

# Victory Collegiate

## A Culture Of Success

### Case Study

#### A Diverse Community of Learners

Victory Collegiate High School believes that education is the most powerful instrument for sparking the revitalization essential to urban communities. They provide a rigorous college preparatory curriculum to their diverse community of productive learners who support each other as they examine social problems, increase social awareness, and work toward community and personal growth.

#### Then and Now

South Shore High School opened its doors to students in 1970 in the neighborhood of Canarsie, Brooklyn, a culturally rich and diverse borough made up mostly of African American, Caribbean American and Latino families. At the peak of enrollment, the student population reached 6,800 students, nearly 2,800 students over the planned capacity, making South Shore High School the second largest high school in the United States at the time. Over the course of three decades, the school struggled with declining graduation rates and test scores, and increasing security problems and in 2006 Mayor Bloomberg announced that South Shore High School would be one of the five New York City high schools to close. In 2010, South Shore High School graduated its last class.

ISA, already working as a partner with the New York City School District to transform failing high schools so that students who are traditionally underserved and underperforming graduate prepared for success in college, was invited to design and develop one of the new schools on the South Shore campus.

schools on the South Shore campus. Marcel Deans was selected as principal to partner with ISA in the development of this new school, which was founded on a deep commitment to improving the educational conditions and outcomes for New York City's underserved youth.

ISA and Deans worked collaboratively to develop a design proposal for the new school, using the ISA Model as its framework. Although then Chancellor Joel Klein approved the proposal in March 2007, the work had just begun. In continued partnership, Deans and ISA spent the next 5 months developing an implementation plan for the creation of the school.



*"When we reach out to our students, we make sure they know they are safe at Victory. Ramped up rigor in the classroom pushes them to work hard, but if they struggle along the way, they know we will work tirelessly to guide them back on the path towards success."*

— Marcel Deans, Principal

#### By The Numbers

## 85%

4-Year Cohort College Admittance Rate

## 90%

4-Year Cohort Graduation Rate

## 89%

Annual Attendance Rate

From securing a Gates grant and recruiting faculty and students to forging relationships with local community leaders to develop a culture of collaboration, Deans and his team continued the implementation process, guided by their vision, educational beliefs, hopes, expectations and commitment to their students. Victory Collegiate opened its doors to its first class of 9th graders in September 2007 and grew a grade per year, with the school having all four grades in 2010.

## Critical Thinking and Intellectual Discourse

From day one, life at Victory Collegiate was all about creating a strong community with shared values, ownership of the school's vision and joint accountability for student success. Each student is paired with an advisor whom they meet with twice every day. A 10 minute check-in each morning fosters an immediate sense of belonging and kinship, while a 40 minute class later in the day gives the advisor an opportunity to build relationships with each student, discuss college readiness and ensure progression of social, academic and emotional development. Advisory classes and a monthly town hall meeting provide students an opportunity to build social understanding, using current events and community issues as a launching point for intellectual discourse.

The inquiry-based curriculum focuses on teaching students how to think, not what to think, emphasizing analytical writing skills and the articulation of higher order thinking as well as content area knowledge.

Victory Collegiate has grade-level teams, where the same teachers in the core content areas teach the same students. The teams meet weekly to discuss how students are progressing in their respective classes and what they can do as a team to support their students academic, social and emotional development. The school counselor plays a leading role in working with the team on addressing issues, especially those that relate to

student behavior and social development. ISA content coaches work directly with teachers in literacy, mathematics, science and social studies to create rigorous and engaging college preparatory curriculum and instruction. The inquiry-based curriculum focuses on teaching students how to think, not what to think, emphasizing analytical writing skills and the articulation of higher order thinking as well as content area knowledge.

Through the school's culture of and commitment to personalization, high expectations coupled with high supports and collective responsibility for school and student success, all students are expected to graduate fully prepared for post secondary education. By the beginning of 2013, stories of Victory's achievements had spread throughout the community and interest in enrollment far exceeded school capacity, with over 300 new applicants for only 81 available seats.

## Sharing Success

Victory Collegiate has received two consecutive A's on its 2010- 2011 and 2011-2012 NYC Department of Education Report Card and currently reports an attendance rate of 89% and a graduation rate of 90%. "Our partnership with ISA has been instrumental to our success", said Deans. "We were coming from a place of shared beliefs; beliefs that formed the foundation of Victory Collegiate. Working together, we have been able to achieve so much more. ISA helped to cultivate my leadership ability and helped the teachers come up to speed with how to execute on the vision."

## Victory Collegiate has P.U.R.P.O.S.E

### Perspective

Can we analyze, and in many cases alter, the lens from which young people view themselves and the world around them?

### Understanding

Can we avoid the trappings of teaching our students what to think rather than teaching them how to think?

### Rigor

Can we challenge each other to work harder, think deeper, and take great pride in our work?

### Problem Solving

Can we cultivate the natural curiosity within our students and compel them to be active thinkers, not afraid to tackle problems, which may at first seem far too complex in nature?

### Open Communication

How do we create an open and honest dialogue with students and families that allow for the greatest chance for success?

### Social Conscience

How can our actions positively impact our families and our communities?

### Expectation

How far can our students go?

## Contact ISA

(516) 812-6700

info@isa-ed.ets.org

www.studentachievement.org



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