

# Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**03M417 FRANK McCOURT HIGH SCHOOL**

**High school**

**145 WEST 84 STREET  
New York  
NY, 10024**

**Principal: Danielle Salzberg**

**Dates of review: Nov 13-14, 2012  
Lead Reviewer: Anthony R. Lodico**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Frank McCourt high school is a high school with 219 students from grade 9 through grade 11. The school population comprises 18.3% Black, 37.0% Hispanic, 37.0% White, and 6.8% Asian students. The student body includes 0.9% English language learners and 17.4% special education students. Boys account for 46.6% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53.4%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 94.8%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Students benefit from a problem based learning curriculum which is aligned to state and common core standards and promotes student inquiry, higher order thinking and college readiness. (1.1)
  - Starting in the summer, school leaders and teachers continued the work of revising and expanding curriculum maps in all disciplines, to ensure alignment with Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and the Chancellor's Instructional Expectations (CIE) shifts. In addition, a Problem Based Learning (PBL) curriculum supports the development of academic tasks that are rigorous and rooted in an outcomes and project based course of study, cognitively engaging all students, including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs). For example, in the integrated science and mathematics classes all students were involved in higher order thinking via inquiry, problem solving and projects focused on exploration and discovery. As a result of this PBL approach and the outcomes based grading, students are consistently immersed in challenging reading, writing, speaking and listening tasks in all disciplines.
- The school's shared philosophy regarding student learning and student outcomes is supported by teaching practices that result in active student engagement, higher order thinking and rigorous work products. (1.2)
  - The school's outcomes based approach to instruction, assessment and learning promotes a culture of active student engagement and high levels of rigor. Teachers use diagnostic assessments, rubrics, protocols and questioning to determine and provide appropriate entry points and support for student needs. All learners are grouped strategically and challenged by rigorous tasks that result in high levels of participation and student thinking. The focus on problem based learning is reflected in consistent use of student to student discussion and open ended problem solving. For example, in a geometry class, students completed a "Triangles Trials Project", which required them to discuss their thought process, draw conclusions and explain the process of a proof in their own words. The high levels of student engagement and motivation are evident in the school's 95% attendance rate and in the percentage of students earning 10 or more credits in the first year. According to 2011-2012 student progress data, over 94% of all first year students, and 87% of first year students in the lowest third met this benchmark.
- Students and staff benefit from a safe, respectful and nurturing learning environment that promotes academic and social emotional growth. (1.4)
  - All members of the school community help to create a learning environment that supports school goals in a safe and nurturing school. Students, teachers, parents, school leaders and other staff members are all committed to maintaining the positive culture that exists at this growing school. Student comments included, "all teachers seem to really love what they do," and, "this is a supportive environment where

we have opportunities to get help if we need it.” The advisory system, school partnerships, leadership council, student ambassadors and town hall meetings all contribute to an atmosphere where all voices are valued and heard. Students benefit from the advisory system that ensures a personal connection with their advisor, who supports them in both academic and social emotional situations. Town hall meetings, community service opportunities and an annual fall ninth grade trip dedicated to team building, are all attributes touted by parents, students and teachers. Also, an advisory curriculum addresses transition to high school, team and culture building, college and career readiness and community service opportunities. A college and career counselor has been added to the staff, as well, to complement the systems already in place and to meet the needs of the 11th graders as they navigate the college application and admissions process.

- Teachers are involved in inquiry based professional collaborations and shared decision making, supporting school goals and enhancing student achievement. (4.2)
  - All teachers are members of departmental, grade, research and advisory teams that engage in planning to improve instruction. Planning teams meet weekly and all other teams meet monthly and as needed to insure that classroom practices are consistently aligned to school goals and engage all students in learning. Teams focus on protocols such as “fishbowl” or “jigsaw”, stations, using evidence to support written and oral ideas, strategic grouping of students and teacher modeling, to deepen learning in all classrooms. Alignment with CCLS is ongoing and the research and planning teams constantly focus on effectively implementing the Problem Based Learning curriculum and approach. This has fostered a commitment to collaboration and has improved the quality of student based inquiry in the delivery of instruction for all learners, as evidenced in classroom visits. High credit accumulation for students in the lowest third and the weighted pass rate in science are two indicators which also provide evidence that the strategies being employed are effective.
  - To improve student achievement, teachers are involved in professional development planning and implementation, curriculum writing and revision, assessment and rubric development, PBL implementation and the selection process for new members of the learning community. The interview and hiring process is a collaborative effort and is designed to align with school goals and the expected learning outcomes for all students. To build leadership capacity, team leaders and other selected staff work closely with school leaders and specialists from New Visions, New Tech and I-Zone, to refine the alignment of instruction and craft initiatives to meet school and CIE goals. As a result of the distributive leadership structures in place, there are consistent and sound decisions being made that positively affect student engagement and higher order thinking, as evidenced by reports from administrators and teachers.

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

- Expand the practice of analyzing and using data from assessments to inform instructional decisions and positively impact on student outcomes. (2.2)

- Teachers are using diagnostic assessments to meet individual student needs and inform instructional decisions for specific courses and subjects. For example, school leaders and teachers are tracking progress and have methods in place to align the data outcomes to instructional decisions and curriculum development. Also, teachers use various methods of formative assessments during lessons to gauge student progress. Students engage in turn and talks, completion of exit slips and group discussion as ways of articulating their own learning. However, the analysis of formative assessments and checks for understanding are not yet systematized to support student self-assessment and planning. Student feedback is not consistent, nor meaningful in assisting all students in knowing how to reach their learning goals. This results in some students being unable to articulate what they need to do to demonstrate mastery and make progress towards their learning targets.
- Expand the practice of providing feedback to teachers to deepen and strengthen teacher development and instructional practice. (4.1)
  - School leaders are using the Danielson Framework to support the development of teachers, including new teachers, and have begun a cycle of short, frequent observations. A focus on student engagement and higher order questioning has been ongoing since last year. The short, frequent observation cycles, including formal and informal observations provide teachers with feedback including next steps. Feedback is shared via e-mails, one to one conferences and written reports. However, although the feedback to teachers includes strengths and areas for development, feedback on next steps does not include actionable plans for pedagogical improvement. Therefore, professional development support for new and experienced teachers is not yet consistently effective in elevating instructional practice.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Frank McCourt High School M417	UD	D	P	WD			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>				
<b>Instructional Core</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula, including the arts, physical and health education, 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 that is informed by a research-based, common teaching framework and is aligned to curricula, engaging and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?			<b>X</b>				
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels?		<b>X</b>					
<b>School Culture</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				<b>X</b>			
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve them?			<b>X</b>				
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet students' learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			<b>X</b>				
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community?			<b>X</b>				
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching with a research-based, common teaching framework 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 <b>inquiry approach</b> that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?				<b>X</b>			
5.1 Evaluate the quality of school- level 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>				
<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>