



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Franklin K. Lane High School

High School 420

**999 Jamaica Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 10011**

Principal: Evan Ahern

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Reviewer: Chrissie Pittman

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Overall evaluation

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

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Franklin K. Lane High School is a large high school made up of five small learning communities. The school is in its second year of restructuring into these communities and is due to complete the re-structuring process by June 2007.

The number of students enrolled is 2,407 from grades 9 to 12. The school has an ethnically diverse school population. The majority of students are Hispanic, at 58%. There are 29% Black students, 9% Asian and other students and 3% White students. Recent immigrants make up 16.6% of the students from the Dominican Republic, Guyana and Ecuador. A relatively high proportion of students are English language learners, 28.3%, and 16% of the students have special educational needs. The school also regularly receives students who are over-age for their grade as incoming ninth graders and there are almost 300 students in the school as a whole, identified as chronically absent. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding. Attendance levels, at 64.4% are significantly below that of similar schools and City schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has a clear sense of purpose and is an effective leader.
- The results of tests are used effectively to improve student performance.
- Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.
- The emphasis which is given to literacy and mathematics is providing a good focus for the school and has improved student performance and achievement year on year.
- Formative data from individual classes effectively informs lesson planning.
- Students are known well by their teachers in the small learning communities, and this promotes better behavior and discipline.
- Partnerships with outside bodies are used effectively to achieve academic goals.
- Parents support the organizational changes in the school and are pleased with the way their children are cared for.
- The school runs smoothly in good order.

What the school needs to improve

- Achieve greater consistency in the collection and use of qualitative and formative data.
- Improve the use of data in relation to long-term strategic planning to promote greater effectiveness in monitoring and review.
- Ensure that there are more effective strategies to improve overall attendance levels.
- Improve the rigor and frequency of classroom observations to improve instruction.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The school is in a transitional stage of its development and some of its procedures are still at a formative stage. The new principal is turning the school around. Improvements since last year include achieving annual yearly progress for nearly all students, increased performance in mathematics and English language arts, improved graduation rate and number of Regents diplomas granted and good gains in attendance in all the small learning communities. The principal and senior leaders are working hard to establish common practices within the school and across the small learning communities that have recently been established. These communities provide a more effective context for students to be known as individuals; behavior has improved overall and their progress can be monitored more effectively. Currently this last aspect is not, however, being consistently carried out in all the small learning communities. Students appreciate the support that is being given to them. Similarly parents are appreciative of the changes that are being made but would like to see more effective communication procedures to be put in place so they could have a better understanding of the progress their children are making. The quality of teaching is variable. This is in part a result of some teachers' resistance to change from a didactic style of teaching to a more student centered focus. The school is appropriately addressing these issues through its professional development programs although it needs to improve the rigor of classroom observations. The senior leaders are also acquiring the skills and capacity to implement change. The strategic use of data and its application to long-term planning are areas in need of further development. Administrative procedures are effective and enable the school to operate smoothly although newly implemented strategies to improve attendance have not yet had the anticipated impact.

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 has appropriate systems for collecting objective data which it is able to analyze on a student, classroom and grade level basis. However, the various types of data collection mean that access to information is not in a consistent form. This is proving to be a problem for the school due to its restructuring along the lines of small learning communities. Nevertheless, the outcomes of external data such as Regents tests are periodically updated so that the school has an appropriate overview of the performance of specific students and classes. This enables it to identify the support needed by individual students, in each subject and class and grade by grade.

The school receives a broad profile of the progress and performance of particular subgroups of students based on ethnicity, English language competence and special educational need. Apart from the external data which is used to document the performance of these groups, the school does its own formative assessment. Data is collected through conferencing activities, tests and interviews with parents. In a broader

context the school generates its own benchmarking data for students who join the school at grade 9. The school also sets standardized mathematics and English language tests which effectively identify strengths and weaknesses of students so that teachers can use the information to inform their lesson planning. The school was able to appropriately identify as an issue the low achievement of Black American students in both English language arts and mathematics. Since this was a sizeable group, the school rightly focused on literacy and mathematics as its major goal for improving the performance of these students.

The creation of small learning communities means that the analysis of data in relation to past performance has only just begun. Despite this situation the school does look at trends in performance and has in place appropriate intervention strategies to support students or groups who are underachieving or disadvantaged such as homeless students or long-term absentees. Comparisons with similar and City-wide schools are rather broad but there is increasing evidence that the school is able to make comparisons about relative performance between the small learning communities.

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 school has a focus on literacy for all of the small learning communities and is trying to achieve consistency of practice between them. The intention is to move from a teacher centered format to more student centered activities which are inquiry based. Although some teachers are finding this difficult to implement, clear benchmarks for achievement of this goal have been established and are reflected in the expectations of increased pass rates for coursework and improved standards in relation to Regents tests. The analysis of student data in relation to performance in mathematics and science has prompted increased collaboration between teachers. Programs of study are being amended to accommodate more inquiry based activities with a view to engaging students more actively in their lessons. The progress and performance of students is being appropriately monitored through formative assessments, interviews and tests. The school is conscious of the need for continuing support for staff in order to change teaching styles, for example through the drive to improve literacy. Students have been effectively targeted and monitored to gauge specific weaknesses and to identify relevant intervention strategies. In the case of students with special education needs the school recognizes the importance of specifically supporting and monitoring the progress of this group. For example, an extended day provision has been made available to these students resulting in improved pass rates in the State tests.

The school conveys its high expectations of achievement to parents through formal newsletters and to students through assemblies in the smaller organizational framework of the learning communities. The drive to improve performance is reflected in increases in attendance levels and increased participation in enrichment activities. The school encourages parents to support its strategies for improvement. It has surveyed parents with a view to emphasizing the need for collaboration. From the parents’ perspective they are supportive of the move towards the small learning communities but some parents feel that weak teaching in some areas and poor communication about their child’s progress is undermining its success.

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 curriculum is appropriately aligned to mandated requirements. It is partially organized along thematic lines which are popular with the students. Each learning community is planning to integrate their curriculum while keeping the high quality of the mathematics teaching ongoing. However, there is not enough consistency in the various ways the curriculum is delivered through these communities. There is no common curriculum planning template to ensure equality in curriculum delivery and instructional programs are not closely enough aligned with the improvement plans relating to literacy. The changes in organizational structure have resulted in more robust accountability requirements for teachers. They are no longer exclusively content area specialists. This changing role has not been fully taken on board by all staff, which is reflected in a continued adherence to didactic teaching and a lack of differentiated work for students of different ability, in some lessons. However, teachers meet regularly and plan together around grade levels.

Administrative decisions relating to the budget and staffing are guided directly by the needs of the data. Financial resources have been appropriately committed to increasing the time that English and mathematics is taught. In its staffing decisions, the school has strategically appointed highly qualified staff and literacy coaches to support the learning communities in the promotion of the literacy objective. The creation of an additional block supports the needs of students who need additional credits..

The smaller numbers of students in the small learning communities enables each individual student to be known better by staff. Relationships between students and staff are positive. In lessons they enjoy the thematic approach to learning particularly when the activities are planned to accommodate their different learning needs. However they do remark that it is apparent that when some teachers are working outside of their subject specialism the lessons are less challenging and interesting. Attendance levels have improved but are still significantly below comparable schools. Despite the priority the school gives to this aspect, its strategies for improvement are not as effective as they might be.

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.

Staff are chosen because of their willingness to teach from the students’ perspective rather than their own. This student centered approach to teaching puts the emphasis on what is being learned and how and it is the teachers’ task to facilitate this learning. Despite the inexperience of the senior management in their changing role there is a clear commitment to the philosophy of small learning communities. Most teachers are willing to learn from experience and revise their plans in the light of that experience. This commitment is particularly evident in the professional development program which has been provided by the school. A professional development committee meets on a regular basis to plan activities during the school year. Many of the activities appropriately revolve around central issues such as learning and teaching and the development of the literacy strategy.

These programs enable collaboration between staff to promote the sustainable progress of students. However, teachers are not evaluating each other's instruction enough to systematically facilitate the sharing of good practice.

The principal is well respected and has clear expectations of teaching outcomes. He has a systematic program of lesson observations and uses the feedback process to effectively establish a common basis of understanding. The principal, with the support of his assistant principals, is acquiring the capacity to successfully implement change in this transitional period of the school's life. His good administration is reflected in the smooth running of the school. Communication procedures between the small learning communities are not yet sufficiently effective for systems for handling data to be fully implemented. However collaborative meetings for various foci, for example curriculum plans, trips, student behavior and attendance, take place weekly in each small learning community and are well informed and make direct reference to data in relation to students' attendance and progress. The school makes appropriate use of support services to meet the needs of students. Productive relationships have been established with Air Force Junior ROTC in order to improve student outcomes. Other links with La Guardia and the District Attorney's office offer the opportunity of potential mentoring roles by business partners. The student government organizes blood drives and fund raisers for 'the March of Dimes' in aid of cerebral palsy. Parents feel this is valuable experience and impacts positively on the 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 undeveloped.

The school has clear developmental plans. In broad terms these are reflected in the commitment to the creation of small learning communities with a specific academic focus. The school has instigated an appropriate organizational and management structure to promote these aims. However, the Comprehensive Education Plan is not consistently reviewed. Regular cabinet meetings provide an appropriate forum for the review of instruction but there is insufficient strategic assessment of the work of the learning communities. Additional outcomes of these meetings are reflected in the emphasis which is given to professional development, for example in relation to developing the staff's capacity to interpret data. In the context of the separate learning communities, the monitoring of progress and the collection of assessment data is more variable. In general terms the size of each separate learning community ensures that the students are well known. Should any student need it, support strategies are successfully put in place but assessment procedures are not robust enough to begin to identify whether the progress being made by groups of individuals is appropriate to their ability level. The school is not yet able to identify whether it is adding value. It is this aspect of diagnostic assessment which is not sufficiently developed in order for it to inform planning reviews at classroom or at the learning community level. The cycle of review and evaluation is only at an early stage of development, and the school's long-term strategic planning is not yet sufficiently rigorous to promote greater effectiveness in monitoring and review.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Franklin K. Lane (High School 420)	∅	✓	+
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	

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		