



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning**

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The Facing History School

High School M303

**525 West 50th Street
Manhattan
NY 10019**

Principal: Dana Panagot

**Date of review: March 13, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Hongying Shen**

The School Context

The Facing History School is a high school with 389 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 28% Black, 67% Hispanic, 2% White, 2% Asian and 1% other students. The student body includes 19% English language learners and 24% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 81.0%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
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	Celebration	Well Developed
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	Focus	Proficient
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	Additional Findings	Proficient
School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	Additional Findings	Well Developed
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	Additional Findings	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects. Curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and content standards and accessible for all learners.

Impact

The school's layered curricula provide multiple options, differentiation, and higher order skills, for all learners to demonstrate mastery of their knowledge.

Supporting Evidence

- Across grades and content areas, the school uses Kathie Nunley's Layered Curriculum model to ensure multiple entry points, allow for more student choice, create differentiation, and promote higher order thinking. In the ninth grade Global History II unit on the Crusades, students have choices to demonstrate a basic understanding of the material in C layer, including completing the document based questions on the Crusades, listing facts using the interactive timeline, or creating a power point presentation. In the B layer of the same unit, students apply what they have learned from their perspectives. They choose to complete one of three B layer tasks, such as assuming the role of a soldier during the Crusades and expressing the savagery of the war in a letter, using primary sources. In the A layer, students choose from creating an electronic scrapbook page, writing a screen play or writing an essay to explain why the Crusades and Holy Wars occurred and if any of the history could have been altered in any way. Students move through three layers of learning in every unit. They work at different paces but they are supported to master one layer of study before moving on to the next layer.
- Facilitated by the curriculum development team, each department creates a skill table that aligns content and skills to Common Core Learning Standards for college and career readiness. Using assessment data and student work, each department reviews and revises its curriculum yearly and adapts Common Core Learning Standards into learning targets to support English language learners and students with disabilities relative to the three-layer curriculum. In order to enhance the teaching and learning of non-fiction texts, the school has adopted the Achieve 3000 program to support English language learners and students with disabilities, especially in ninth and tenth grade English, history, and science classes.
- The school strategically integrates the instructional shifts into the three layer curricula. Across grades and content areas, high order skills are emphasized and embedded in performance based assessment tasks, which require students to do in-depth research papers, present them to a panel of staff, students, and community members, and answer key content questions. The assessment tasks scaffold student critical thinking, presentation skills, analytical skills, and writing/revision skills. In a ninth grade English language arts unit, the B layer assignment requires students to choose a genre of letter, poster, or PowerPoint, and write a persuasive piece to get a friend to either read or not read the book *Speak*. The A layer assignment requires students to write a timed essay on one of three questions such as, "Are you responsible for helping strangers in need?"

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula, teacher pedagogy reflects the belief that students learn in different ways, and students have choices in how to demonstrate their mastery of knowledge.

Impact

The school's inherent beliefs about how students learn best result in the adoption of the three layer curriculum model, which creates multiple entry points for students to showcase multiple intelligences and learning; yet there are inconsistencies in teaching strategies to scaffold learning in all classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teachers follow the Common Core aligned units and plan targeted learning for each lesson using “I can” statements, which are aligned with the specific skills and language functions for each grade level in the Common Core Learning Standards. In the Living Environment lesson observed, the aim is “I can model a biological process and make predictions about how a process will occur.” In a Global History class, the learning outcome is “I can make real world comparisons to my current civilization and an ancient civilization of my choice.” Though students were sitting in pairs or groups, a lack of structure to guide meaningful discussions about the topics resulted in random conversations while students worked on their individual assignments.
- In a tenth grade integrated co-teaching geometry class, students sat at their learning stations working on a B layer assignment: to build two buildings for the disaster struck Oklahoma to help with the relief effort. In order to build these buildings, students were to present a proposal for the State that included blue prints of the buildings and proofs of their actual shapes, along with a budget for those buildings. Students were to show that “I can prove a quadrilateral is a quadrilateral based on its properties and apply it to real life.” Each station pertained to the part of the assignment that the students were completing to allow group discussions, and the students with low-skill level were paired with those with high-skill level at the same station. For those students who had completed the B layer assignment they began working on C layer for the next unit of area and perimeter. Though students were paired and grouped according to their needs for support, the conversations or discussions among them for making meaning of the learning were not purposefully structured.
- Across classrooms, students are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills. In a ninth grade integrated co-teaching English language arts class, students were to demonstrate that “I can find evidence to support a claim using both opinion and research” and “I can use debate techniques to defend a side of an argument” in the unit of study of the books *Speak* and *Of Mice and Men*. At the time of observation, students were having a debate on if it is okay to use the word “retarded”. Students sat on either side of the room to support their side of the argument. They followed the formal debate etiquette shown on the white board and took turns speaking to their point and chose students from the opposing side to respond. They were observed to quote from the research they did or use their life experiences to support their claims.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school uses common assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas. Teachers create rubrics and grading policies that are aligned with the school curricula.

Impact

Teacher collaboration on data analysis results in adjustments to curricula and increase in students passing rates.

Supporting Evidence

- As part of the New York State Performance Standards Consortium, the school holds graduation requirements of Performance Based Assessment Tasks (PBAT) in English language arts, math, social studies, and science. Each of the PBAT papers and presentations are graded on a common Consortium rubric, as well as a school-created rubric. In ninth and tenth grade, students present their portfolios in the four subject areas in January and June, and they need a passing grade in order to move to the next grade level. Students in tenth and eleventh grades do panel presentations for a panel of content teachers, an advisor, visitors, and peer guests in each subject. Successful completion of all panels and credits allows students to apply for senior institute, where nominated and accepted seniors take honors and Advanced Placement courses.
- The school aligns assessments to curricula and analyzes information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions. The school noticed that in the past two years only 53% or less ninth graders were passing the portfolio presentations. The school curriculum development team did a dilemma protocol and a staff survey to surface the reason for the low ninth grade passing rate and found that ninth graders were unfamiliar with the school presentation system and were basing their ability to present on completion rather than the content knowledge and skills. Instructional adjustments were made to the ninth grade curriculum, focusing on knowledge and skills aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, and the impact has been positive. The data shows that ninth grade English 1 portfolio-passing rate for students has continued to increase from 75% in 2013-14 to 81.3% in 2014-2015.
- The school uses a teacher-created grading policy across all classrooms and requires a minimum number of graded assignments to be entered into Engrade, the online grading system, to offer a clear portrait of student mastery and allow student equitable opportunity for success regardless of their teacher. Following the grading policy, teachers need to enter a minimum of three graded learning activities assignments a week, a minimum of eight formative assessments a semester, and a minimum of four summative assessments a semester.
- In a geometry class, the teacher tracks the progress of each student based on his/her progress of mastery of the math skills. The teacher assesses the students at the end of a lesson with a quiz and uses the data to regroup the students for the following day lesson.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations through ongoing professional development, some of which is aligned with the Danielson Framework for Teaching. School leaders and staff communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness, to families and students, through the rigorous curriculum and advisory.

Impact

Teachers are empowered to use the Danielson Framework for Teaching and apply it to their practice and pedagogy as part of their evaluation. Students are guided through the advisory and college 101 course to achieve their post-secondary goals.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and staff make the Danielson Framework for Teaching an authentic part of practice and pedagogy and create a teacher evaluation system that incorporates reflective meetings, collaboration, and a portfolio process. The system supports teachers and allows for honest conversations between staff and administration. All teacher observations are rated using the eight competences chosen by the State, and teachers meet with the administration during their initial structured review to choose three focus competencies from the eight around which they build their goals and portfolio. These chosen competencies form the rating for the final review.
- The school curriculum development team has created a common culture guide that is aligned to Danielson, and it outlines school- and classroom-wide expectations for teachers and students. The team does the Danielson-focused classroom walkthroughs with the administrators and gives feedback to teachers. The observation of the classroom practice informs the future professional development, and on each professional development Wednesday, the topic of the learning is explicitly aligned to the Danielson Framework. The topics include “Using Depth of Knowledge to generate teacher-created questions”, “Using Depth of Knowledge to teach students to create their own questions”, and “Purposefully selecting discussion techniques to engage students with those questions”.
- The master and model teachers have established their lab classrooms, where teachers can observe strategies and methodologies for the Danielson Framework for Teaching in using questioning and discussion techniques(3b) and using assessment in instruction (3d). The master and model teachers list their pedagogical strengths as well as the areas they are working on in a lab classroom information overview and invite peer observations and discussions to achieve a mutual accountability for professionalism.
- The Facing Ourselves Committee creates common culture advisory curriculum and opportunities for all students to engage in discussions of real-life issues as well as community service opportunities twice a year. The same advisor follows the same group of students for the four years they are at the school. A full time college counselor provides workshops for parents and teaches all seniors in a “College 101” course designed for college applications.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

All teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach. There is teacher leadership in planning school policies, curriculum, and professional development that affects student learning across the school.

Impact

As a result of the structured teams, all teachers are part of at least three teams, including academies, departments, and problem of practice (POP) groups, and have a voice in curricula revision and an effect on student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- The Curriculum Development team (CDT) is a group of teacher representatives from each subject area and academy. The group meets two hours every week to support creation and revision of the curriculum and to participate in leadership training to set agendas and lead their respective departments in areas of inquiry, data analysis, student work, and curriculum creation and revision. Each meeting is designed to develop effective teacher leaders, who turn-key the learning to their departments or lead professional development workshops.
- All teachers participate in Problem of Practice (POP) groups, and each POP group is facilitated by a curriculum development team member. Teachers are engaged in collaborative inquiry around individualized problems of practice. Each POP group chooses its own pedagogical problems, tries out a solution, and reflects and documents its success.
- The two members on the Curriculum Development team (CDT) from each department create the bi-weekly agendas and facilitate the department meetings. The CDT members also serve as the liaison between the department and the administrative team, ensuring that all voices are heard. The departments use protocols for looking at student and teacher work to engage in curricula revision and strengthen teacher practice.
- The Facing Ourselves Committee (FOC) is a committee of adult learners whose work focuses on staff development. The committee brainstorms ideas and develops ways to engage the whole staff in discussion. It also brings these ideas to the students in advisory. During the observation of the committee meeting, teachers brainstormed on the question “why do we want to focus on ‘the power of words’?” Teachers talked about how to include the topic in the advisory curriculum to address the issue that sometimes students say words they don’t even know the meaning of. The committee discussed how long this cycle of inquiry would be and what impact it might have.
- Teachers participate in various structured professional collaborations, and they systematically analyze key elements of teacher work including classroom practice, assessment data and student work. There is a school wide instructional coherence and increased student achievement as evidenced by the 72% graduation rate of the 2014 graduating class, up 21% from the graduation rate of the class of 2011.