



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Academy of Finance and Enterprise

High School 24Q264

**30-20 Thomson Ave
Queens
NY 11101**

Principal: Victoria Armano

**Date of review: March 19, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Juan Mendez**

The School Context

Academy of Finance and Enterprise is a high school with 481 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 7% Black, 51% Hispanic, 15% White, and 22% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 7% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 93.2%.

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 | Additional Findings | Proficient |
| 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 | Well Developed |
| 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 | Celebration | 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:

**3.4 High
Expectations**

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

School leaders promote high levels of expectation for all staff through multiple structures and a culture of reciprocal accountability. The school orchestrates many opportunities to partner with families, keeping them apprised of student progress while implementing distinct guidance structures to distribute information and provide clear next steps to students.

Impact

The clearly embedded culture of mutual accountability, empowering parents and students toward ownership of the learning process with clear connections to Common Core Learning Standards results in high levels of student achievement and college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The weekly memo to students and parents, “What’s Happening at the Academy of Finance and Enterprise this Week?” provides in depth information to the school community. Included in the memo are announcement of school meetings, Advanced Placement exam dates, Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) application information and reminders on food, and cell phone guidelines. The sense of commitment and accountability is summed up when a student commented, “this school points out our strengths and helps us with our weaknesses, they don’t allow us to give up here.”
- The school’s Advisory Board is comprised of parents, teachers, students, alumni, Community Based Organizations (CBO’s) and business partners. Parent workshops for example “The Road to College ... ‘provide information to support students’ progress toward college and career readiness.
- Structures to communicate with students and parents regarding progress toward achievement of goals include the use of EndGrade, phone calls, one on one parent meetings with the principal on weekends, School Messenger, weekly and monthly bulletins. The guidance department uses data to inform strategic workshops for students and parents. For example, guidance collaborates with NYCares to provide support in filling out FAFSA applications.
- The school works with community organizations to support the academic needs of students such as Junior Achievement, National Academy Foundation, Citi Mentoring Program, Virtual Enterprise, Sponsors for Education Opportunity Network, Urban Upbound, NYCares, Big Brother and Big Sister of NYC, Urban League are among some of the partnerships. Parents comment, “my child feels empowered here.”
- Shared accountability for learning and ownership is evidenced by frequent classroom observations, peer-inter-visitations and feedback from classroom visits. Best practices from professional development are implemented by teachers. Intervention strategies are supported by individualized plans to support all learners. For example, teachers adjust questioning techniques based on collaborative meetings and use data to create student progress charts per marking period.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

School leaders and faculty embrace a clear set of beliefs on how students learn best informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching allowing multiple pedagogical approaches. Pedagogical staff are building consistency with regards to teaching practices and student ownership of work products across the school.

Impact

Teaching practices aligned to the Common Core instructional shifts support students to engage in high level discussions yet, opportunities for all learners to produce rigorous work products is not sufficiently embedded across all departments.

Supporting Evidence

- In most classrooms visited, collaborative structures are evident. For example, in English Language Arts, students analyzed the “Letter from Birmingham Jail” through the lens of Aristotle’s rhetorical devices in groups with assigned roles such as expert and questioner.
- The school’s instructional focus centers on complex texts and activities, multiple entry points, coherence and rigor while tailoring assessments. Teachers work with consultants from Generation Ready, which provide departments feedback on best practices and provide workshops pertaining to the Danielson Framework for Teaching.
- In some classrooms visited, students participated in discussions by responding to teacher-generated questions. For example in Managerial Accounting, the teacher asks a series of questions regarding income statements and analysis. However opportunities for student led conversation was not observed.
- Student work products are uniformly integrated into the school’s portfolio assessments, with seniors creating an exit portfolio. In Advanced Placement Global History, students explore whether geography shape humanity or vice versa through the environmental effects of the bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima.
- Varied prompts and learning activities engage most learners, with some missed opportunities for student ownership of work products. For example in Social Studies, students use multiple documents to write claims and peers edit claims in groups regarding the partition of India. However, in a United States History class, students merely fill in the blank with guided notes on American Imperialism.

Additional Findings

| | | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Quality Indicator: | 1.1 Curriculum | Rating: | Proficient |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-------------------|

Findings

Across grades and subject areas, the curriculum is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. Academic tasks are planned and refined using data and student work

Impact

Pivotal curricula improvements result in coherence and promote college and career readiness for all learners. A diversity of learners has access to the curricula and is cognitively engaged in tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- The school recently developed two Career and Technical Education tracks, along with a Business Course Sequence with all curricula aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. These programs are further supported by industry partners such as the National Academy of Foundation and the Virtual Enterprise.
- Curricula maps provide evidence that the school develops rigorous academic tasks through the adaptation of Engage New York and Common Core aligned textbooks. The English as a Second Language curriculum map includes essential questions, performance indicators, assessments, reading and writing foci. The schools Comprehensive Education Plan reveals intended alignment of English Language Arts curriculum with Common Core Learning Standards in order to achieve a 3% increase in the number of students passing the exam.
- Academic tasks reflect inclusion of Common Core instructional shifts, which culminate in tasks refined over time. Teachers modify and support instruction within six cycles using data collected daily to inform adjustments. The school's portfolio projects are thematic and promote higher order thinking skills with students conducting hands on activities, research and writing with projects connected to the global world. For example, a 12th grade Spanish portfolio essay examined "the role of Hispanic voters in the reelection of President Obama."
- English language learners and students with disabilities have access to the curriculum with textual supports, vocabulary scaffolds, visual and audio aids. For example, in algebra and trigonometry, students are given critical vocabulary on terms such as coefficients, daily writing journals, follow written directions on graphing functions and perform visual calculator function notations on the Interactive Board. The citywide percentage of English language learners graduating within four years is in the highest tier in the city at 89%.
- Lesson plans in all content areas emphasize higher order thinking skills and a range of student choice in task completion. In chemistry, tasks include building molecular structures of compounds, identifying relationships between the number of bonds and types of molecules in the compound and providing reasoning why the molecule is an acid or a base. In Living Environment the curriculum map includes a unit on reproduction and development with students engaging in mitosis labs, constructing models of meiosis and mitosis and investigations of inherited human traits. The school has a citywide weighted Regents examination pass rate of 90% and over in each subject area: English language arts, Global history, United States history, math and science.

Findings

Common assessments aligned to curricula in all subject areas are used to track student progress. Teachers consistently use checks for understanding, make effective adjustments in instruction to meet the needs of all learners and provide students with actionable feedback to understand the steps required to succeed.

Impact

The school's highly structured systems to monitor and track student progress through data analysis as well as during classroom instruction are used to sustain collaborative inquiry and continuously improve instruction toward student mastery of Common Core Learning Standards and awareness of next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders establish fixed classroom routines which utilize assessment strategies to drive teachers to elicit checks for understanding and encourage student self-assessment. For example, in chemistry, students complete test corrections and explanations of each incorrect answer. Corrections are then posted on bulletin boards to encourage learning for all. The school utilizes an "Academic Emergency Room" allowing students to peer tutor and assist in their peers' success.
- Vertical and horizontal teams meet to assess student progress driven by data inquiry. Teams analyze subgroups, lowest third, English Language Learners and students with disabilities in order to make strategic adjustments to the curricula. For example, an outgrowth of collaboration resulted in one on one conferencing for students with disabilities on Regents examination questions.
- An amalgamation of college level practices, including high quality feedback on student portfolio projects relevant to complex texts and research inquiry required in senior exit portfolios has helped bolster the six-year graduation rate to 97%.
- Student work products include research and inquiry writing from ninth through twelfth grade and are showcased at an invitation event for parents and families. Student writing is accompanied by rubrics, objectives aligned to standards, and connection to real world issues such as the impact of technology.
- Data tracking systems are highly structured and track student progress across all grades and subject areas so that the learning needs of all students are met. Each teacher completes data analysis for each course and subject taught, identifying students by name, reasons for lack of success, specific instructional strategies and academic interventions to be used to address their needs and whether they are meeting, developing or exceeding standards. Data analysis plans are reviewed with administration and teaching strategies are continuously refined.

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

Findings

Teachers participate in professional collaborations and distributed leadership structures that foster reflection as well as provide opportunities to examine data on inquiry teams allowing for collaborative input on curricula and teaching practices.

Impact

The outgrowth of the administration's and faculty's effective use of data analysis is seen in improved pedagogy and student progress on assessments. Shared leadership structures build capacity, strengthen trust and result in school wide instructional coherence and student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams build a repository of documents to sequence and memorialize team efforts aligned to instructional objectives, standards and school wide goals. For example, a vertical team meets to discuss portfolio concerns, curriculum decisions aligned to Common Core Learning Standards, career and technical concerns, and upcoming case conferences with the guidance department resulting in improve teacher practice.
- Across the school, professional collaboration has amplified the impact on student achievement as evidenced by increase in student credit accumulation; first year students being in highest tier citywide and increased passing percentages. The 85% and 89% graduation rates for Students with disabilities and English language underscore the effect this embedded sharing promotes.
- Teacher leaders are a part of each team, collaborate with administration, attend and conduct professional development and turnkey information aligned to the Common Core and their respective content areas. For example, teachers examine argumentative writing student work samples and make adjustments to format and criterion which is then adopted by the department.
- Teachers articulate that they feel empowered to have input on decisions toward the use and development of instructional resources and strategies across grades. A teacher commented, "I like that we can address specific students and their needs both academic and social emotional."
- Teacher teams analyze student data and create class profiles to support the needs of their students. Action plans reflect the diverse population as well as the individualized instructional plans to support learners. For example, one teacher's plan included students identified by name and whether students were meeting, developing or exceeding standards with skills such as graph interpretations, drawing conclusions and writing lab reports.