

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

**Fordham Leadership Academy for Business and
Technology**

High School 438

**500 East Fordham Road
Bronx
NY 10458**

Principal: Richard Bost

Dates of review: March 5 - 6, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Dr. Salvador A. Fernandez

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Fordham Leadership Academy for Business and Technology is a high school with 538 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 36% Black, 60% Hispanic, 2% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 60% of the students enrolled and girls account for 40%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 73.5%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 74% eligibility.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The school has made good progress since the previous Quality Review in using data to inform instruction and set class goals, which are consistent across content subjects. Teachers are empowered to make decisions. During the past three months, school leaders created weekly common planning time resulting in constructive teacher collaboration. Although teacher empowerment and professional collaborations are encouraged and supported, teachers do not have an individual professional development growth plan. During grade level meetings, teachers go over grade goals concerning attendance and scholarship and make modifications as needed to plans. In content level meetings, teachers review unit goals, student work and unit tests to gain an understanding of whether or not goals are being met. Teachers meet with students once or twice a month to track progress towards credit accumulation and scholarship. However, the school does not have a structure in place to set students' individual learning goals in core subjects that include next steps for students to achieve.

The school has established very effective links with outside organizations that give students real life experiences to help prepare them for college, technical careers or the work force. School leaders and faculty communicate high expectations through hallway displays and letters sent home to families that address school-wide goals. All stakeholders know exactly what the goal is for the year.

Classrooms are well organized, with displays of student work, homework expectations charts promoting clear expectations and a positive learning environment. Teachers plan skills-based lessons to meet the needs of their students. At present, teachers do not plan differentiated lessons that improve rigor in instruction and engagement for students to meet or exceed learning goals in core subjects. Teachers have established rubrics in content subjects that are aligned to State standards for students to self-assess.

The principal's short and long-term plans for the school are to provide a quality education to all students. This vision is shared effectively with all stakeholders. However, the school lacks the structure to be consistent and ensure follow-up to monitor, evaluate and revise long-term action plans and instructional practices to ensure success for their interim and final goals in suitable timeframes.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is supported by staff and communicates high expectations that are clearly understood by the entire school community.
- The school has a good system in place for analyzing, interpreting and recording formative and summative data to track student performance and progress.
- Additional resources are allocated for specialized support staff to ensure that the social and academic needs of students are met.
- Teachers are empowered during weekly grade and content level meetings to share best practices, look at student work, revise curriculum maps and re-program classes to meet the needs of their students and improve student outcomes.
- The school has an effective system to communicate with families about student progress, performance and attendance.
- The school has strong partnerships with outside organizations that provide exposure to real life experience for students that prepare them for college, technical careers or work force.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop teachers' ability to plan differentiated lessons that engage and challenge students to meet or exceed learning goals in all core subjects.
- Develop a structure to support teachers in setting individual learning goals for all students that clearly define next steps in achieving long-term goals and involve students in self-assessment.
- Enhance the professional development plan to include a personalized approach to support teachers to develop effective teaching methods that encourage self-reflection, evaluation and revision of instructional practice.
- Ensure follow-up and consistency to regularly monitor, evaluate and make revisions as needed to long-term action plans and instructional practices that include measurable interim goals and timeframes to improve student outcomes.

Part 3: Main Findings

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

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school has developed a good system, since the last Quality Review and has focused on fine-tuning it over the past three months to analyze and interpret formative and summative data. Teachers, during grade level meetings, look at student work and scholarship reports to assess student progress. They make programming decisions based on their findings in order to match individual students to classes which best fit their academic needs. Teachers also meet by content level to analyze formative assessments from unit tests, class quizzes and other standardized exams to modify instruction to target skill deficiencies in content level subjects. During these weekly meetings, teachers also look for trends and patterns that emerge within their grade which may prevent learning. The school has developed a data-driven culture that empowers teachers to find ways to improve student outcomes by carefully looking at formative and summative results. The school does a good job disaggregating data for English language learners and special education students to provide students with interventions through improved instructional practices and student outcomes for these subgroups. The school knows in order to continue their growth, it needs to stay focused on what it is doing and to expand current practices to all core subjects and increase the range of data.

The school does a good job communicating with families about student progress, performance, attendance and behavior concerns. Progress reports are sent home every four weeks, in addition to report cards that are distributed four times a year. The guidance counselors meet with students on a regular basis to go over credit accumulation and next steps. Parents are assigned a password to enable them access to academic information for their child on the school's website. Information is constantly updated for parents to obtain the latest progress information. One area the school leaders and faculty addressed was attendance by implementing a rigorous attendance campaign. The "Happy Family", as they call themselves, consists of the parent coordinator, aides and guidance counselors who are constantly keeping parents aware of their child's attendance and progress. This has contributed to a 5% increase in attendance from last year. As parents stated during our meeting, "We are very happy with the work everyone at the school provides for our children".

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

School leaders and faculty communicate high expectations in many ways through hallway displays that address school-wide goals focused on homework and attendance. Rituals and routines are clearly embedded in practice. All stakeholders know exactly

what the goal is for the year. Classroom environments are conducive to learning. Uniformity in all classrooms delineates school-wide goals and provides students with clear expectations; for example, homework charts posted keeping students aware of assignments.

The school takes a collaborative approach to whole-school planning, fully involving staff. Five teams of 10 teachers each developed the Comprehensive Educational Plan by looking at all accountability reports from the Department of Education. In addition, they analyzed formative and summative data to set school-wide goals as well as specific goals for English language learners, special education students and grade level goals. The process was extremely transparent. However, although parents were involved at several stages of the plan, they were not involved at each stage of the planning cycle. The Comprehensive Educational Plan was only shared with students after being developed. They were not part of the collaborative process.

Teachers meet twice a week in grade level meetings to go over grade goals concerning attendance and scholarship in order to make modifications to plans as needed. Content level teachers meet three times a week to go over unit goals, look at student work and unit tests to attain an understanding of whether or not the students are meeting goals and adjust unit of study as needed. Teachers also meet with students once or twice a month to track progress towards credit accumulation and scholarship. However, the school does not have a structure in place to set students' individual learning goals in core subjects that include next steps for students to achieve long-term goals. This limits the impact of goal setting on student achievement.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students' learning goals.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

School leaders and faculty have begun to collaborate effectively in content and grade level meetings to tailor the curriculum to meet student needs. Much of this work started when the school leaders implemented grade and content level meetings at the beginning of this school year. Teachers are able to meet and discuss students' needs by analyzing formative and summative results from data. The main focus is grade 9 students because so many came with low levels of achievement. Teachers revamped programs to specifically meet their skills deficit. This has proven to be an effective practice by the increased attendance and level of engagement of students in the newly formed classes that address skill needs. This practice has also trickled up to the other grades where teachers are implementing a similar process. Teachers are focusing their lessons on skills-based instruction to meet the needs of their students.

At present, teachers do not plan differentiated lessons to improve rigor of instruction and increase levels of student engagement to meet or exceed learning goals in core subjects. Teachers have rubrics in content subjects that are aligned to State standards for students to self-assess. There is a good sense of uniformity across classrooms within the school by displaying homework charts and State standards.

Grade and content level meetings are the springboard in creating a climate of collaboration that sparks teachers to work together and improve practices to provide quality education for students. As one teacher said, "We may not always agree, but

relationships have improved because now we are discussing ways to improve student outcomes". The staff are excited about the changes in the last three months. They are working extremely hard to ensure that students are treated with respect. Students like the fact that teachers take time to go over work and provide extra help when needed.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Professional development is informed by classroom observations, both formal and informal, inter-visitations by teachers, carefully examining achievement data and professional collaboration dialogue from grade and content level meetings. Teachers have many opportunities to attend professional development City-wide, within their network and visiting other schools to look at best practices. New teachers are provided with a mentor and feel supported by school staff.

Teachers have a lot of time to meet during the week to look at student work, plan lessons and discuss students within their grade. This has strengthened relationships resulting in teachers making connections, sharing best practices and learning from each other. Informal observations are beginning to be used to provide teachers with immediate feedback that enables them to reflect on what was noticed and make adjustments as needed. The principal encourages teachers to take ownership by providing them with time to meet in order to revise curriculum and make organizational decisions within their grades. However, the school does not have a structure to personalize professional development planning that would support individual teachers in developing effective goals and teaching methods that encourage self-reflection, evaluation and revision of instructional practices.

The inquiry team was restructured from last year because the focus changed from math to English language learners and special education students who are having trouble with comprehension. The new team represents a good cross section of the staff. They discuss student engagement in meaningful and purposeful activities to keep students' interest high and motivate them to attend school. As a direct result of the team's work, the attendance of target population students has improved this year. Team members plan to share the success school-wide in grade level meetings. As one team member stated, "The school is on the right track".

The school has strategically developed partnerships with outside organizations that provide exposure to real life experience for students in the business and technical world. One such example is the Capitol One Bank that is located on the first floor of the school building. Students operate the bank under the guidance of bank employees. This bank can be used by students and staff and is open three days a week. As one student stated, "The bank is cool". The school does a good job developing students' social and academic skills for college, technical careers or work force.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

School leaders and faculty analyze all available formative and summative data to monitor instruction, student progress and the impact of organizational and curricula decisions throughout the year in order to provide students with interventions to help them meet goals.

The school uses progress reports to track students' scholarship progress every four weeks. The reports are sent home and require a parent's signature. Formal and informal observations, snapshots, walkthroughs and scholarship reports enable school leaders to assess instructional practices throughout the year.

Administrators changed the program of a number of students after an examination of attendance and scholarship data to tailor classes that provide the interventions needed to engage students in learning. However, the school leaders lack follow-up and consistency in monitoring, evaluating progress and making revisions in a timely manner to improve long-term action plans as well as instructional practices and student outcomes.

This year, however, the school has instituted structures that support future development for the school to revisit instructional practices in a collaborative setting. The principal's vision to provide quality education is becoming a reality. By allowing teachers to take ownership during common planning and make decisions that impact positively on students' learning a culture of learners at all levels is being built.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: Fordham Leadership Academy for Business and Technology	△	➤	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?			X	
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?			X	
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?			X	
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X	
Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student’s next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student’s learning.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?		X		
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?			X	
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?			X	
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DYQ, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.

<i>To what extent do ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?			X	
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?		X		
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?			X	
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X	

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.

<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?		X		
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?			X	
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?			X	
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X	

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

<i>To what extent do...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?		X		
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?			X	
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?			X	
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X	

Quality Review Scoring Key							
△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed