



Quality Review Report 2013-2014

The Forward School

11x287

**3710 Barnes Avenue
Bronx
NY 10467**

Principal: Shaniquia L. Dixon

Dates of review: March 13 - 14, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Elizabeth A. White

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Forward is a middle school with 245 students from sixth through grade eight. The school population comprises 71% Black, 27% Hispanic, 0% White, 1% Asian and 1% other students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 26% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 88.8%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school accurately captures teacher effectiveness resulting in feedback that identifies critical attributes for improvement of pedagogical growth. (4.1)
 - School leaders have incorporated the Danielson Framework into the evaluation of teacher practice. Feedback from regular classroom visits accurately captures next steps for pedagogical growth. After analysis of teacher practice data across the school the focus is on questioning and engagement. This focus is evident in post-observation feedback. For example, in a report about an English language arts lesson, next steps for growth includes, “To promote student engagement use a teaching model such as the Jigsaw or Fishbowl...Students will have the opportunity to talk amongst themselves on assigned tasks... This will increase student engagement in the lesson.” Feedback is aligned to areas of need resulting in pedagogy that is becoming increasingly aligned to teaching and learning practices in *The Danielson Framework* over the course of the year.
 - Observation trends are used to determine professional development offerings and build leadership development capacity. During *Professional Learning Team (PLT)* meetings teachers gather by department to review data and reflect on pedagogy. After PLT meetings a *Team Feedback Sheet* is completed enabling teachers to reflect on meeting outcomes and formulate next steps for action amongst themselves. Math and science PLT agendas document topics such as, midline data analysis; rigorous questioning and curriculum focus areas. Team meetings are also informed by teacher-led learning walks designed to provide collegial support. This enables teachers to consult mutually to determine student needs, thus, informing the process for the creation of lesson plans that result in learning experiences better matched to student learning needs. These collaborative, teacher-led decision-making opportunities result in an effective system for leadership development.
- The school’s faculty engages in collaborative teacher team practices resulting in increased strategic planning to improve student outcomes. (4.2)
 - Teacher teams have consistent protocols that document professional collaboration by department. This includes: team feedback reflection sheets, department goal development such as citing and using multiple sources in social studies planning for the May Social Studies Fair, and data reviews. Analysis of student work based on data outcomes from school-wide assessment tools (e.g. Rally and State assessment tasks) is used to identify next steps for student progress and instruction with an on-going shared focus on improved student progress. During an English language arts team meeting teachers used a rubric to analyze student poetry responses on a State test simulation. The team reviewed possible reasons why errors were made (e.g. “Students summarized instead of analyzing the relationship between stanzas”) setting the stage for identifying what instructional next steps would correct students’ missteps. These processes for teacher collaboration have led to continuous collaborative concentration on student achievement resulting in clear and coherent expectations for improved

teacher practice and progress towards achieving learning goals for groups of students.

- The school engages in aligning curricula to New York State standards and identifying expectations for instruction resulting in increased access to curricula for all learners. (1.1)
 - The school is in the process of reviewing new curricula. *CODEX*, the selected English language arts curriculum, is being implemented. During math teacher team meetings colleagues discuss student outcomes in major and supporting mathematical concepts using *CMP3* curriculum. Teachers utilize Common Core aligned resources from *EngageNY* to supplement curricular materials. Core subject teams are working on explicitly identifying teaching strategies in curricular documents and plans that align to CCLS expectations. In addition, since current *Rally* assessment data indicates a widening gap between students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and the general student body, indicating modifications for ability level grouping, supports for English language learners and students with IEPs to provide access to the curricula and tasks are also a work in progress. These efforts enable teachers to integrate instructional shifts aligned to student needs and provide access to curricula and tasks thus promoting all students to meet proficiency standards.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop pedagogy across classrooms to align with demanding curricula resulting in increased access, discussion and engagement for all students. (1.2)
 - In a few classrooms, students are provided with multiple entry points and engage in rigorous thinking. For example, during a social studies lesson, student groups were given choice as to which text they would closely read to analyze Franklin D. Roosevelt's social programs and their impact on the finances and morale of workers. Student leaders used a rubric to rate the participation from each member of the group. However, in many lessons classroom practice is inconsistently aligned to instructional expectations. In a math classroom, a lesson on the Pythagorean Theorem, the teacher's rapid fire questions were focused on the few students who chose to respond, while others were disengaged, having sidebar conversations with peers and other adults, and could not follow along. There was no check for understanding for the lesson. This resulted in a lack of access to the curriculum. Similarly, during an English language arts lesson in a special needs classroom the pacing was slow. As an opening lesson activity students were asked to compose a quick write about entering sixth grade. Afterwards the teacher asked each child in the class to read their composition aloud. This utilized a significant amount of time, leaving little time to teach the lesson's aim, which was how to write an objective summary of a text. Thus, lessons lacking checks for understanding, correct pacing, and scaffolds to access tasks hinder student thinking and participation resulting in limited active engagement in rigorous tasks.
- Cultivate a school environment that encourages positive personal behaviors and respect for instructional time resulting in the social and academic growth of students. (1.4)

- Currently, eighth graders participate in high school and college visits. There is also a “Dixon Dollar” incentive to reward good citizenship behaviors. An advisory offering does exist that is led by a Guidance Counselor and includes special assembly gatherings. However, the school lacks coherent, school-wide plans to explicitly teach and require constructive academic and personal behaviors that lead to positive student outcomes. Poorly communicated supports limit effective outreach to build a culture that promotes a sufficient respect for academic time. In addition, newly reinstated homerooms are not used as a place to consistently communicate information such as academic supports and behavioral expectations to students. The principal has instituted a monthly “Principal’s Contest”. It asks students to write about a given theme, such as Nelson Mandela. However, information about these contests is not widely known amongst the student body. The bulletin is posted in a place where students often ignore, thus limiting student participation and hindering their effectiveness in encouraging positive academic behaviors. When interviewing students there was even-sided disagreement about whether or not most teachers push them to do their best. The majority stated that insufficient support is provided during instruction especially in social studies and science. Parents have stated that tutoring supports have just recently begun and others stated that their children did not know where to show up for enrichment class. In addition, when students miss an assignment, the school reporting system does not indicate the content of the assignment missed, for example, Worksheet 7.1. Parents also noted being unclear as to what the grading policy is. The lack of information renders them unable to support students at home. The lack of a coherent plan linking discipline supports to academic success has resulted in an inconsistency in expectations for personal responsibility leading to behavioral problems, particularly in classrooms, as expressed by the principal, teachers, students and parents alike.
- Formalize a system for capturing support and progress data to regularly monitor and evaluate processes with greater efficiency to identify trends in order to enhance the impact of school-wide efforts. (5.1)
 - The school leader has expectations and implemented measures for improving classroom instruction, professional development, curriculum, and behavior. However, checks to monitor the quality and impact of these efforts are not established. For example, while there is an advisory protocol and a currency incentive system to address student behaviors, a system to monitor the effectiveness of these efforts is not currently in place. While the school uses a consultant to aggregate student test data, leadership is unclear as to how to articulate what the data represents in terms of student progress. During a teacher team meeting, results from the last school-wide assessment was discussed and teachers agreed that “This time the data was received (in a) timely (fashion)”. Additionally, the school has a yearlong plan for professional development. However, the impact on teacher practice is not yet procedurally determined. The lack of tracking success to evaluate school-wide initiatives limits the ability to hold the school community accountable for making timely and necessary adjustments, thus limiting the impact of efforts.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: The Forward School	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