



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Quality Review
Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning
2013-2014**

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Felisa Rincon de Gautier Institute for Law and Public Policy

**High School 519
1440 Story Avenue
Bronx
NY 10473**

Principal: Grismaldy Laboy-Wilson

Dates of review: April 29 – 30, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Arisleya A. Ureña

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Felisa Rincon de Gautier Institute for Law and Public Policy is a high school with 341 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 26% Black, 69% Hispanic, 2% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 11% English language learners and 26% special education students. Boys account for 46% of the students enrolled and girls account for 54%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 85.3%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school administration fosters a culture of learning that maintains effective personal behaviors and supports the academic and social-emotional growth of students and adults. (1.4)
 - The motto, “Believe, Achieve, and Succeed,” emphasizes the community’s belief, fostering a culture for learning focused on providing support to students to ensure their academic success. Students said that they feel “safe”, and know that they are receiving what they need to graduate and go to college. Seeking to actualize the goal to improve the school culture, the principal selected to emphasize domain 2, Classroom Environment, of the Danielson Framework for Teaching, with the support from the Climate and Culture Center Committee. Also, the school’s processing of students’ petitions has resulted in an increased number of clubs and initiatives such as the Dragon Flies, and after school extra-curricular activities. Students appreciate receiving information about the status of petitions via emails in their Jupiter accounts and the school’s daily announcements. Furthermore, the decision to integrate the Substance Abuse Prevention Intervention Specialist (SAPIS) with the physical education class led to developing a curriculum to offer additional personal supports to students. Moreover, efforts around students’ attendance and academic growth include the Climate and Culture Center Committee meeting weekly to develop assistance that includes guidance and support staff calling homes to assess extenuating circumstances before absence patterns become excessive, and arranging home visits and counseling for the student and family. Additional use of resources such as the school messenger and postcards further the school’s attendance initiatives. For example, during common planning time teachers engage in conversations about students’ attendance and behavior to create next steps and address students’ academic achievement. Moreover, parents stated that they believe the school cares for their children’s well-being. As a result, parents and staff agree that everyone is invested in student learning and achievement.
- School leaders’ communication of teacher high expectations aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching and student college career readiness fosters a culture for learning. (3.4)
 - The school administration and teachers met at the end of the 2012-2013 school year to develop a crosswalk between the school’s instructional vision and the Danielson Framework to support the school’s instructional goals. To further communicate expectations for instruction, the administration organized multiple learning opportunities for staff in and out of the school around the Danielson Framework for Teaching with an emphasis on domains 2 and 3. In a teacher meeting, a first year teacher and an experienced teacher shared how much they learned from their inter-visitations to other schools as being “the most helpful.” Furthermore, staff is held accountable through observation cycles, scheduled meetings, and ongoing discussions about attaining the school’s instructional goals. In addition, the school makes certain that teachers and families are aware

of high expectations by engaging in communication through emails, the parent handbook, student handbook, and teachers' correspondence to parents regarding course instructional expectations, Jupiter grading system, on-going formal and informal meetings, the School Leadership Team (SLT), faculty meetings, and information from guidance counselors. Parents are also able to monitor and track their children's grades and behavior via Jupiter, thus increasing a shared understanding of expectations for behavior and academic achievement. In addition, the administration, along with a full time college advisor, coordinates various workshops for families and students about the college application process, career day, college trips, and monthly grade level meetings. In addition, the administration initiated the Honors Instructional Program (HIP) to increase the school's goal in fostering a school's culture of high expectations and college and career readiness. Consequently, students shared that they know what the administration and teachers expect from them, "Believe, Achieve, and Succeed." As a result, there is an increased number of students and parents requesting enrollment in the Honors Instructional Program (HIP).

- School leadership uses the observation process and analysis of student data to support teacher development and practice. (4.1)
 - Written observation reports give teachers specific feedback on areas of strength and areas in need of improvement, aligned to a specific competency of the Danielson Framework for Teaching, with recommendations for next steps. Feedback to teachers includes using ARIS learning videos, schedule of inter-visitations, meeting with the administration to discuss specific teaching strategies, and/or schedule one-on-one meeting with coaches from the support network (CFN) and the school's instructional coach to provide professional development on targeted needs. Observation reports also include feedback that references teacher reflection emails, low inference notes from other classroom visits, and targeted next steps. Additionally, the administration uses ADVANCE observation data and a school based observation tracker tool to monitor teachers' instructional goals and progress. The administration shared a practice of looking at students' work, asking students questions about their learning, and using students' performance data to further identify teacher's areas of strengths and challenges, thus supporting the development of pedagogical skills to increase student learning. Furthermore, the administration's initiative of giving gold star award to teachers who achieved highly effective in specific areas of the Danielson Framework highlights best practices and provides opportunities for teachers to support each other in their professional growth. As a result, ADVANCE data demonstrates increased numbers of teachers scoring effective and highly effective in domain 2, thus expanding practices that foster a positive learning environment for all learners.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop curricula that include rigorous learning tasks so that all learners have access and are cognitively engaged. (1.1)
 - A review of curriculum artifacts revealed a focus on performance task assessments aligned to Regents and Common Core Learning Standards

(CCLS). However, essential questions to drive effective lesson planning across all content areas were not of a high level or always evident. Lower-level questions included “Why did early people develop civilizations in river valleys? How do governments influence culture? How do wars transform societies?” in a history curricula map, English language arts essential questions were “How can love be difficult? What forces impede love?” Although a math curricula map had essential questions such as “What is the difference between arithmetic and geometric sequences? Another math map only included content topics with no essential questions. Furthermore, despite the process to ensure CCLS alignment, lessons within units of study across grade-level content areas did not sufficiently include real world application or extensions to engage all learners in challenging tasks, thus hindering them from engaging in higher order thinking. While there is some evidence in the lesson template of pre-planned learning tasks identified as “differentiation/scaffolding or ELL’s Targeted Instruction”, as an indication that teachers are expected to include multiple entry points to allow access for diverse learners, most plans did not include these adjustments for student subgroups. Some lessons reviewed only referenced translations, dictionaries, and/or use of graphic organizers as the adjustments for English language learners, limiting access to the curriculum and missing out on providing learning tasks that further develop second language acquisition, academic knowledge, and critical thinking skills. Thus, although the curricula evidences an emphasis on the Regents, student work is not suitably referenced in refining the work, learning tasks inconsistently challenge or require rigorous thinking, and efforts to cognitively engage all learners across grades and subjects are impeded.

- Strengthen pedagogical practices so that they consistently provide multiple entry-points and engagement to increase students’ thinking and participation. (1.2)
 - The school's instructional focus this year is to improve classroom environment, questioning, and student-centered instruction to ensure increased student engagement. With this goal in mind, the school has established norms for classroom instruction that include daily aims, do-now activities, and lesson summaries. In classrooms visited, there were instances of how some teachers provided visuals and translations to support diverse learners. However, learning tasks inconsistently provided multiple entry-points and scaffolds for all learners and across many classrooms students had to complete the same assignments. For example, classes including English language learners engaged students in lower-leveled activities that required them to use the Google translator, copy work from another student, or work with another student who translated the content. Thus, students had limited opportunities to be fully challenged by participating in learning tasks that involve higher order thinking. In a special education class, two students who had completed the first task and continued to work on the next activity were instructed by the teacher not to proceed and wait, thus preventing them from extending their learning. Consequently, teacher practices do not sufficiently provide learning activities with multiple entry points to engage all learners, including English language learners and special education students, in rigorous learning and high levels of thinking.

- The administration stated that the school's belief about how students learn best is "by doing, more student center." The administration and teachers shared that questions are designed using Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK). However, in most classes teachers asked low level DOK questions with only a few students responding, often with the teacher restating the answer. In an English language arts class, a learning activity that took most of the class period required students to work with a partner completing a graphic organizer, with students who were able to complete the task not provided with appropriate extension activities. Also, other students who faced academic challenges completing the task only received individual probing and clarifying questions from each teacher, which did not give students the appropriate interventions to successfully complete the task. Thus, the opportunity to appropriately engage all students in cognitively challenging learning is hindered. In a history class, although the teacher had higher order thinking questions (HOT) for the Do Now, only a few students were called upon to respond, thus limiting full participation and discussion for all learners.
- Strengthen school practices so that teachers consistently use common assessments and on-going checks for understanding to track academic progress and inform planning, ensuring increased learning for all students. (2.2)
 - Teachers use unit exams, mid-terms, finale exams, and Regents simulations to track students' content attainment and inform content planning. For example, the history department shared that after analyzing the January Regents results it decided to focus the current unit on the Document Based Question (DBQ) essay process and analysis of political cartoons. Leadership also shared that after analyzing Regents' data from the previous school year, one of the school's instructional decisions included integrating learning tasks that require students to cite textual evidence. Although this structure enables the school to use assessment data to inform instructional and curricula decisions, student data results is inconsistently used to make adjustments to ensure increased learning for all students. Moreover, even though teachers use Regents' rubrics to assess student work, students inconsistently engage in opportunities to self-assess and monitor their academic progress, thus hampering opportunities to increase students' autonomy. Administration and teachers shared that exit slips, questioning, and student work are used to check for ongoing understanding. Yet, while teachers used questioning as a mean to conduct intermediate lesson checks for individual students, evidence of effective and immediate lesson adjustments to address the learning needs of all students did not take place. Moreover, in many classrooms observed, misallocation of time hampered teachers having students complete exit slips and/or conducting a lesson summary, therefore hindering the ability to address students' learning needs.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Felisa Rincon de Gautier Institute for Law and Public Policy	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