Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Fordham Leadership Academy for Business and Technology
High school 10X438
500 East Fordham Rd.
Bronx
NY 10458

Principal: Fiorella Cabrejos

Dates of Review:
March 16, 2017 - March 17, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Marion Wilson
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

Fordham Leadership Academy for Business and Technology serves students in grade 9 through grade 12. 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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Culture

*To what extent does the school...*  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<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>
</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>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Systems for Improvement

*To what extent does the school...*  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<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>
</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>
</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>Area of Celebration</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>
</tr>
<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>Area of Focus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

| Quality Indicator: | 4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision | Rating: | Well Developed |

Findings

School leaders and teacher peers use low inference and focused formal and informal observations that are aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching on a regular basis. Meaningful feedback accurately captures teachers' strengths, challenges, and next steps for support.

Impact

There are strategically planned frequent cycles of observations so that teachers have shown significant improvement in their teaching practices based on student assessment data and observation reports. Feedback articulates clear expectations for teacher practice and supports significant teacher development and professional growth in alignment with personalized teachers' goals.

Supporting Evidence

- Observations that are conducted with both administrators and lead teachers on a weekly basis capture the strengths and challenges of teachers' pedagogy and provide a clear picture of next steps, resulting in instructional changes influencing improvement in student data as evidenced in mock Regents' exams and student reading levels. Teachers' professional goals and learning experiences are structured around the Danielson Framework for Teaching and are reflecting improved teacher practice across key selected domains and student progress on writing tasks. The analysis of select teachers through their feedback history and next steps revealed that teachers are moving along the continuum to being effective in multiple components regarding instruction. Feedback from administration and teacher peers centers on using effective questioning and discussion techniques to elicit student understanding using discussion protocols. In addition, teachers are also reminded that in order to engage students in lessons, they must create purposeful and strategic student groupings so that students engage in cooperative learning.

- Teacher growth is documented over time and includes reflection about their practice with analysis of student performance data in coordination with their frequently updated professional goals. During a teacher team meeting, teachers shared that there is a common understanding of what effective teaching looks and sounds like, including strategies to support diverse learners. Teachers receive concrete feedback and meaningful next steps from administration to support their understanding of incorporating multiple entry points into lessons. As a result, more teachers incorporate video presentations, display exemplars for their expectation of student work products, and provide varied reading materials based on student interest and reading levels. Teachers receive coaching to support their growth and development related to the school's theory of action, which states, “If we provide opportunities for students to engage in productive struggle and make their thinking visible via daily discussion and sustained writing, then students will demonstrate college and career readiness skills across content areas.” Observation reports and teacher commentary supports this focus.

- The ongoing cycle of focused observations of classroom practice and follow-up support from lead teachers contribute to teachers better understanding their strengths and challenges. Most teachers are able to implement the articulated next steps and are being more reflective about what and how they are teaching. The next steps in observation notes align with the school's goals for teacher improvement and include a strategic plan of action to improve teacher practice across grades and subject areas. In one sample observation, the administrator shared that the teacher should use a group work protocol to help facilitate student collaboration, and then check-in and monitor students' work as they complete tasks. The administrator followed up and referenced the teacher's incorporation of this feedback into a subsequent lesson.
**Findings**

School staff does not yet have a process in place to regularly evaluate and adjust curricula and instructional practices across all grades and subjects, or to regularly evaluate the quality of school discipline and culture policies.

**Impact**

While the administrative team reviews most unit plans and lesson plans across subjects during their cabinet meetings, school faculty continue to make adjustments to increase the coherence of lesson planning practices across the school. In addition, school personnel are developing ways to consistently support the expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School leaders shared that they review items including practices and data related to curricular and assessment practices as reflected on their cabinet meeting agendas. However, administrators sporadically discuss the implications for pedagogy, curricula, and assessment practices in terms of the expectations based on specific student needs. Consequently, administrators and lead teachers are developing a process to regularly calendar a review of all instructional practices to ensure that instruction and tasks are modified based on data analysis to support students in meeting the expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards. Current practices do not have a focus on making frequent periodic adjustments to foster and increase consistency of instructional practices.

- School leaders and faculty are implementing a process to recurrently evaluate and adjust the quality of teacher teamwork and professional development with particular attention to what teachers need to learn in order to support increased student mastery of the Common Core Standards. The school leaders offered workshops regarding formative assessment strategies that would assist in providing useful in-the-moment feedback to their students during instructional time. While a few teachers are incorporating some strategies learned, the school is reevaluating the system in place to attempt to increase the coherence of checks for understanding across the school. Additionally as teachers are asked to reflect on lesson planning and the use of formative assessment strategies, staff is beginning to gauge the effectiveness of their efforts so that there is greater uniformity of use of these practices across subjects and grades.

- While members from the attendance team review attendance data to monitor long term absences and coordinate efforts to decrease chronic attendance issues, school leaders are still working on a system to memorialize these efforts. School leaders and faculty continue to create action plans focused on documenting the structures in place for reviewing the effectiveness of both outreach efforts to parents and the school’s discipline policy in regards to school culture and climate. School leaders communicated that this impending system would include pre-determined indicators of success to evaluate practices and expectations during set intervals while providing clear next steps for adjustments.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

Written curricula plans are aligned to the Common Core and content standards and integrate the instructional shifts across most subjects and grades. Academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order thinking skills for English Language Learners and students with disabilities.

Impact

School leaders and faculty make decisions to build coherence of written curricula documents and promote college and career readiness for all students. Lesson plans and academic tasks include plans for scaffolds and multiple entry points into lessons for a diversity of learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Curricula documents are written and aligned to the Common Core and content standards in order to build coherence across and within grades. Lesson plans across most subject areas identify instructional shifts that coordinate topics between subject areas as students advance through grades and teachers plan units that integrate the instructional shifts on which the school is focused. Most written plans include opportunities for students to work collaboratively and cite evidence to support their positions. For example, a sample plan for a science lesson required students to engage in research discussion by applying their thinking about a real problem and posing solutions. Students were required to cite evidence from their research to support the discussion. In another plan, the learning target called for students to determine the area of a circle while also constructing viable arguments and critiquing the reasoning of others as they worked through the solutions.

- Rigorous habits and higher-order skills such as those that require students to consider multiple perspectives, create their own meaning, and solve real world problems, are throughout most curricula and academic tasks. Most planned tasks require students, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, to think critically, ask questions, and engage in disciplined inquiry and thought. In a sample lesson plan, the teacher listed the supports that would be provided to assist diverse learners graphing linear and quadratic functions in a system. Also listed in the lesson plan were the use of calculators, graphing paper, charts, and student grouping as supports to help students tackle the problems. In a social studies lesson plan, the task required students to annotate text and answer higher-order-thinking questions based on documents on the impact of the Cold War from different viewpoints to develop an evidence-based stance. Differentiation for this activity included four versions of the activity with pre-defined vocabulary, questions translated in Spanish, and sentence starters for English Language Learners.

- Curricula and tasks, across most grades and subjects, challenge students to work independently with scaffolds to ensure that they are able to demonstrate their thinking through the final work products they create. Most curricula documents included grouping of students who could support one another in order to complete the task. In addition, the majority of curricula documents indicated that an additional teacher would push into the class to provide hands on support and lower the teacher to student ratio. Lesson plans include activities to afford students multiple opportunities for representation, engagement, and expression in lessons. For example, in the math unit plan, there were clear expectations listed for the focus standards for practice within the unit which required students to make sense of problems, attend to precision, and construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.
**Additional Finding**

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

Across some classrooms visited, planned supports in lesson plans are executed to provide different pathways to understanding according to diverse student needs. There were missed opportunities for meaningful student-to-student discussions across classrooms.

**Impact**

In some classes, instructional groups were organized by overall marking period grades so students work in fixed groups based on strengths and weaknesses. Student work products reflect uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Across some classes, teaching strategies and instructional tasks address the needs of individual students and subgroups, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities. Some plans are executed with appropriate pacing and timing allocations for lessons. The effective use of scaffolds to ensure that students were able to engage with the task and productively struggle was not evidenced across most classrooms visited. For example, in one class visited, students had to find the central idea of the story they were reading. Varied graphic organizers were provided to support their completion of the task. In some classes visited, the execution of written supports, included scaffolds that were appropriate based on the needs of the learners, were readily available for the successful completion of challenging tasks. However, there were missed opportunities in some classes for these embedded supports to help students make sense of the activity to complete the assignment independently.

- Some teaching practices utilize project-based and collaborative learning, questioning, and discussions that promote high levels of student thinking. There is use of scaffolding techniques such as visual prompts, videos, manipulatives, note-taking tools, academic vocabulary supports, anchor charts, and technology tools to provide multiple entry points to lessons and tasks for most learners. Across some classrooms, teachers provided opportunities for students to engage in think-pair-shares or group discussions, however the lessons were teacher centered limiting authentic student participation. In some instances, students who were comfortable speaking dominated the conversation while others remained quiet or worked independently. The questions posed, mainly by the teacher, were recall or comprehension type questions that did not properly ensure that all voices were heard in the discussion. Additionally, observed protocols used to facilitate student conversation amongst each other were at a minimum. For example, in a class visited, the same student responded to the teacher’s prompt on several occasions, which did not allow others to engage in the discourse to demonstrate their understanding. This type of practice was observed across various classes precluding all students being engaged.

- Teachers across some classes provided students with challenging learning tasks that required them to use critical thinking, analysis, synthesis, and problem solving tools. A few teachers missed opportunities during instructional time to allow thoughtful collaborations and ownership amongst students in discussion and group activities. Teachers’ questions or prompts sometimes led to a single path of entry and did not foster or encourage students to make connections among concepts or ideas previously learned.
Additional Finding

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

Teachers use and create assessments and rubrics that are aligned to the school's curricula. Common assessments are used to determine student progress towards goals across grades and subject areas.

Impact

Students receive actionable feedback on their work from teachers and are able to use the information to improve their work products. The results from end-of-unit assessments are used to adjust curricula and instructional techniques.

Supporting Evidence

- Assessments are aligned to the Common Core and content standards in the curriculum and include end-of-unit assessments, mock Regents examinations, and teacher created tests. School faculty also collect information on student performance utilizing an error analysis report to note areas that individual and groups of students are struggling with to create targeted lessons to support student understanding. There are various rubrics created based on the standards, which are used to provide actionable feedback to students on how to improve their work products. In addition, teachers analyze student formative assessment data from quizzes and student work products to reveal information about student achievement. This information is shared with students using an online communication-sharing tool. Consequently, students are able to speak about their next steps in terms of performance and overall grade accumulation. Students also utilize the information from rubrics to improve writing and performance tasks in reading and math. The school continues to fine-tune assessment practices to offer a clearer picture of student mastery that includes increased meaningful feedback to students across all subjects. As a result, groups of students are making progress between examinations.

- Teachers collaborate and design common grade-wide curriculum-aligned assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that attempt to address the data-defined student needs across most grades and subjects. Rubrics that are available across subject areas help teachers coordinate their next steps. These assessment tools are then used to track student progress towards goals across grades and make instructional decisions. A Regents exam comparison data summary spreadsheet revealed that groups of students were scoring better on the most recent administration of the English Common Core, Algebra Common Core, and United States History examinations, respectively. Teachers monitor this type of data on a continual basis in order to redesign units of studies in relation to these results.

- Most department teams look at the results of assessments to determine the standards students are struggling with to pinpoint skills and concepts students need to know and be able to do. Some assessments yield reliable and valid results aligned to be consistent with State assessment results. In addition, most teachers consistently analyze data from writing tasks, rubrics, and assessments to get a better understanding of students’ progress and learning needs relative to the learning goals and make adjustments to practice accordingly.
Additional Finding

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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</thead>
</table>

Findings

The majority of teachers are using a structured protocol for inquiry-based professional collaborations to review student work and/or data. Teacher teams consistently analyze formative and summative assessments for students they service.

Impact

The work of the majority of teacher teams has helped to promote the school’s goals and implementation of the Common Core standards thereby strengthening the instructional capacity of most teachers. More teachers have implemented effective teaching routines and strategies for groups of students to make progress on their end-of-unit assessments.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers collaborate on professional teams, both intra- and inter-departmental, to discuss schoolwide instructional practices that support the implementation of the Common Core and the instructional shifts. The teams work through the inquiry process in order to strengthen their work by looking at student work products using an interdisciplinary lens to help improve their students' writing ability and skills. Most teacher teams are planning lessons through an inter-disciplinary lens to explicitly teach the foundational skills for expository writing across subject areas and grade levels. As a result, teachers noticed that students are able to effectively utilize basic writing techniques and strategies across subject areas to create more meaningful work products. Consequently, student work products reviewed during the teacher team observation meeting showed that students were incorporating some of the strategies, including key vocabulary words, throughout their essays. Thus, the pedagogical approaches culled and implemented as an outgrowth of teacher teamwork has helped students to make sense of complex text enabling them to use annotation strategies and create paragraph outlines to respond to writing prompts.

- Teacher teams use protocols to review student work products, especially performance and writing tasks, and to revise and adapt curricula in most subject areas and grades. The professional collaborations include teacher-initiated intervisitations and sharing of best practices using an online platform, which helps teachers have a deeper understanding of student self-assessment, questioning and discussions and engaging students in rigorous activities. Minutes from the science department teacher team meeting indicated that teachers should encourage more students to participate in group work activities through discussion protocols. Teachers were also given a list of question stems that promote critical thinking skills while students were conducting scientific inquiry. As a result, teachers have adopted a shared instructional strategy to address a gap in skills for students.

- Teachers in grade and departmental teams utilize the Writing is Thinking through Strategic Inquiry (WITsi) process to plan interdisciplinary supports for students they service. Most teachers meet weekly by departments to unpack Common Core aligned curricula materials and revise unit maps and tasks in order to align their teaching practices to the needs of their diverse learners. Teachers collaborate using an online document-sharing tool to build coherence across teams. As a result, teachers have surfaced gaps in student understanding in relation to writing standards and have thus incorporated pedagogical changes tied to those gaps.