



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**Fordham Leadership Academy for Business and
Technology**

**High School 438
500 East Fordham Road
Bronx
NY 10458**

Principal: Richard Bost

Dates of review: March 28-29, 2007

Reviewer: Cheryl Baker

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 Fordham Leadership Academy for Leadership and Technology is a high school serving 583 students in grades nine through twelve. Slightly more than 13% of students receive special education services while just over 14% are English language learners. The predominant home language is Spanish. Hispanic students are 63% of the population, Black students are 31%, Asians and others are 3% and White students represent 3%. Males account for approximately two thirds of the population. The school is Title I eligible with the percent of qualifying students exceeding the City average. Attendance has averaged approximately 78%, below that of City schools.

The school opened in September 2002, under different leadership, as one of five small learning communities housed within one building that was the site of one large and troubled high school. Several of the original staff had been employed at that school. Fordham Leadership Academy's classrooms are on two floors where there are also classrooms of other schools. Students from other schools pass through the halls of Fordham Leadership Academy at certain times of the day. Preliminary plans to add a sixth school to the site are a cause of great concern for administrators, students, teachers and parents who already have significant challenges with respect to maintaining an independent identity and reducing behavioral infractions. According to the most recent Annual School Report, the school is at 102.4% utilization.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal holds high expectations for effective teaching and monitors instruction with regularity.
- The school has the capacity to generate data that allow administrators to analyze student performance and attendance indicators in relation to the instructional program and student support services.
- The school has become responsive to the issues raised by the analysis of student achievement and attendance data.
- Teachers are empowered to share in collaborative decision making.
- Daily common planning time supports the delivery of professional development, the development of curriculum, and the refinement of school-wide policies and practices.
- Students are afforded unique opportunities to explore business, finance and technology-related career paths that are reflective of the school's mission.

What the school needs to improve

- Engage all constituencies in developing, sharing and actualizing a strategic plan for improving all aspects of the school that identifies long and short term goals, actions to be taken, responsible parties, and incremental and final measures of success.
- Support the horizontal and vertical alignment of the curriculum as it is refined by continuing to develop guides in the core tested areas that include pacing calendars, common assessments, and explicitly reference State standards.
- Increase the practice of administering periodic assessments for the diagnosis of students' specific learning needs.
- Train teachers in how to make use of the data available to them in differentiating their classroom instruction to meet the needs of all students.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the current programs and practices relative to meeting the needs of English language learners and other students needing academic intervention services.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is an undeveloped school with proficient features.

The principal, a recent graduate of The Leadership Academy, assumed control of the school after the abrupt and unanticipated retirement of the founding principal in September 2006. Therefore, the principal has faced the challenge of learning about the school and its past practices while simultaneously implementing practices and promulgating values that characterize his leadership. The staff, students and parents have also needed to adjust to the change in leadership. During its growth phase, 2002-2006, the interpretation of data regarding the progress of the school and its students did not sufficiently identify some significant areas of concern and the interrogation of this data did take place at sufficient depth. That pattern has changed under with the current principal who is endeavoring to build an instructional team that uses the available information to make decisions. Thus far, the school has demonstrated improvement in gathering and interpreting data and using it to inform curriculum and instruction. The use of data in developing, but the job of revising long and short term plans for improving all aspects of the school remains to be done.

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 uses data such as the scholarship report, Regents scores, cohort data, attendance data and incidents records to understand the progress of individual students, classrooms and academic subject areas. The principal brings a background in the use of data to inform decisions and is supported by a campus-wide data analyst who generates reports upon request. The region provides a diagnostic reading test that is administered to all grade students and, this year, introduced a periodic examination for mathematics that is administered to ninth and tenth grade students. All tenth and eleventh grade students take the Preliminary Scholastic Achievement Test. Teachers rely most heavily on the assessments embedded in their instruction to monitor students' progress rather than results from other instruments.

The progress of students receiving special education services is measured and monitored according to the stipulations of their individual education plans. English language learners receive a home language survey on entry and their progress towards achieving proficiency in English is measures by standardized State testing. The progress of ethnic groups is relatively similar, although that data has not been interrogated deeply. Nor has the relative progress of gender groups.

Students who are not on track to graduate have emerged as a category of interest under the current administration when it was discovered that a significant number of students in each cohort have not earned sufficient credits nor have they met with success on the Regents examinations. For the 2007 cohort, this is a particular concern.

Cohort data is providing longitudinal comparative data to the administration regarding students' progress. The school also compares its progress to that of the other schools sharing the campus. The analysis of the regional mathematics periodic examinations provides comparisons of schools in the region. The issuance of the school's first report of annual yearly progress will shed greater light on its expected yearly gains and standing with respect to 'similar' and City schools.

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 undeveloped.

The school has a Comprehensive Education Plan that was developed by a school leadership team under the previous administration and is not a significant influence in guiding current actions, especially in light of deficits revealed by the analysis of placement, achievement and attendance data undertaken by the current administration. The principal's performance review, developed for the regional office, reflects goals for the school and its students that are largely aspirational, given the circumstances of his brief tenure. He is communicating his goals and expectations to teachers, parents, students and his fellow administrators informally as he endeavors to instill collaborative planning practices in the school. With the exception of the attendance plan, there is little evidence in the school of the embedded practice of using data to develop plans that support the attainment of measurable short and long term goals through defining actions, identifying responsible parties and setting benchmarks and timelines to measure success.

A particular focus area has emerged through the recent identification of students not on track for graduation. This has indicated that greater vigilance and planning with respect to grading practices, credit attainment and promotion criteria is crucial. The administration and faculty are working to correct practices that led to this problem while endeavoring to provide remediation through Saturday school, credit recovery programs and tutoring especially for seniors who expect to graduate in June.

For students most at risk such as special education, English language learners and students needing academic intervention services the school provides support with varying levels of structure and success. The majority of special education students are educated in small self-contained classes for each of the core tested areas. The Wilson reading program is used for remediation in reading. The pupil personnel team monitors progress of special education students. The school does not have separate educational settings for English language learners. They receive instruction in the general education classroom with supplemental push-in support, regardless of their level of proficiency. They are also offered after school tutoring. A coordinator for the English language program was identified in early 2007. The school has absorbed the mandated 37.5 minutes of extended day support into its regular schedule limiting the possibility of focused remedial help for struggling students in the regular population. The expectation of push-in support from guidance personnel is limited in its effectiveness. The identification of students is largely informal and anecdotal.

While students and parents feel that the school expects them to succeed, they have not been held to strict criteria for promotion to date, creating for some, a false sense of accomplishment. Parents feel welcomed in the school and appreciate the support and programs offered by the parent coordinator.

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 follows curriculum guides provided by the region, City, State, and career-related programs, depending on the academic area or career focus. The Virtual Enterprise Institute is particularly effective in addressing the school’s mission. The school intends to continue to foster the refinement of curriculum for lower performing students, increase the alignment of English language arts and English language learner curriculum, and promote the administration and analysis of common assessments across the content areas.

In addition to nearly daily classroom visits, the principal holds teachers accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes through the regular comparison of students’ marking period grades, their attendance and their regents pass rates. Instruction is differentiated primarily by activity with little evidence of the use of the widespread use of individual student performance data in lessons. Instruction varies with respect to student engagement. Students report that their classes are interesting, especially those with an engaging career focus. They feel known and supported by the adults in the building.

The analysis of Regents pass rates led to the discovery that students had not been scheduled properly. Some who had passed the Regents were taking regents courses. Others who had not passed were not taking the appropriate courses. The principal took the dramatic but necessary step to reschedule the school at the end of the first semester to properly place students. He also reassigned teachers where their strengths could best be used to forward student achievement. Similarly, the results of the grade nine entrance examination in reading revealed that a small number of students who were reading far below grade level. The principal created a specialized reading section for these students which began in the second semester. The duties of some administrative and support staff were also redistributed to support these changes. The budget was developed by the former administration and has been sufficient to support the educational program.

Attendance has been below 80% for the last three years and raising it is a strong focus in the school. The principal’s performance review sets the goal of increasing attendance dramatically. The attendance team, now headed by an assistant principal, has put many practices into place such as daily calls home, strict consequences relative to report card grades, and rewards for good attendance. Reminders about the importance of attendance are visible in the school. To date, attendance is still below 80%.

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.

The principal has had the opportunity to hire one teacher. His criteria included strong content knowledge, empathy, and an inclination for reflective practice based on the results of student learning. The reassignment of the duties of some administrative and support personnel was influenced by the capacity to use data to improve performance and progress. As a principal continuing to develop a deep understanding of the school, his oversight of all aspects of the institution, including classroom instruction, is keen. He has high expectations for effective and engaging instruction which he communicates to teachers through formal and informal observations and through the regular distribution of

timely articles. He is gaining the respect of all school constituencies as this year of transition unfolds. Generally, the school runs smoothly and its small size helps to ensure that procedures are communicated and followed.

School-wide daily common planning time affords teachers the opportunity to address professional development topics, plan units and share effective practices. Topics for professional development are identified by the region and through the collaborative efforts of the lead teachers and the administrative team. While teachers regularly share effective practices, peer observations are not common among teachers. The daily common planning period also presents the principal with easy access to his staff to provide professional development or to address organizational issues as they arise in a collaborative fashion. Lead teachers in English and mathematics provide support and coaching to teachers in these disciplines. Consultants provided by the region provide additional support to the school. Teachers may also receive support of workshops and courses germane to their individual assignments.

The school and its students benefit from unique relationships with businesses such as the Bear Stearns Corporation and the Northfork Bank that provide adult mentoring for students, tutoring and on-the-job training in the financial sector. Local institutions of higher learning provide credit recovery programs for students at promotional risk.

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 schools plans such as the Comprehensive education Plan and the principal's performance review are generally not specific as to interim goals and measures of progress. Rather, they set forth longer term goals for overall improvement. The plans are not actualized so as to use interim or final outcomes to drive successive goal setting and improvement planning. Nor are there effective structures in place to provide tight and active monitoring of incremental progress.

The principal compares student progress within and across classrooms based on attendance, scholarship report information and Regents scores. The focus of this analysis has been on teacher practices rather than making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions. It did lead, however, to the mid-year rescheduling of students noted earlier. Item analysis of some Regents examinations are helping teachers to address students individual needs. Comparisons across schools are not especially informative due to the relative youth of the school and lack of substantial longitudinal data.

The region introduced periodic assessments in mathematics in the current school year and teachers are still learning how to use the data they have generated. School personnel stated that this year was the first time the school had made use of the ninth grade reading scores even though these have been received in pervious years. Similarly, the school has received disaggregated Preliminary Scholastic Achievement Test scores but this data has not penetrated the classrooms.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Fordham Leadership Academy for Business and Technology H.S. 438	∅	✓	+
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		