounds achieve this. It is the best example of a happy medium between theory and practice. We need more resources like this.”*

With this in mind, there was a heightened sense of concern amongst administrators over what they perceived as increasing requirements of the grant. They would like more flexibility, particularly for programs that may already exist in schools (e.g., induction). Furthermore, they would like to play a greater role in the grant in terms of identifying and acquiring services that they deem as a good match or fit for their schools. For instance, administrators were initially concerned over the requirements of the Deeper Learning Task Force. Admittedly, administrators agreed that it was *“too new and too loose”* and needed more fleshing out for them to have a better understanding of its connection to the PICCS model. In their words, *“Right now it feels like building the plane while flying it.”* They were appreciative of the consultants’ accommodations of their

interests and needs. Nevertheless, they expressed some cautionary remarks, namely that PICCS staff ensure that the work of DLTF is well coordinated with the other consultant work to reduce conflicts or overlaps.

