Quality Review Report

2017-2018

Fordham Leadership Academy

High school 10X438

500 East Fordham Road
Bronx
NY 10458

Principal: Fiorella Cabrejos

Dates of Review:
May 8, 2018 - May 9, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Robin Posner
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 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></td>
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</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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</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>
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</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>Area of Celebration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

**To what extent does the school...**

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

| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: | Well Developed |

Findings

School leaders and staff systematically emphasize high expectations for professionalism and academic excellence to the entire school community. There is an established culture for learning that challenges students and communicated expectations for their academic achievement.

Impact

The culture that exists in the school results in the demonstration and expression of student ownership of their educational experiences as well as preparedness for college and career. Communication structures ensure a high level of trust and mutual accountability between administration and staff.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers engage in professional development focused on aligning instructional practices with the expectations of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Meetings address subject-area content as well as grade-level issues such as academic discourse, checks for understanding, and grade-level progressions. Teachers also provide feedback to one another to improve assignments and lesson planning. Warm and cool feedback addresses pedagogical practices, instructional goals and planning, and questions. The teacher group believes that the feedback they receive through observations by colleagues and supervisors is meaningful and leads to self-reflection and improved practice. In one report, a teacher was given feedback around using the think-pair-share strategy as well as exit slips to focus student thinking back on the task. A later report compliments the teacher for implementing both of these strategies effectively. Teachers state that the feedback specific to the level of explicit instruction they are giving to students helps ensure accountability for the high expectations needed to provide the best possible learning experiences for the students. Teachers and leaders share that there is always a sense of mutual accountability and urgency to get the work done.

- High expectations for students include the instructional goals developed every semester that are both personal and school-based. Students shared that all school staff work to ensure they meet their goals. Students shared goals around passing classes, meeting certain grade requirements, the college application process and improving time spent at home on studying and school work. A student shared, “I had a goal to get a grade over 90 percent in a particular subject area. My teacher supported me by meeting with me individually, and giving me tips and extra assignments to meet that goal, and I did.” Core values are reinforced through a scaffold of advisory curricula that include the development of study skills, preparedness for the world of work, higher education, and citizenship. Students are given opportunities every semester to participate in internships and career-day events that enable them to make real-world connections between academic excellence, community awareness, and the school’s emphasized core values. A student shared, “The community service opportunities provided helps us to discover our potential. I worked as an intern in a medical office and discovered I was really interested in the medical field, which I will pursue in college.”

- The school’s numerous activities for students support their development with the appropriate tools to succeed in college and the workplace. Rigorous coursework including Advanced Placement courses in math, science and English Language Arts (ELA), and College Now courses are offered. Parents state the administrators and staff have high expectations for excellence and success beyond high school. Students shared that there is an expectation that they will go on to college, career, or trade school upon graduation. Students are exposed to a variety of colleges and post-graduation opportunities beginning from ninth grade and feel supported and confident that they are making sound and realistic decisions regarding their college or career. A student shared that she wants to be a math professor and the school helped steer her towards a college that would be the right match. Another student concurred about finding a match for his ambition to major in criminal justice.
Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 1.2 Pedagogy | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings
Teaching strategies align to schoolwide goals and provide entry points through the use of scaffolds for all learners to participate in academic tasks and discussion.

Impact
Students engage in high levels of thinking and discussion leading to the development of meaningful work products across classrooms. However, as of yet, full engagement is not seen in all classes and in some classrooms there was no evidence of high-quality supports and extensions for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- The instructional priorities for all classes include a focus on academic discourse, content-specific vocabulary, student-centered learning targets, actionable feedback, and checks for understanding. Most of these adopted priorities were coherent throughout classes and provided students with opportunities to produce meaningful work, although in some classes, a few students were not as engaged as others, limiting their critical thinking and demonstration of content. For example, in an algebra class, there were students with their heads down who neither participated in the lesson nor were asked to participate by the teacher. In a global history class, the teacher spoke directly to three students who were not participating, but those students continued to be disengaged. In this same class, there were several students finished early and those students were not provided with any extension activities to further their thinking.

- Across classrooms, students were arranged in pairs, triads, or small groups to promote discussion and critical thinking. In a chemistry class, students were placed into pairs to discuss how to use a problem-solving approach to balance an equation. Students had to work together to cite the specific steps they would take to annotate and solve the problem. The students engaged in critical thinking discussions purposefully knowing it’s an instructional focus expected of them as communicated by the teacher. Discussions in some other classes reflected a similar instructional focus on attempts at rich discussions, although in other classes, groups did not seem purposeful and meaningful, leading to some students not being engaged in rigorous conversations with peers. In a living environment class, students were answering questions on a graphic organizer while the teacher recorded the answers on the whiteboard. Students were not asked to turn and talk to peers prior to sharing out with the teacher, although some chose to do so organically.

- In most classrooms, lessons and teaching documents represent deep content knowledge and understanding of students' diverse needs, resulting in academic tasks and activities that engage students in high-levels of cognitive activity. Most lessons include academic tasks and supports such as scaffolds and generate challenging discourse to intellectually engage all students, including students with disabilities, struggling students, and the highest achieving students. In an ELA class students worked in groups with a teacher to annotate a text. The teacher used purposeful grouping by grouping students with like abilities and modeled aloud as a scaffold for students. Probing questions were posed to facilitate some students' reflections on how they would annotate a document, prior to giving students an opportunity to annotate on their own. The lesson included an extension activity for early finishers.
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

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order thinking skills for English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

Impact

Purposeful curricular decisions build coherence and promote college and career readiness via rigorous curricula and academic tasks that are accessible to all students.

Supporting Evidence

- The administrative and teaching teams determined that although the main curricula in use are Common Core-aligned, they needed supplemental materials in order to meet all students’ needs. To this end, staff determined that they needed to review the data to inform the changes that would encompass the individual needs of all of the students in the school. Specific steps to provide the differentiation and bridge the learning gaps include revising unit assessments, developing instructional objectives that target standards, and ensuring coherence between assessments, learning targets, and tasks. During independent practice in most classes, students were given differentiated worksheets targeted towards becoming more challenging over time to ensure Regents readiness.

- Both faculty and administration stated that they build coherence using the Common Core and instructional shifts to promote college and career readiness. The scope and sequence and lesson plans are focused on the Common Core and instructional shifts. Teacher-developed lesson plans follow the format of Common Core, Regents review topics, essential questions, student-facing learning targets, real-world connections, assessments, activities, academic language, and closure. The scope and sequence demonstrates coherence of the instructional shifts. For example, in ELA across grades, there are tasks that incorporate evidence-based short response and constructed response, as well as essays that include arguments, literary analysis, compare/contrast, and narrative fiction. In math across grades, there are tasks that incorporate application, conceptual understanding, and fluency. Professional development plans include learning activities for teachers to plan vertically and horizontally ensuring the development of engaging and rigorous tasks aligned to Common Core and the instructional shifts.

- Across grades and subjects, lesson plans include elements such as teaching points in the form of academic targets and student-facing learning targets, criteria for success, collaborative structures, key academic vocabulary, independent practice, error analysis, and exit tickets. Most lesson plans included differentiation for English Language Learners (ELLs), students with disabilities, and independent workers based on need. For example, in a living environment class, ELLs were given the text in both Spanish and English, portable graphic organizers, and a Spanish-English glossary. Additionally, most plans include individual, paired, or group tasks that provide access through tiered tasks or processes, leveled readers, and mixed grouping, while a few provide extensions. Some lessons include the level of Webb’s Depth of Knowledge for the higher-order questions being asked.
Additional Finding

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

Across most classrooms, teachers use assessments that are aligned to the Common Core and the curricula. The school uses common assessments to determine student progress towards goals across grades and subject areas.

Impact

Actionable feedback is provided to students and teachers regarding student achievement and it’s used to adjust curricular and instructional decisions.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses baseline exams, mock Regents, and teacher-created midterms across all disciplines. This data is used to determine strategic groups, refine whole-class instruction, and determine student needs for additional instructional support. Review of this data led to a schoolwide focus on ensuring students had the content-specific vocabulary they needed to solve problems and answer questions. The analysis of assessment results has led to the development of instructional goals for staff and students and the reinforcement of skills across all subject areas. After a review of ELA assessments, teachers noticed a consistent gap in the use of text-based evidence when students were responding to a prompt. As a result, teachers began implementing the use of strategies such as sentence stems to help students respond more specifically. This became an instructional goal for students. The use of data to inform and adjust instruction in all content areas is consistent across classrooms and classroom checks for understanding lead to instructional adjustments that support all learners.

- A review of student work and meetings with teachers and students revealed that feedback on student work is actionable and includes next steps. Comments on an ELA task provided students with positive feedback and next steps. One teacher noted, “I like how you stated your claim/position in the opening. That made it easy for me to follow your claim throughout your essay.” Next steps included, “Don’t be afraid to include a hook. This will help engage the reader to continue reading.” On a social studies writing piece, the teacher offered these actionable next steps, “Try to mention another position or counterclaim and explain why the evidence for your claim outweighs the counterclaim. Try to prove the other side wrong.” Across subjects feedback is detailed and provides students with clear next steps.

- All teachers utilize item analysis and disaggregated data to identify learning gaps, trends, and patterns. Analyzed test scores of specific subgroups of students have enabled teachers to pinpoint which standards have been mastered and which groups of students require reteaching, remediation or enrichment. Based on a review of the ELA Regents exam, teachers realized there was a consistent gap with students being able to analyze and use multiple sources of text-based evidence. As a result, teachers began utilizing strategies to support learners. Additionally, vocabulary was very general and not specific to the prompt, so all teachers became focused on exposing students to more content specific vocabulary throughout the lesson and providing students with the opportunities to utilize this skill throughout the lesson.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

School leaders support teacher development with effective feedback and next steps from frequent and strategic classroom observation cycles. Feedback is aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and accurately catches strengths and weaknesses.

Impact

Effective feedback is part of a system that elevates schoolwide instructional practices and emphasizes continuous growth. Teachers are supported in meeting professional goals.

Supporting Evidence

- Frequent cycles of classroom observations provide feedback utilizing the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Leaders and teachers shared that weekly observations can be both evaluative and non-evaluative to support leaders looking for trends and patterns to share with staff. Additionally, these cycles are often timed around professional learning so leaders can determine how it is being implemented in each classroom and if it requires further support for groups or individual teachers. Each rated item on observation reports includes specific language from the evidence from the classroom that supports the rating, as well as actionable next steps. For example, one observation report includes feedback to the teacher in ensuring that the think-pair-share strategy is used. Another report detailed having the teacher create rigorous Regents-aligned tasks that include multiple texts to allow students to engage in a cognitive productive struggle. Other examples of actionable feedback found with observation reports asked teachers to group students based on their skill level as well as formative assessment data such as exit tickets to help identify the scaffolds each group might require. One teacher reported that due to feedback offered by a school leader, she has been giving stronger written feedback to students that includes actionable next steps and that students are using the feedback to improve their grades.

- In addition, there are examples of observation reports that reinforce feedback offered in earlier reports. For example, one observation report includes feedback indicating that the teacher should be providing students with sentence stems as a way to begin their essays. A subsequent report indicates that the teacher has begun to implement this strategy successfully. The fact that this specific recommendation was made in a previous observation report was also noted. In another report, a teacher is advised to post classroom procedures that outline student expectations for flow of the day in the classroom. A later report compliments the teacher for improvement in classroom tone since implementing this feedback, resulting in improved ratings for this teacher as evidenced in *Advance*.

- Besides the reports resulting from official classroom observations are the emails that follow informal classroom visits that contain glows, grows and next steps. Teachers shared that the school leaders do not necessarily write up these observations and just share the feedback on what was observed. One teacher shared that he was advised to speak with the instructional coach and his mentor in order to visit a specifically identified teacher to observe the methods used by this teacher in implementing explicit modeling. Another teacher shared a school leader gave him advice on how to use the student-facing learning targets to drive his lesson planning, which aligned with his professional goals for the year. The teacher reported that he reflected on the advice, implemented it, and that that has resulted in much more successful development of his planning as evidenced on his last observation write-up, moving him along the continuum needed to meet his goals.
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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</table>

Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured inquiry-based professional collaborations. Teacher teams consistently analyze data and student work for all students they share.

Impact

Teachers' collaborations strengthen their capacity in instructional design and delivery. Teacher team work results in improved teacher practice.

Supporting Evidence

- The majority of teachers are engaged in frequent inquiry-based professional collaborations across grades and departments. Teams identify a problem of practice and determine next steps to improve pedagogy and make revisions to curricula. The work products generated by the collaborative teacher teams, such as curriculum maps, lesson plans, unit plans, pacing calendars, and student materials, are shared at grade-level and department meetings. Support staff and content teachers reported that significant time is allotted for co-planning with the teachers that they co-teach with, making it easier to support English Language Learners (ELLs), students with disabilities, students in need of intensive intervention, and students that can be accelerated. Teachers further reported that grade-level meeting time is also used to embed into the curricula practices across grades and content areas to build coherence. Teachers overwhelmingly agreed that the teacher team collaboration and professional learning time have improved their professional practice as evidenced by Advance data.

- Teachers strengthen their instructional capacity through team collaborations. In one case, teachers reported that because of a conversation around successful instructional strategies for students providing evidence from multiple sources, and a subsequent look at student feedback, teachers had greater insights into what students needed to successfully complete Regents-based tasks. They then began to think about how to scaffold the instruction to provide supports for common pitfalls like explaining the synthesis of multiple documents, which most students struggled with. A teacher stated, “We are always trying to find strategies we can use to teach analysis and this year, through inquiry, our conversations evolved and a light went on for me. I’ve taken what we discussed in inquiry and run with it and it’s really impacted my practice.”

- During the math team meeting, teachers analyzed student work using the Atlas Protocol for assessing if students are meeting the learning targets, using academic vocabulary as well as offering constructive criticism regarding the task and how it might be improved. Analysis revealed further evidence of a schoolwide trend that students are using more academic vocabulary than they were previously; however, math tasks are not giving them enough opportunities. The teachers then devised a list of strategies, including more opportunities to make their thinking visible and thus use academic vocabulary through extension activities or provide more open-ended questions that require students to explain their work. The results of these strategies would be discussed at the next team meeting for constructing a department action plan toward the goal of increasing students’ effective use of academic vocabulary.