

# Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**Fordham High School for the Arts**

**High School 437**

**500 East Fordham Road**

**Bronx**

**NY 10458**

**Principal: Iris Blige**

**January 9-10, 2012**

**Lead Reviewer: Jill Herman**

## **Part 1: The school context**

### **Information about the school**

Fordham High School for the Arts is a high school with 434 students from 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 39% Black, 57% Hispanic, 2% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 39% of the students enrolled and girls account for 61%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 91.0%.

### **Overall Evaluation**

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Organizational decisions support the school's goals of improving achievement for all students. (1.3)
  - Maintaining its school so that it can grant an arts endorsed diploma, the principal programs the five full time arts teachers into the required introductory courses for 9<sup>th</sup> graders, and as providers for students' majors starting with the second semester in grade 9 and continuing through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. The school's relations with arts partners provides enrichment and internships for students as well as staff training so that students are competitive in their specialty and arts are integrated into the school to strengthen student outcomes. Allocated resources include arts related technology, technology for classrooms, assessments for ninth graders, reading programs for struggling students, as well as after-school and Saturday school. In addition the principal has secured many competitive grants such as iZone which offers advanced placement classes, on-line tutoring, and training for staff, promoting personalized learning so that all students are on the road to achieving success.
  - School programming provides all teachers with common planning time five days a week, content teams and the creative arts team to meet several times a week, and enables an interdisciplinary content team to work on common core tasks. Each teams' work also focuses on learning and integrating new technology as a teaching strategy into their classrooms and creating and discussing classroom implementation of the Common Core tasks so that students attain success on Regents' exams and are prepared for the challenges of college.
- School leaders gather a wide range of data in order to understand the strengths and areas of need at the school. (2.1)
  - The principal and staff review the Progress Report, Regents' exams, item analysis, course pass rates, grade teachers uniform content exams, Learning Environment Survey, and attendance, all of which inform the curricular and instructional planning for the year. Results from entry exams, including a standardized reading test, provide data that is reviewed to identify grade 9 students' strengths and areas of need, thus enabling teachers to know and address incoming students' levels of proficiency and areas of learning deficiencies.
  - School leaders and staff examine periodic assessments, classroom exams, and assignments, in order to better identify those who are having difficulty passing courses and/or the Regents' exams. Consequently, teachers are able to target support for those who are identified as struggling students in order to strengthen students' learning and mastery.
- School leaders and staff organize data to analyze trends in achievement that inform instructional and curricular decisions. (2.3)

- By examining Regents, the No Child Left Behind report, cohort data, and class level data, the school community surfaced a trend in understanding questions and writing difficulty that was impacting student achievement. Using this data, staff has made decisions for more writing in all content areas, adding additional writing classes for English language learners, and have incorporated this as a strategy into the arts, so that students achieve mastery and academic success.
- Teachers use Skedula, mock Regents, Excel, and other data tools to inform them, in a timely way, regarding trends in student performance. This allows them to communicate with each other, and identify topics needing review, or re-teaching, as well as the ability to focus on providing students with additional support after school or during lunch.
- There is a set of goals, based on data, designed to accelerate student learning outcomes. (3.1)
  - Goals for improving Regents' passing in math and English language arts, and the graduation rate, which are evident in the Principal's Performance Review and the Comprehensive Educational Plan, influence department level goals. Corresponding action plans created by staff and administration are strategically designed by using comparison data of class pass rates and Regents' scores, and subsequently include in teachers' goals reference to an increase of students passing Regents as a means to accelerate student achievement.
  - Aside from school-wide data, the school community examines State report card and results from Regents' exams in order to develop effective plans that will raise the numbers of students passing the English language arts Regents from 65% to 68%, and math Regents from 44% to 47% . An additional writing class, in place for English language learners, and a double block of global history is paired with an English class for a group of students to deepen reading and writing connections.
- Teacher teams are working collaboratively to analyze student and teacher work products for the purpose of improving student achievement. (4.2)
  - The discussion around Common Core Standards and creating performance assessments has surfaced the identification of student learning needs. Teachers who are now looking at student and teacher work are beginning to reflect on their own practice as a way to improve instruction by providing more complex thinking tasks.
  - Teachers are active in many collaborative efforts, turnkey professional development, and decide on curricular issues together to better assess curricular decisions they have put in place. Structures, such as the intervisitations, are developing to assist in formalizing distributive leadership and share best practices, thus further impacting teaching and learning at the school.

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

- Further develop and strengthen curricula and rigor of assessments that will prepare students for college. (1.1)

- Although teachers are planning Common Core tasks, and curriculum is aligned to support students' passing State exams, there is little evidence that classrooms provide students with the opportunities to develop thinking strategies, which will impact their ability to successfully complete performance tasks as well as be college ready.
- Curricula and tasks which are primarily geared and formatted in alignment with Regents' exams include some class assignments that ask who, what, when, while other tasks require students to provide evidence to support their work. This inconsistency in teaching, contributes to a lack of coherence and expectation for students, thus hindering providing all students with the opportunity to practice and demonstrate their ability to engage in higher-order thinking.
- Develop consistency in classrooms activities that promote engagement and insure a variety of learning opportunities. (1.2)
  - A review of data highlights that of the 14 holdovers in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, seven were special education students, and three English language learners, while in grade 10 five out of ten students not advancing, were former English language learners. The majority of classes are teacher directed with direct questioning that requires one or two word responses. In some cases, the teacher provides a response. In a writing class for English language learners, all students had read the same reading passage and were given a vocabulary sheet with teacher identified words. When asked a definition of a word not on the list, a student was unable to state its meaning. Lacking strategies and routines that surface and/or suitably address students' needs, impacts their achievement.
  - Active student class participation is minimal. Students rarely ask questions or are engage in class discussions prompted by a question, which provides entry points for all students. In several classrooms, students engage in casual conversations with each other, unrelated to topic. Some student's complete assignments and others do not. Student work products range from math tests, responses to document based questions, to challenging thematic development. Lack of consistency in questioning and thoughtful strategies prevents all students from active engagement in their learning and producing meaningful and thoughtful work leading to higher levels of achievement.
- Develop consistency in the use of frequent on-going assessments to adjust classroom instruction in order to improve student understanding. (2.2)
  - The Regents' rubric is used in courses culminating with a Regents' exam. Teachers also use self-created rubrics. As these documents differ, and do not sufficiently share similar language and explanations to provide students with a clear understanding of expectations, there is a lack of reinforcement and coherence around learning tasks.
  - Although, some teachers use exit slips and others call randomly on students to get a picture of understanding, many students report they leave some classes confused. By not consistently and systematically

checking for understanding, students are not provided with the suitable supports and opportunity to accomplish mastery of topic.

- Deepen the focus of classroom observation and explicitly link to professional development so that teachers can improve their practice. (4.1)
  - Although the school uses Danielson's framework for peer intervisitations and informal observations the principal has not yet developed a clear link between this practice of looking at effective teaching and the setting of teacher's goals, which presently relate primarily to student achievement. In addition, as there is a different focus each month, teachers, many of whom are new, are not provided with sufficient time to work on improving identified practices in a sustained manner over time.
  - School leaders are strategically developing systems to incorporate the new teachers on a variety of teams including the Common Core task team so that they become familiarized with school's expectations and receive support from their peers. In addition, there are five full days of professional development include planning for the year, reflecting on best practices, and analyzing data. Teachers are also being trained on new technology to be incorporated in classrooms. However, there are still unresolved issues apparent in the classrooms. Students spoke about the teacher turnover and the lack of control and student interest in some classes. Professional development is not targeted to the needs of all the teachers, thus impacting improving teachers' practices and subsequent decisions regarding teacher tenure.
- Examine ways in which information relative to students' evaluations is shared with students and families in order to develop a shared understanding in the school community. (5.2)
  - School leaders and staff do not evaluate grading practices in relationship to improving or clarifying achievement. Departments have common systems around percentages of homework, participation, tests, and projects, and the school provides two progress reports and the mandatory report cards. Students understand the green and red system on report cards that reflects passing and failing, but are unable to articulate their own learning needs. One student stated that she did not understand why she received a certain grade on her paper. Some student work has checks and a numerical grade. Thus, the lack of reflection on organizing student achievement data for students and families prevents clarity and coherence of messaging, as well as missing out on promoting students as partners in their learning.
  - School leaders, teachers, and parents, all report that there is a very small turnout at parent-teacher conference meetings. One parent stated that her child's report card stating 'needs improvement' was found to be unclear, and did not include explicit information relative to what was needed for improvement. Another parent expressed her embarrassment relative to a teacher openly discussing her child's problems in front of other parents. This lack of tangible, positive parent involvement and sharing of information around children's learning interferes with improving clarity of expectations.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

<b>School name: Fordham High School for the Arts</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>		

<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.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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?		<b>X</b>					
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?		<b>X</b>					
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?		<b>X</b>					
4.4 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?		<b>X</b>					
<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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?		<b>X</b>					
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?	<b>X</b>						
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?		<b>X</b>					
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?		<b>X</b>					
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<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>