

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Frances Perkins Academy

14K632

**50 Bedford Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11222**

Principal: Kevin Bryant

Dates of review: May 13 -14, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Claudette Essor

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Frances Perkins Academy is a high school with 138 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 65% Black, 32% Hispanic, 2% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 31% special education students. Boys account for 72% of the students enrolled and girls account for 28%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 84.7%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- All staff work collaboratively to align curricula to Common Core and other relevant standards across content areas, in order to strengthen coherence of curricula and ensure access to engaging tasks for all learners. (1.1)
 - Based on one of three templates distributed by the principal, lesson plans and unit maps for all content areas show essential questions, targeted Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), Big Ideas, assessments, performance tasks and core texts that reflect the instructional shifts, thus providing for alignment of content area curricula to their respective standards. There is a focus on tasks that require regular use of academic vocabulary, text-based responses in all content areas, close reading and annotation of texts to support writing activities, and emphasis on fluency and application in math, in alignment to instructional shifts and applicable Regents standards. For example, a ninth grade English language arts unit map showed that after reading *Things Fall Apart* and *Oedipus*, students were asked to, “Compose a five paragraph argumentative essay showing claims and counterclaims that address character development”. A similar unit task in United States history required students to, “Develop a logical argument for the addition of the Bill of Rights by determining the relevance of each amendment”. These practices ensure coherence of curricula across disciplines and foster college and career readiness for all students.
 - The principal, coaches, teacher leaders and a Generation Ready consultant collaborate with other staff, to craft units of study that offer cognitively engaging tasks for all students. Data from baseline assessments, mock Regents, the January 2014 Regents and student work, inform teachers of needed adjustments to curricula, leading to the infusion of literacy-based activities in all disciplines. Thus bulletin boards show argumentative writing in English language arts, global and United States history, as well as explanations of problem solving steps in math and descriptions of events in science. Unit maps are developed around student work and data, thus ensuring targeted focus on the needs of diverse learners. For example, a math task required students to compare different routes and present an argument about which route is best, based on miles to and from a given destination and different stops by each of two students traveling on bikes. To further promote cognitive engagement of students, the school offers electives such as art and poetry, and courses in geometry, algebra, trigonometry and Spanish that lead to an advanced Regents diploma. Thus, curricula and tasks are designed to offer all students, including students with disabilities and English language learners, access to engaging learning experiences.
- The principal, in collaboration with other staff, prioritizes the use of resources, including teacher time, making effective organizational decisions that support the schools’ instructional goals, thus improving student achievement. (1.3)
 - To support instructional goals, the school partners with Generation Ready to help all teachers develop and refine unit plans, and Urban Arts to help global history and United States history teachers integrate literacy skills into their content areas. Additional support for goals comes from investments in technology, which have resulted in a computer lab that allows students to

participate in online learning via iLearn courses and the Rosetta Stone program for foreign language learning. The school is currently partnered with Ivy Keys, which offers tutoring and practice assessments that prepare students for the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and College Now, which supports students in being college and career ready. Organizations such as Greenpoint Youth Court, Good Sheppard, Blackmoon Theatre Group, Ghetto Film School, Generation Next, Greenpoint Chamber of Commerce, New York Police Department Gang Task Force and Health for Youths also offer services that strengthen students' social-emotional skills. Thus, the principal's decisions are well aligned to school goals, fostering improved academic achievement, as evidenced by student work in binders and January 2014 Regents data showing more students passing the English language arts Regents with a higher score than before.

- The principal uses strategic scheduling to ensure that all teachers are able to meet weekly for grade level common planning and vertical teacher team meetings that address instructional expectations. These meetings lead to the immersion of staff in collaborative reviews of student work and data as they share best practices and strategies to enhance staff and student learning. The teams use protocols to examine student work in order to identify gaps in learning and determine adjustments to curriculum and instruction to improve student achievement. Meetings include teacher leaders from each grade, as well as the principal who participates in the math team's meetings. A guidance counselor and dean provide input for team meetings, using course pass, credit accumulation, behavior and attendance data to help inform discussions of the performance of students, especially struggling students. As a result, teachers benefit from the sharing of strategies to improve their instruction so that all students can be pushed to work to their full potential.
- The principal has established structures that engage all members of the school community in setting and monitoring school goals, leading to ongoing progress towards the attainment of targeted outcomes. (3.1)

School staff uses summative and formative data to inform the development of goals that are communicated to the school community through the school's Comprehensive Education Plan, staff handbook and bulletins. Goals include improving teacher effectiveness, student attendance, pass rates for Regents exams, graduation rates, and the college readiness index. The goals are driven by the principal's belief that, "Sound teaching and learning begins with effective lesson planning that involves sufficient student-to-student interaction as well as student-centered activities which are assessed via multiple mediums and yield high levels of intellectual engagement." Goals are tracked via observation data, lesson artifacts, student scholarship reports and other performance data, leading to adjustments for accelerated students' learning. Adjustments for teachers, include additional conferences with the principal, increased support from coaches or instructional leads and intervisitations to strengthen pedagogy. For students, there are test prep courses, mock Regents, and after school intervention programs, all of which support increased credit accumulation, thus enhancing students' academic and social-emotional development.

- Parents reported that they regularly engage in school-level goal setting with the principal, through monthly Parent Teacher Association and School Leadership Team meetings, while school staff and student government representatives stated that they meet with the principal at designated times to provide their input. School staff noted that they provide input in decision-making that target

additional support for struggling students and plans for additional partnerships and electives that elevate students' engagement in school. Parents confirmed their input in discussions of instructional initiatives, including the hiring of additional staff and students stated that student government members help determine electives to be offered, make decisions about special events and coordinate a mentoring program that helps peers to improve their grades. Thus, goal setting and decision-making are well informed by regular communication with and effective input from all constituent groups, contributing to ongoing school improvement.

- The principal utilizes the Danielson Framework for Teaching to build a shared understanding of instruction, with cycles of feedback that support teachers in strengthening their pedagogical practices and content knowledge. (4.1)
 - Through lesson planning sessions, reviews of videos, e-mails, one-to-one conversations with the principal, teacher leads and coaches, all teachers receive feedback that details next steps for improving their instructional practice. Mentors provide additional personalized feedback to the many new teachers and teachers reported that the principal conducts observations regularly and routinely meets with teachers to examine student work and specify aspects of instruction that must be improved. As part of his observation of teacher practice, the principal also collects lesson and unit plans which are returned to teachers with verbal and written feedback detailing next steps. Also, using color-coded data analysis spreadsheets, in conjunction with data from the Advance teacher evaluation portal, the principal tracks the progress of teachers, providing additional differentiated feedback to improve their practice. These strategies promote a culture of learning with multiple avenues for feedback that support teachers' growth.
 - Lessons viewed in classrooms and observation reports show that the Danielson Framework for Teaching is embedded into all aspects of instruction. For example, the principal created and uses the formula “ $1e + 3b + 3d = 3c$,” to remind all teachers that effective lesson planning, (1e), involves sufficient student-to-student interaction as well student-centered activities, (3b), which are assessed via multiple mediums, (3d), and yield high levels of intellectual engagement, (3c)”, This aligns his feedback to these targeted domains, thus fostering clear expectations for improving teacher practice. The principal also groups teachers by their strengths and areas of need, offering personalized verbal and written feedback that addresses their growth. Consequently, feedback systems are purposefully designed to accurately capture teachers' strengths and needs and thus enhance teacher development.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen teacher pedagogy to ensure that instruction consistently includes tasks and activities that engage all students in higher order thinking, leading to high quality student work and peer-to-peer discussions across classrooms. (1.2)
 - In some classrooms, students worked in small groups, reading texts to cite evidence for responses to varied tasks and using academic vocabulary to explain solutions to different problems. For example, in one class the teacher asked students to use textual evidence from a set of related non-fiction articles to formulate and support their opinions about the materials read. However, in several other classrooms, all students worked on the

same task, with no extension activities for advanced learners. Further, in most classrooms, including one with English language learners and students with disabilities, tasks were of low demand, as evidenced by the tasks being on photocopied sheets of paper, with only a few lines for written responses that required little student thinking. As a result, teaching practices do not always reflect written curricula across subjects and grades, so not all students are consistently given tasks that challenge them to demonstrate higher order thinking in their work.

- In a few classes, the teachers provided prompts to promote discussions about tasks completed or texts read and students took turns responding. In one class the teacher engaged in skillful questioning that supported students in a lively peer-to-peer discussion as they shared points of view after reading an article about “Hitler’s Rise to Power”. However, this was not the norm across classrooms. Also, the practice of inviting students to comment on responses by peers was not consistently evident across classrooms, as several lessons were so teacher-dominated that most students sat compliantly, listening to the teacher or to a few peers who were called upon. As a result, not all students benefit from teaching practices that consistently provide opportunities for high-level thinking and participation in peer-to-peer discussions that maximize learning.
- Deepen assessment practices to consistently provide staff and students with accurate feedback on students’ progress, in order to ensure adjustments to curriculum and instruction that effectively address students’ needs. (2.2)
 - Staff and students share feedback on assessments, via proficiency reports, individual conferences, and logs of progress. Some teachers use rubrics aligned to curricula, selected State standards and Regents assessments to provide feedback to students regarding their content knowledge and readiness for Regents’ exams. However, interviews of some students and reviews of students’ work folders indicated that regular use of rubrics is not the norm across content areas. Students’ work samples also showed limited evidence of meaningful teacher feedback, in that while some samples of work showed rubric-based performance level scores with teacher comments, others showed only checkmarks with no comments. In some folders, collections of work showed no teacher feedback. Thus, assessment practices do not consistently yield actionable feedback that is shared with staff and students to inform understanding of students’ learning needs in all disciplines.
 - In some classrooms, teachers worked with small groups of students and circulated to assess students’ understanding of concepts introduced. A few teachers also used a white board or skills chart to explain steps to complete tasks. However, checks for understanding leading to adjustments during the teaching period were not consistently evident in classrooms, as a majority of teachers who walked around the room monitoring students’ work did not use their observations to drive follow-up questioning, reinforce teaching points, or redirect individual student learning. Further, ongoing assessment practices, such as rubric-based peer and self- assessment and turn-and-talks were not consistently evident across classrooms. Consequently, assessment practices do not always result in timely adjustments to instruction that accurately target and effectively address all students’ learning needs.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Frances Perkins Academy	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score			X				
Instructional Core							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards?			X				
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?		X					
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?		X					
School Culture							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X				
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations?			X				
Systems for Improvement							
<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 student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			X				
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?				X			
4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection?			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				
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?			X				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed