

# Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Francis Lewis High School  
High School 430

58-20 UTOPIA PARKWAY  
QUEENS  
NY 11365

Principal: Musa Ali Shama

Dates of review: March 12 - 14, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Juan Mendez

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Francis Lewis High School is a high school with 4233 students from grade 9 through grade 9. The school population comprises 8% Black, 24% Hispanic, 16% White, 51% Asian students and 0% other students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 92.3%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal makes organizational decisions that strategically support instructional goals in order to improve instruction and increase student achievement. (1.3)
  - o School leaders structure teacher time for meetings in order to plan, monitor, and support improved instruction. Dedicated common planning time provided for 58 integrated co-teaching (ICT) classes and for teachers of English as a second language creates opportunities for ongoing dialogue around student learning. Moreover, Freshman Block teachers meet formally on a weekly basis and use data to align instruction. Additionally, school leaders collect the minutes taken at informal meetings, which occur at least 2-3 periods a week. Thus the review of documents, the regularly scheduled meetings, and common planning times, all yield considerable opportunities to examine student data to ensure that all students are engaged in challenging tasks.
  - o The administration hires dually certified teachers to support interdepartmental and interdisciplinary assignments. Over the past year, 16 dual-licensed content and special education teachers were hired to provide suitable instruction in the ICT classes. This hiring decision solidifies the school's attempt to address its growing special education population and to meet its Comprehensive Education Plan's goal of "ensuring that all students are college ready and have the knowledge and skills to succeed in credit-bearing courses without remediation." This results in effectively establishing the means necessary to systematically close the achievement gap and target student groups in need by strategically placing them among highly qualified teachers and allows teachers to share in the responsibility for meeting the needs of a manageable cohort of students.
- The administration leads focused efforts on maintaining a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment that supports students' academic and social emotional growth. (1.4)
  - o The school's commendable attendance rate, which is slightly over 92%, drives the extracurricular programs that are immensely popular and offer opportunities for students to contribute to the school and the community and enhance their personal growth in a myriad of ways. Students not only feel safe while involved in the activities outside of the building, but they also feel safe while inside the building. The Annual Student Survey with above average scores validates the belief that students are pleased with the overall tone and school culture. A student who was interviewed added the point, "You learn a lot about yourself and business," emphasizing the school's efforts in developing well-rounded individuals.
  - o The school provides a wide range of valuable educational opportunities for students, including advanced placement and College Now classes, which serve to further academic development and were created based on student preferences and feedback. Additionally, students partake in the Principal's Consultative Council where they are able to opine on all school-related activities. Moreover, students are given a part in the C-30 hiring selection process. As a result, the decision-making process does not leave out students, who are intent on taking high-interest courses and who are decisive about all school-related matters that impact them.

- The administration gathers and analyzes specific information on student performance to supply faculty with pertinent data on emergent trends. (2.1)
  - School leaders generate summative data reports in order to identify strengths and challenges faced by all students, with a special focus on student subgroups. This move to closely track subgroups was prompted by the ongoing challenge of ensuring their attaining adequate yearly progress (AYP) in the area of test performance. One area of concern is the school's lowest third, which has been underperforming over the last three years. By analyzing and developing supports to help this subgroup, the lowest third earning ten or more credits has elevated its average yearly accreditation rate to approximately 75%. Moreover, a good portion of subgroup data focuses on attendance for ELLs and students with individual education plans. By maintaining a focus on the ELL subgroup, these students have continued to meet AYP measurements on yearly exams.
  - School leaders gather and customize periodic assessment and classroom level data to recalibrate instruction as necessary. Teachers are thoroughly trained in workshops on the use of ARIS and Daedalus, databases that enable teachers to make curricula modifications based on the needs of individual students. Additionally, ninth grade placement exams help to engender appropriate placement for students in both English and math classes. A student support program assists all students in meeting graduation rate accountability measures. As a result, the identified subgroup of Black students who have not been meeting AYP in graduation accountability measures has been addressed accordingly and significant progress in attendance and interim assessments are beginning to emerge.
- The principal has a clear vision for the school that is focused on the attainment of specific goals and action plans to drive student learning. (3.1)
  - Goal setting and effective action planning, at the forefront of high expectations for students and staff is reflected in the school's Comprehensive Education Plan, (CEP), and includes a college readiness goal relative to the need to "increase PSAT/SAT critical reading and writing scores." Accordingly, action plans to accomplish this goal involve numerous approaches that includes access and shared itemized analyses of question sets from the PSAT through the school's private ARIS page. As a result, the use of this comprehensive data informs existing instructional and organizational practices. Additionally, teachers mentioned that in order to narrow the achievement gap, and "increase the enrollment of Black and Hispanics in college prep and AP courses" would be a needed. As a result, the school has designed an interconnected plan meant to enable all students to be college ready.
  - School leaders maintain strong lines of communication with all stakeholders in order to inform school planning. Assistant principals engage faculty in regular and ongoing conversations at department meetings pertaining to the school leadership team and CEP. Teachers have embraced the role of informing the planning process and help to direct the school by sharing student work to pinpoint deficiencies in instruction. The result of this collaborative process has led to decisions such as the implementation of rubrics in all humanities classes and the sharing of grading practices concerning student writing. Additionally, bi-weekly assemblies and parent orientations provide forums for feedback on school planning and other miscellaneous concerns. As a result, the school involves all stakeholders in its movement towards higher expectations, which has yielded a clear direction that all constituents agree upon.

- Teachers are engaged in the inquiry process to inform decision-making and promote shared leadership. (4.2)
  - o A vast majority of teachers are engaged in structured professional collaboration. Teams of teachers collaborate monthly, the main purpose being to review student work and rubrics. Additional areas of foci are assessments, which include uniform midterms and final exams aligned to the Regents. Protocols for student work analysis are closely followed and warm and cool feedback is recorded and used as leverage to make informed decisions. The school's literacy coach frequently leads norming sessions at these meetings. The result is a process of shared decision-making that produces ongoing change in teacher practice.
  - o Distributed leadership is a common practice at the school. A literacy coach serves to guide the school in developing an understanding of the literacy standards of the Common Core. Furthermore, the school's inquiry teams that are comprised of the school's SLT and staff from subject specific departments are involved in critical school-based decisions relative to student learning as evidenced in meeting agendas. Decisions that stem from this emergent leadership have led to offerings of after-school and Saturday tutoring, resulting in an 8% percent increase in school scholarship.
- The principal is a proactive leader who develops highly successful and efficient systems that create a data-driven learning community focused on building adult capacity and improving student outcomes. (5.2)
  - o Cabinet and teacher meetings evaluate benchmark assessments and student work products, and collaborate on making reasonable adjustments. Changes in departmental grading policies and alternate assessment portfolios have come as a result of the expectations of the Common Core. This approach has led to more rigorous exit competencies that are representative of the critical thinking that will appear on national examinations in 2014.
  - o Administrators regularly review ways in which to keep families well informed of their children's progress relative to performance data, thus ensuring that families can observe their children's growth. Internet connections allow families, students, or teachers to access Daedalus, the primary informational platform used by the school. As this platform provides a transparent structure for sharing not only performance data but also attendance data, teacher-parent outreach is becoming easier and allows for communication with parents via e-mail. As a result, teachers now use the Daedalus platform to set learning goals for students that are clearly communicated with parents, thus raising levels of expectations.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Refine curricula so that all academic tasks are engaging, rigorous, and accessible to a diverse student population. (1.1)
  - o The school has taken the necessary steps to align lower grades to the Common Core Standards. However, postsecondary readiness is only beginning to emerge across all grades and subject areas. The principal acknowledges the fact that "There's not enough writing going on." This lack prompts the need for ongoing design of curricula to focus on getting students to write effectively, with special attention to social studies discussion based questions, and essays. Classroom routines that often involve note taking do not include teachers' consistent

reference to key writing standards aligned to Common Core. As a result, students were inconsistently able to demonstrate their thinking aside from the use of verbal responses. SWD's and ELL's follow established subject area curriculum maps," however, the extent to which these maps establish clear pathways for student success in classes visited remains unclear. As a result, there is a lack of coherence in regard to representative CCLS tasks across subjects, grade levels.

- Incorporate additional research-based teaching strategies so that differentiated lessons extend the curricula and increase student thinking to improve student learning. (1.2)
  - Problem based learning and Dr. Norman Webb's Depth of Knowledge Matrix are theoretical approaches utilized by a large portion of teachers as the operative means by which to engage students. Even though teachers we interviewed mentioned that professional development led to changes in their teaching strategies, multiple entry points are still inconsistently used. In a U.S. History class we visited, students were creating their own companies and establishing stock prices for imaginary companies. However, students in this class were not using informational text to substantiate their claims. This revealed a misalignment to key demands of the Common Core. An English as a Second Language class began with the question: "Can anyone explain to us how we create an outline?" The next step involved guiding the class in a formulaic approach based on steps outlined via a handout. The emphasis on this singular approach created inconsistencies in establishing supports for ELLs and students with disabilities. When a student was asked, "How do you explain the term drafting?" His response was, "We task box." This reliance on formulaic approaches shows an inconsistency in targeting tier 2 academic vocabulary that would enable students to transfer critical thinking and writing skills to other subject areas. A lack of school wide differentiated instruction reveals that many teachers have not fully adopted newer pedagogical practices that are strategically differentiated with multiple entry points for all students, impacting students with disabilities from earning Regents' diplomas.
- Establish a process with feedback focused on classroom teaching and student learning outcomes that improves instructional practice. (4.1)
  - Although teachers receive differentiated feedback on classroom observations, there is hesitancy in using language from the Danielson Framework due to "contentious opposition" by some teachers. Although the principal has taken steps to address this, the Danielson Framework was not referred to by any teachers interviewed. Additionally, feedback from the Danielson Framework is inconsistently aligned with professional goals established by the teachers. Currently artifacts exemplifying teacher goals do not include references to effective teaching practices from a research-based framework, but only reference competencies from a feedback rubric, which included coherent curriculum, questioning and discussion, and assessment. As a result there is a misalignment between teacher goals and instructional priorities as per the school's framework.
- Extend the use of classroom data analysis so that instructional adjustments are made to meet student-learning needs and next steps are clearly identified. (2.2)
  - Although teacher teams analyze classroom level data to identify strengths and needs of individual students, the staff inconsistently makes required adjustments to pedagogy. Intervention plans are put into effect to support students in need of assistance and to offer students academic structures such as completing homework

and class work. However, staff struggle to make connections between their evidence of the student work and their own instructional practice. Therefore, they do not yet differentiate lessons or use different instructional strategies to support students, thereby missing opportunities to move them closer to mastery.

- Teachers consistently ask low-level questions to gauge student understanding; therefore, this practice does not provide adequate information for teachers to make timely instructional adjustments to meet all student needs and leads to inconsistencies when checking for student understanding. Consequently, students have difficulty achieving the expected levels of mastery, thus limiting learning opportunities.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

<b>School name: Francis Lewis High School</b>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?				<b>X</b>
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				<b>X</b>
<b>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.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?				<b>X</b>
2.2 Align assessments to curriculum, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?			<b>X</b>	
2.3 Use grading policies and tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends to inform instruction and curriculum?				<b>X</b>
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students' progress toward school and class expectations?				<b>X</b>
<b>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.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
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?				<b>X</b>
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?			<b>X</b>	
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?				<b>X</b>
3.4 Communicate high expectations to staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?			<b>X</b>	

**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>	UD	D	P	WD
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	
1..4 Integrate child/youth development, guidance/advisement support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?				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>	UD	D	P	WD
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, with particular attention to the CCLS?			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	

**Quality Review Scoring Key**

<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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