

Quality Review Report 2009-2010

Foundations Academy

High School 322

**70 Tomkins Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11206**

Principal: Gary Beidleman

Dates of review: December 17 - 18, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Ainslie Cumberbatch

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Foundations Academy is a high school with 226 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 81% Black, 18% Hispanic students and 1% American Indian. The student body includes less than 1% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 81.2%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Foundations Academy provides a friendly, caring, and welcoming environment that parents say is “family-oriented” because of the warm relationship that exists between the home and school. It has a strong leader who focuses on core goals around student writing, rigorous inquiry questioning, teacher retention and school culture. Parents describe the principal as dedicated; students see him as caring and the staff declares him a visionary. Whilst parents value their relationship with the school they realize that their role is limited and that they require additional guidance to better support their children academically. There is a wide range of external partnerships that adds a useful dimension to the school’s broad and enriched curriculum that includes the arts.

School leaders empower teachers through a distributed leadership model and work to support student growth. Administrators regularly evaluate the effectiveness of organizational decisions using feedback forms at professional development sessions, on-line surveys for staff, and a review of scholarship data. As a result, the school identifies specific needs of staff whom embrace opportunities for their professional growth and engage in thoughtful research around leadership development. Although teachers meet together and with school leaders for support and professional development feedback to staff does not always include next steps and so not all teachers derive the same benefit from these experiences and the quality of teaching strategies varies across the school. Differentiation of instruction is not evident in every classroom and therefore some students do not always perform at their full potential. Students develop personal education plans but they do not consistently meet with teachers to review their progress or engage in reflection about next steps. Students do not always receive consistent feedback about their progress and this has a negative affect on their focus and subsequent performance.

School teams focus their review on assessing students’ work, examining data, developing action plans, and setting school-wide, department, and grade specific goals for individuals as well as groups of students. Through this and other data, staff members are able to tailor instructional programs to address identified needs. The staff collaborates well to gather and analyze a broad range of data significantly from periodic assessments, the school’s Progress Report and mock Regents exams to identify and address student needs including those with individual educational plans. Teachers participate in programs that target specific groups of students, implement a variety of strategies and chart their progress. This is resulting in positive student outcomes as seen in groups of grade 9 and 10 students, or generally, in English language arts by using vocabulary aids and other prompts and re-teaching key concepts in such content as algebra.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school is a safe place where students engage in learning and receive a good level of support for their personal and academic development.
 - The school provides many opportunities for students, including those with individual education plans and the few English language learners to experience an enriched and challenging curriculum, including the arts. Students benefit from peer support and small class sizes and the progress of all students toward graduation is closely tracked. Teacher teams review student assessment data to provide a range of academic support that promotes positive student outcomes including a focus on vocabulary usage, improving questioning techniques and using evidence to support a given position. Students value this support and state, “It helps propel you to achieve your full potential”.
 - The principal’s vision of empowering student leaders is responsible for the creation of a leadership class that engages students and encourages them to take ownership of their learning and to become involved in school development. Juniors sponsor a variety of school fundraising events to reduce the cost of senior dues and graduation expenses.
- School leaders and faculty analyze a comprehensive range of data to understand the performance, progress, and learning needs of students.
 - The school’s comprehensive use of data includes an analysis of information from periodic assessments, the school’s Progress Report and mock Regents exams in order to understand the school’s strengths and prioritize areas for improvement. The school schedules instructional programs after school and on Saturdays and works with teacher teams to uncover instructional strategies that impact positively on student growth. These include a focus on the key factors determining students’ poor performance on a mock Algebra Regents and providing professional development for teachers on how to “re-teach” based on students’ low performance.
 - The school works collaboratively to review Design Your Own assessments and classroom level data for student sub-groups, such as ninth graders, to track their progress and support their learning needs. Subsequently students are grouped to target specific skill development and structure “study skills” programs to address the needs of individuals and groups. As a result students are improving in English language arts by using writing prompts to help them organize their work.
- The principal communicates a clear vision and nurtures a school community to enable all participants to focus on accelerating student learning to achieve positive outcomes.
 - The school focuses on three core goals that permeate planning documents and conversations at team meetings. As a result, there is coherence between identified school goals, team discussions, lesson planning and the strategies that teachers use in the classroom to accelerate student learning.

- School staff participates in professional collaborations that foster reflection and provide opportunities for researching effective instructional techniques.
 - School leaders invest in the inquiry process by organizing all teachers into teams, scheduling time for them to meet and providing guidance. As a result, staff work to attain their personal and leadership potential in the workplace while assuming leadership roles within the school. Teachers remark that, “Everything is now coming together”. Teachers’ step-up to be leaders and problem solvers and state that they feel comfortable taking “risks” in the classroom.
 - A core team of staff members makes up the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) team. The team works with grade 9 and 10 students on how to study, read for content, take notes, and manage time. They also run collaborative study groups and provide tutorials to students. The scholarship data to date for students in this program show that they achieve at a higher level than their classmates do.
- The school maintains a strong network of partners that provide students and families with opportunities to grow academically and socially.
 - The school’s partnership with the Empowerment Network, Institute for Student Achievement (ISA), New York City Technical College and several community-based youth services organizations provides rich academic and social opportunities for students in line with the school goals. These relationships students note, “...show they want to see you go to college.”
- School leaders regularly evaluate the effectiveness of organizational decisions and make adjustments to secure improvements.
 - The use of feedback forms at professional development sessions, on-line surveys for staff and a careful review of student scholarship data provide administrators with key information about school needs. As a result, the school schedules staff for intensive professional development and programs students for targeted study-skills sessions. Consequently, teachers deliver more focused classroom instruction and students improve their performance.
 - Teachers use interim progress reports to identify student progress between marking periods. The school shares this information with parents, reviews it during team meetings and at teacher-student conferences allowing all parties to focus on improving student outcomes.

What the school needs to improve

- Deepen differentiation of instruction so that all lessons engage students working at different levels and offer suitable challenges to extend student learning.
 - Teachers use data to group students and plan lessons to facilitate student learning. In some classes, teachers group for instruction and allow for various ways of completing assigned tasks. The adaptation of approaches and resources to meet each student’s needs is not prevalent in every classroom and some students lose focus and do not achieve their learning goals.

- Teachers work in departmental teams to develop curriculum maps and lesson plans aligned to State standards. However, instruction is inconsistent across departments and some teachers do not use essential questions and guided practice and actively engage each student to best affect positive learning.
- Provide consistent feedback to students with next steps for improvement based on specific rubrics to help them set and achieve their goals.
 - Teachers develop personal education plans with students and advisors meet with their advisees. However, no procedure is in place to allow time for classroom teachers to meet with students to regularly review their progress and engage students in reflecting on their work and planning next steps.
 - Some teachers use rubrics as a means of assessment in their classrooms. However, this is not a school-wide practice that includes regular meaningful feedback about accomplished work. Consequently, students and parents do not always have a clear basis for conversations about student progress that is content specific and prompts discussion around next learning steps.
- Extend the level of parent engagement to include consistent opportunities for parents to participate in their child's progress and in school decision-making.
 - The school communicates with parents via phone, email, regular mail, and personal interactions about their child's attendance, academic progress, and expectations. They also request information at parent association meetings about preferred parent workshops in order to plan various activities. However, the school does not provide clear supports to parents that explain how students and parents can support student progress and meet these expectations. As a result, this limits their participation in this process.
 - School leaders include the school leadership team in goal setting and budget review related to the school Comprehensive Educational Plan. Parents are included in school activities such as plans for hosting the play, *Platanos and Collard Greens*, but they are not consistently engaged or provided with supports in decisions related to teaching and learning.
- Develop professional goals for teachers that align with school-wide goals and affect student achievement.
 - School leaders establish procedures for reviewing lesson plans and monitoring the quality of instruction to ensure that it aligns to student needs and is standards-based. However, feedback to staff does not always include specific actions related to professional goals and next steps. As a result, the implementation of instructional strategies varies across the school.
 - Positively, teams meet in department and grade structures to review data, strategize, and plan for meeting student needs. Although leaders provide supports that include modeling lessons, collaboration with Teachers' College and coaching sessions, planning does not always include targeted professional development to help individual teacher's understanding and implementation of strategies and curriculum and so not every teacher feels adequately prepared to meet some program goals.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: Foundations Academy	Δ	➤	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?				X
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?			X	
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?				X
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1				X
Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?				X
2.2 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance trends?				X
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?				X			
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?			X				
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			X				
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X				
Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?			X				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?				X			
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?			X				
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals 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 progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?				X			
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X				
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?				X			
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed