



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Foundations Academy

High School 322

**265 Ralph Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11233**

Principal: Gary Beidleman

Dates of review: March 15 - 16, 2007

Reviewer: Mike Doran

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Foundations Academy is a small high school located in a multicultural neighborhood of Brooklyn. The school occupies one floor within a building shared with a large elementary school. Its work is constrained by limited accommodation and facilities. The school opened in September 2005 with its first ninth grade intake, and is adding a grade each year to eventually serve a projected population of 400 students in grades nine to twelve. There are plans to re-locate the school to provide suitable accommodation and facilities for the expanding population.

The school's current population of 204 students is drawn from a wide area of Brooklyn and comprises 84% Black and 13% Hispanic students, with the remaining 3% coming from other backgrounds. The proportion of English language learners (2%) is low, and that of special needs students (8%) is comparable with similar and City schools. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding, with 71% of the students eligible.

The school has also recently become an Empowerment school, giving it more flexibility to make key decisions and control the resources for their school community. Empowerment schools are free to develop or purchase professional development services, choose which schools to affiliate with, and benefit from reduced reporting and paperwork requirements. Additionally, the school is currently engaged in a research project to design its own (DYO) periodic assessment arrangements, and as such has DYO school status.

The ethos of the school is characterized by a strong commitment to enabling its students to progress academically and to successfully graduate into college.

Currently at 92%, attendance is good and above the average for City and similar schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal provides good leadership with clarity of vision and direction, a hands-on style, and the determination to create a successful school.
- The principal is supported by a committed and professional team of administrators and teachers who know and care for their students.
- The school has the full trust of the parents, who hold the school and its staff in high regard.
- The school provides an orderly, safe and very supportive learning environment to which students respond with good behavior and positive attitudes to learning.
- The school's admissions program, under-pinned by base-line assessment, provides effective support to students on entry to the school.
- High expectations, shared with students and parents, drive the work of the school.
- Teachers are very supportive of one another, and are well supported by good opportunities for professional development.
- The school's intervention and support programs, informed by close monitoring of the progress and development of individual students, provides timely and effective support for students causing concern.
- Attendance is good and is maintained by rigorous monitoring and follow-up systems.
- The school actively explores new whole-school strategies for engaging and supporting students in their learning and personal development.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that all teachers feel fully involved in planning for school improvement and their associated professional development.
- Continue to develop and resource instructional programs in science, social studies, and the arts.
- Further explore the introduction of periodic assessment systems that focus on students' proficiency and performance, in order to better inform the setting of shared goals and next steps in their learning.
- Extend the analysis and use of student performance data in whole-school planning to identify patterns of under-achievement, to make comparison with similar schools, to monitor the impact of school improvement strategies, and to make timely revisions of plans.
- Develop and establish systems and procedures for recording the longitudinal progress and support given students from the point of entry to inform student grade transition, and interventions and support planning.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school

In the eighteen months since the school opened the principal has established a safe and orderly environment conducive to teaching and learning, and to the personal development of the students. Initiatives, such as cohort ability groupings within grades and a compulsory extended day for the 9th grade, are being explored to raise students' achievement, and other after-school programs and external partnership activities are used to further engage and support students. School staff know and care for their students well, and this underpins good levels of individual support for the students, with timely interventions and the involvement of parents.

The teaching staff work collaboratively and reflectively, and are well supported by the leadership, key teachers and coaches in meeting the needs of the students through the on-going development of differentiated instructional programs increasingly informed by student performance data.

Areas for improvement identified in this report are mainly concerned with ensuring consistency in the delivery of differentiated instructional programs, and with further extending the systematic collection, recording and analysis of data to inform planning and the monitoring of progress at the classroom and whole-school level. The school is well placed to carry-out such further improvements.

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school gathers a wide range of data from standardized tests and internal assessments relating to the current performance and progress of individual students. The data collected is detailed with respect to English language arts and mathematics. Data collection in other subjects is less systematic, and there is considerable variation between classes, grades, and subjects in how assessments are carried out and records are kept. The principal additionally tracks the progress of students within class groups.

Current student data is scrutinized by the school's cabinet, by subject departments and by other staff teams to monitor the progress of each student, and where necessary to refer students for more detailed monitoring and intervention support. A similar level of detailed monitoring takes place for special needs students and English language learners within different ethnic groups. Additionally, there is a focus on students at risk of not meeting graduation requirements.

Baseline assessments in reading and mathematics are carried out on entry to inform the differentiated grouping of students within grades, and interim assessments in English language arts and mathematics are carried out in all grades on a marking period cycle.

Item analysis of test feedback is effectively used within subject departments to review and improve instructional programs and their delivery.

In addition to monitoring academic performance data, the school also collects data about attendance, punctuality, and homework. This is followed up with students by advisors and with parents through teacher-parent conferencing and the progress and reporting cycles.

The recent and current progress of individual students, class by class, grade by grade is scrutinized to inform whole-school planning. However, the school does not yet subject its data to longitudinal analysis across grades, classes and subjects to identify patterns of under-achievement or to make comparison with similar schools. However, an Empowerment Schools intensive self-study team within the school is carrying out a study of a group of students progressing through the school to identify best practices that may be implemented school wide. Work on developing spreadsheet and database applications to manage whole school data is being taken forward by the principal and a small group of staff, but this has yet to involve the wider teaching staff.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student’s next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student’s learning.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The analysis of data to inform collaborative lesson planning, learning goals and next steps is strongest in English language arts, and mathematics. However, the data from the teachers’ assessments in the classroom are not yet consistently integrated into systematic departmental planning or setting of academic goals for students in all areas of the school.

In the context of a small school community the teachers know and care for their students. There is a collective support culture amongst the staff that identifies and targets support for individual students causing concern or at risk. Throughout the school week there are structured opportunities, such as in advisory groups, for all students to meet with advisors, to discuss topics that relate to their development, and to raise issues about their lives inside or outside school. In this way student concerns are quickly picked up and addressed by individual teachers and the whole school community. The school is particularly effective in responding at an early stage to students in greatest need of support. For example, good before-school and after-school programs of catch-up and support for under-achieving students, including Regents-prep, extended school classes, and Saturday school are provided.

The school communicates clearly with parents and provides opportunities to involve them in their children’s learning. Parents appreciate the ready access they have to staff and the timeliness with which teachers let them know of any concerns. The school has high expectations of its students, with a strong focus on enabling them to graduate into college. A rigorous system of progress reports, record cards and teacher-parent conferencing ensures that students and their parents are kept well informed of progress. The school provides curriculum events and support for parents to enable them to more fully support their children’s learning, but the majority of parents have yet to fully take up these opportunities. The school is considering the use of individualized learning plans for students to more systematically provide shared goal setting and associated planning for next steps in learning.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The school has been careful to select its curriculum and has augmented the mandated curriculum to meet the needs of its students. A particular focus has been on ensuring access to the curriculum for students who have limited reading and comprehension skills in English. Curriculum materials are graded for reading level. The need to strengthen other curriculum areas such as science is acknowledged. The school is currently exploring a number of strategies to raise student achievement. Examples of this include the introduction of an obligatory extended day for all 9th grade students, the transfer of science and gym to the extended day to give more time for mathematics and English language arts, and a ‘summer bridge’ induction program for new intakes.

A standardized lesson planning format is widely used, and this is helpful to collaborative lesson planning and to less experienced teachers. However, the format does not explicitly prompt differentiation of instruction, additional support needed for individual students or groups, or linkage to prior learning. Instructional programs generally engage the students, but this is more variable in the lower ability classes. Computer technology is recognized as a powerful learning tool in the classroom and continues to be developed.

Student attendance is a high priority, and at 92% it is good compared to that of other City and similar schools. Attendance is monitored closely by the school’s attendance team and pursued relentlessly with students, and where necessary with their families, by staff at all levels including the principal. Staff know their students well and are held accountable for their learning. Students are very appreciative of their openness and approachability of the staff and there is generally a good level of mutual respect between teachers and students, although this can be sometimes be variable in the lower ability classes. The views of students are canvassed annually by survey.

Scheduling, staff deployment, and budget setting are focused on the needs as identified by analysis of data. The identification and deployment of lead teachers provide opportunities for teachers to use their particular expertise to support school development and the professional development of colleagues. Appropriate levels of funding are focused on the professional development of staff, and on the improvement strategies and goals identified in the school’s Comprehensive Education Plan. There has been a considerable investment in teaching and learning materials, and in computer technology, to support and adapt the instructional programs. Increasingly funding is being allocated to strengthen resourcing in curriculum areas identified for development, such as science. However, the school acknowledges that the management of resources could be further strengthened by more effective use of student data in whole school planning, for example to identify and deal with patterns of underachievement.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

Having established the new school, the principal appointed all staff in line with his vision for the school and the needs of its students. He adopted a system for staff selection using a range of criteria and procedures such as screening against the school’s ethos, lesson

demonstration, participation in a collaborative working group, and involving key staff on the teacher recruitment team. The selection process has yet to take account of the capability of applicants to make effective use of student performance data to improve performance.

Professional development is generally aligned to the needs of the school. It is well planned and managed by the cabinet, but has yet to take sufficient account of teachers' professional reflection on their practice. Discussion and debate in subject teams is an important part of professional development, and staff readily reflect on and share their teaching practice. The school receives significant support in professional development from its lead partner, the Institute of Student Achievement (ISA). The school's mathematics coach and other ISA coaches also provide valuable support to the teaching staff. However, planning of professional development does not yet fully involve teachers in collaborative whole school planning that draws upon the effective use of school-wide student data, such as the identification of patterns of underachievement.

The school is an orderly and safe place, and is welcoming to students, parents and visitors. The principal and his administrators are well respected, and provide a model not only of their high expectations but also of their care and commitment to students and their families. The principal has the capacity and determination to drive through school improvement plans, and to make any organisational changes to the school that are needed to achieve this. The principal has begun to regularly and systematically observe instructional practice and provide feedback to teachers. This in turn additionally informs planning for professional development. Goals are agreed with teachers for their professional development. The school is also very concerned to provide opportunities for the development of broader personal skills and interests, and it offers enrichment and extension activities, such as school trips, to interest and extend students.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school has good collaborative planning arrangements in relation to current curriculum provision and instructional programs that involve various teams of teachers. Interim and final test results and regular diagnostic measures of students' progress are used to monitor, revise and adapt plans at the individual student and class level through the year, and to target student interventions. This has yet to systematically inform whole school planning and goal setting. The Comprehensive Education Plan is used as a working document, reviewed during the year and overseen by the school leadership team. In addition, elements of the plan are reviewed through various team meetings of teachers. However, the planning does not provide the necessary wider and strategic perspective of a whole-school plan. The school does not yet make full use of student performance data to inform the annual Comprehensive Education Plan, and other linked plans, about the comparative performance of specific student groups, classes and subjects, and to monitor and adapt the school's plans and goals.

The school leadership team does not yet play a strong enough role in reviewing the progress of the school using performance data to inform their consideration of options for school improvement.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Foundations Academy (HS 322)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score		X	

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • each student, classroom, grade level, 		X	
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ethnic groups, English Language Learners, special education students* 		X	
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all other categories of interest to the school* 		X	
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.	X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 1		X	

* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.		X	
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject, and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area.		X	
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			X
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.			X
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2		X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.			X
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.		X	
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.		X	
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.		X	
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3		X	
Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.		X	
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.		X	
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.		X	
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.		X	
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.		X	
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.		X	
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4		X	
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.	X		
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.		X	
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.	X		
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.	X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 5	X		