



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**Frank McCourt High School**

**High School M417**

**145 West 84 Street  
Manhattan  
NY 10024**

**Principal: Danielle Salzberg**

**Date of review: February 9, 2015**

**Lead Reviewer: Marjory Matthieu-Kodjovi**

## The School Context

Frank McCourt High School M417 is a high school with 387 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 16% Black, 40% Hispanic, 31% White, and 9% Asian students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 41% of the students enrolled and girls account for 59%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 93.0%.

## School Quality Criteria

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

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured, professional collaborations that promotes of the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards. Distributed leadership structures are embedded in the school and all teacher teams exemplify effective teacher leadership in decision making.

### Impact

As a result of teacher teams' consistent collaboration, teachers continuously make strong key decisions that strengthen teacher practice, school-wide instructional coherence and offers support to ensure improvement and achievement by all learners.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school stated that in the last few years, they had a trend in which students struggled to get 10 credits or more in 10<sup>th</sup> grade. The 10<sup>th</sup> grade teacher team which meets weekly has taken on to fix that this year. The goal is to have more students earn 10 credits or more in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. The teacher team met to discuss student performance, student data, and strategies to move students from one level to the next. The team went on to examine outcomes that they use and shared across teams to see if there is a way to get some leverage by using those outcomes and strategies more frequently or consistently across classrooms. Teacher teams also examine student work across the grade and engage in dialogue about ways they might have seen progress there. This initiative is evident through professional development agendas, minutes and conversation with principal and teachers.
- At the end of last year school year, the Research team explored peer evaluation and became involved in the observation process using the Danielson Framework for Teaching, began peer to peer feedback. Over the fall semester, the Research team analyzed different models of peer to peer feedback and as a Progressive Redesign Opportunity for Schools of Excellence (PROSE) School, was able to hire two master teachers and a Model teacher. This resulted in the master teachers deciding that they wanted to focus on peer feedback and putting in place a protocol and process to ensure implementation.
- Administrators shared and teachers agree that they get to make key decisions in the school. One decision was to hire an assistant principal rather than another teacher. The 9<sup>th</sup> grade teams decided to analyze why GPA dropped when students transitioning to high school; asking "why when students come here they did well in 8<sup>th</sup> grade and now they are here and not doing so well and their GPA drops significantly." The 9<sup>th</sup> grade team focused their attention on which students and particular schools were experiencing difficulties. They questioned if there was something that the school was not seeing or could do differently, to ensure better outcomes. The 9<sup>th</sup> grade team asked they needed to revise a certain type of skill as it caused students to struggle or was too new across the 9<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Math department started an algebra pilot with the algebra teachers' supporting and guiding other teachers around their process, failures and accomplishments. They explained how the modules work and how it linked to the tasks. Teachers negotiated what would happen with the geometry roll out. As a result, the department has completely absorbs the modules for geometry into the geometry curriculum. The process is on-going and has also begun for algebra 2 before the modules are released.

## Area of Focus

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

School leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations that are connected to a path to college and career readiness. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations for all students. However, the school is in the process of expanding a system to further engage all parents in the community.

### Impact

Guidance supports prepare students for the next level and promotes career and college readiness across classrooms. The school offers ongoing and detailed help to families to understand student progress toward meeting those expectations.

### Supporting Evidence

- The College counselor runs three big evening events, one for 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade on the college process and how students could prepare for the process. For 11<sup>th</sup> grade families, the College counselor explores what students might expect in the upcoming year and for 12<sup>th</sup> grade families, they offer a financial aid night.
- The school relies on their Advisory program to support a culture of high expectations and college and career readiness skill acquisition. They have a four-year advisory program with an annual college readiness unit and takes students to visit college campuses. For example in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade, the focus is on creating an aspiration and interest in the process, including an understanding of interests and career possibilities. In 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade there is a larger focus on college tours, applications, and testing. Within the Advisory program, all advisors are expected to establish contact with parents to communicate expectations. As part of the advisory outcomes, school runs a career fair. This year the career fair happened at the intersession EXPO. All students' interns presented the profile of their career that they interned in at the expo. The school will host a career fair in the spring with professionals coming in as is done every year.
- The Parent Teacher Association (PTA), School Leadership Team (SLT) and a team of interns, along with the teacher who liaises as the part-time Parent Coordinator, have all been working on different strategies to engage more students and parents in the school. For example, the school wants to formalize advisory trips and reflect on the types of trips students take. Inviting parents to big events and offering representations of student work, conferences, and small parlor meetings, are done on a small scale. The school is working towards institutionalizing some projects and work with the PTA to engage parents who typically do not attend these events.
- The school has a live grade book that is built around outcomes. Families, students and teachers can check that daily for updates. Feedback given in JumpRope and the principal shares "It is a way to push the teachers making sure that they give feedback in a timely fashion." According to students, the school teaches them how to use JumpRope and to set goals for themselves. Students concur that, this training happens in advisory and classroom and sometimes teachers will have students open their JumpRope report for their class, look at trends in their score, their outcomes overtime and how that outcome should be their goals for the next project or essay that they write.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

Administration and staff emphasize rigorous habits and higher order thinking skills in a coherent way across grade and subject area. Curricula tasks are planned and refined using student work data.

### Impact

All learners, including students with disabilities (SWDs), demonstrate their thinking and groups of students, including the lowest- and highest-achieving students, have multiple access ways to challenging and engaging curricula and tasks.

### Supporting Evidence

- All teacher uses outcomes-based grading, related rubrics and feedback protocols to support student growth. These outcomes are based on the Common Core Learning Standards and are directly aligned to the rubrics. Teachers and students agree that the outcome based grading is adjusted to make them more clear and accessible to students and used consistently across classrooms. According to teachers, department and team meetings refine and reflect on rubrics as well as streamline the use of outcomes.
- The school has developed curricular units to ensure access to rigorous habits and higher-order skills for all students including students with disabilities. For example all Math, Science, Humanities unit plans include Common Core Learning Standards aligned outcomes to be covered in the unit. Teams systematically provide feedback to each other on unit plans as was evident during teacher and principal meeting and the review of Math and Social Studies unit plans. Unit and lesson plans, and related assessments and rubrics are points of conversation in coaching sessions between administration and teachers. During teacher meeting and principal leadership conversation, it was evident that the purpose of the conversations and reflections in team meetings are to ensure that higher order thinking skills are embedded in courses and students are supported in demonstrating mastery.
- In upper house Humanities, critical thinking is taught throughout the unit and then assessed in a final project through a deep individual understanding of the unit topic. Project overviews and entry documents in Humanities include higher order thinking skills. For example students shared in their *Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) in the Developing World* project, they were asked to conduct a research to educate the public about all sides of the GMO question. Students were divided and assigned different areas of research to present to the public and were asked to take a formal position. A group of students were charged with researching GMOs in the developing world while another group researched GMOs in health care. Students submitted a position paper and each work group delivered a presentation to the public; survey the audience to assess the attitude of the public before and after the presentation and each student wrote a data analysis reports based on their findings.
- Every classroom systematically uses graphic organizers, differentiated texts, peer review protocols like Critical Friends Group (CFG) and others to empower students allowing them demonstrate their skills. Parallel and individual small group instruction as well as regular reflections and goal-setting also support students to be able to engage at their level and challenge themselves in the curriculum.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching strategies strategically provide multiple entry points and high-quality supports and extensions into the curricula and, student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking, participation, and ownership.

### Impact

All learners, including SWDs, are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in student work products.

### Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms teachers use discussions and or Socratic seminars to teach students how to use evidence to support the claim or argument; student choice and teaching them to set deadlines for themselves; real-world learning (internships, field trips, guest speakers, community service); and questioning and discussion protocols.
- In all classrooms, teachers use practices that provide multiple entry points, supports, and extensions to all students. Modified student work (chunking, tiered text, revised or choice assessments), group discussion (Socratic seminars, fish bowling in Social progress class), small guided groupings; scaffolding; modeling, student choice, and graphic organizers. Protocols such as turn and talk, how to borrow materials such as compass and rules are put in place. Students receive handouts with activities in order to do inquiry work, visual image are used often to support student learning and understanding. In Science class, students were able to articulate the protocol and use personal reflections.
- In a Geometry class Integrate Co-Teaching (ICT) students were asked to apply their understanding of dilations to explore and compare dilations from different centers. Using the SmartBoard, students modeled by working backwards from a given dilation and image in order to find the original pre-image. Students posed and answered questions such as “Why do we need to construct a congruent angle in order to find the pre-image?” “Did anyone think of doing this another way?” “If so how did you do it?” Students discussed the relationship between circles before and after dilations, and other students share how all circles are similar and that dilation maps a circle to another circle. Students who struggled with the compass and skills of dilating circles were provided graphic organizers and pushed by both teachers in the class to discover the process they needed to use in order to find the pre-image, given the image. Some students were given a different organizer to simplify the diagram to make it clearer that constructing a congruent angle is necessary to work backwards and find the pre-image point.
- A vast majority of teachers incorporated the use of technology (SmartBoards, laptops, Flips) into their teachings, as support for all students including students with disabilities and English language learners. For example in a Humanities class, students working in groups had access to articles and templates for their work on their laptops. The collaborative structure of the class also allowed student to share their research and have access to google docs to support them in completing their tasks.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

The school uses common assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas. Across classrooms, teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

### Impact

This results in curricula and instruction adjustment that allows teachers to make effective adjustments to meet all students' learning needs.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use assessment information to group students and assign different classwork. For example students and teachers shared that if they show a higher skill level based on an in class assignment and will be given more challenging versions of content or problems to push their understanding and learning (students shared Math and Humanities work product). Students who struggle with content are sometimes given shorter versions of the content or problem that will still enable them to demonstrate their understanding at completion (student shared before and after poster presentation).
- A variety of formative and summative assessments such as exit slips, reading logs, personal reflections, oral presentations, were used to measure evolving progress in most classrooms. Teachers and administrators reported that 9<sup>th</sup> grade writing teachers assess students through preliminary plans, outline or prototypes and a practice presentation and the summative assessment. A 9<sup>th</sup> grade student concurred during student meeting. Another student shared that in Spanish classes, teachers assess students via daily vocabulary and reflection on daily new concepts. According to students, they are expected to use a critical friend's group protocol as a formative assessment that has components of visual, written, and spoken skills. In Geometry classes, teachers pre and post-test students at the beginning and end of the unit and then in the middle and based on information of the pretest teachers use that information to group students for the unit as well as for deciding if they need materials in different groups and adjust the assessment like options.
- In 10<sup>th</sup> grade writing, outcomes focus on 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and college readiness, such as what is needed to think critically and be successful in academia. Some outcomes included writing a research question, conducting research and making an annotated bibliography. These standards are aligned with reading and writing outcomes used in other classes such as English language arts and Math to help improve skills and understanding.
- Across the school during the month of January many courses give midyear diagnostics or mid-term as a way to find what preparations need to happen for the regents in June. Students concurred that they also have a culminating performance test at the end of the term for the upper grades. The idea according to the principal "is that no one outcome should be graded only once in the courses and teachers should be looking at the performance of the students on particular outcome over time".