



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Forest Hills

High School Q440

**67-01 110th Street
Forest Hills,
NY 11375**

Principal: Saul Gootnik

Date of review: January 16, 2015

Lead Reviewer: Juan Mendez

Additional Findings

Forest Hills is a high school with 3836 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 9% Black, 34% Hispanic, 30% White, and 26% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 7% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 91.3%.

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	Additional Findings	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	Focus	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	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
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Findings

The school has orchestrated a culture of high expectations for learning via multiple methods of communication to all constituents, partnering with families, and supporting students with effective feedback and supports.

Impact

A clear path to college and career readiness has been established through transparent channels of communication with families and students that deepen their understanding of the expectations of student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- The use of Skedula, Pupil Path, and Daedalus, across all grade levels ensures that essential information is communicated to families on their children’s progress towards mastery of Common Core Learning Standards and overall performance. Additionally, through ongoing Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings, collaborative workshops such as college and career and Common Core Standards, parents are engaged as partners. Parents highlighted, “The school places high expectations on children, assistant principals are very responsive, and tutoring is always available.”
- All students have opportunities to thrive via exposure to college level work with six College Now courses, varied Advanced Placement courses, and a partnership with Queens College. Students have earned more than 1000 college credits. The post-secondary enrollment rate is 72% with students enrolling in college within six months of graduation. Student ownership of their learning process is evident through support and participation in ongoing tutoring sessions, which occurs before and after school. The school website showcases school-wide activities and fosters an awareness of college expectations, and access to library databases promoting inquiry-based research.
- High expectations are manifested through structured guidance supports for individual students with one-on-one conferencing. Guidance counselors are present at Parent Association meetings to communicate the expectation of the school’s learning environment. A robust guidance page on the school website communicates college information for both students and parents. The guidance department uses the push-in model in classrooms to review college preparedness and expectations as well as Naviance, to meet students’ individual needs, while students’ strengths and goals are assessed and monitored and tracked for a smooth transition into college.
- The school partners with families to support progress toward college readiness. The parental translation team is comprised of bilingual staff members who translate important information to families in letters, fliers and emails. The school houses an open house for new students and families sharing instructional expectations and rigorous course offerings. Monthly Parent Association conferences, parent teacher conferences within the year and School Leadership Team meetings are all used to communicate clear expectations.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

The school uses common assessments in all subject areas and tracks progress of students; however, it is still crafting routines to make strategic instructional adjustments to meet the needs of all learners. Most teachers use ongoing checks for understanding in classrooms yet student self-assessment is inconsistent.

Impact

The school's systems to monitor progress through data analysis sustain collaborative inquiry. Assessment practices during instruction are varied and intermittently used to inform curricula amendments in units and lessons in order to meet the learning needs of all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Student self-assessment is evident in most classrooms, but not in the vast majority of classrooms. Students use writing checklists in English with established criteria to peer-assess oral presentations.
- Teacher teams meet weekly to review assessment data, analyze trends and make adjustments to curricula. Teachers of English language learners examine item analysis reports and tailor instruction to meet deficiencies. For example, teachers adjusted curriculum maps in English language arts based on time per unit and included graphic organizers to scaffold learning.
- Teachers' assessment practices include exit tickets as a check for understanding and medial summary, in order to make effective adjustments to meet the learning needs of students, as evidenced in Global History classes. For example, the students' exit slip in Global History mirrored a document based question as on the Global History Regents examination.
- School-wide tracking of student progress on common assessments and baseline assessments and subsequent adjustments to curricula and instruction have bolstered the six-year graduation rate to 88%. Adjustments include incorporating Common Core shifts in units such as citing evidence from complex texts and reading informational texts.
- Common assessments are increasingly added to meet the needs of rigorous standards. The school added the National Occupational Competency Testing Institute (NOCTI) Examination in Career and Technical Education Business, the National Latin Examination, the WISE Financial Literacy Examination and the NYC Comprehensive Examination in music. Assessment data is used to norm instructional practice, though adjustments are made inconsistently across grades and subject areas.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

All curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards. Higher order thinking and writing skills are consistently emphasized for most learners across grades and content areas.

Impact

The school's curricula decisions promote rigor, build coherence, and accelerate college and career readiness for all learners. Academic tasks are an impetus for higher level critical thinking across grades and subject areas.

Supporting Evidence

- In social studies, teachers work in common planning teams to revise units and lessons to help all learners reach the standards in the Social Studies Framework. Adjustments are made by incorporating writing skills and deepened spatial thinking approaches into units with mapping skills. The Citywide percentage for the Global History Regents Examination is in the highest tier in the city at 81%. The school's "We the People" team are the New York State Champions for 2013 and 2014.
- Teachers revise units from EngageNY. Departments and disciplines have incorporated argumentative writing, reflecting the Common Core shifts, into the curricula. In History and English, students write from sources and respond from the texts, both verbally and in writing. In English classes, the non-fiction texts inform the fiction texts. For example, students read Martin Luther King Jr. speeches alongside *To Kill a Mockingbird* in units on American Society. Revisions are made to units with the addition or deletion of resources to support the instructional objectives.
- All learners including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities have access to demonstrate their thinking. The Citywide percentage of Self-Contained English language learners graduating within four years is in the highest tier in the city at 92%. In math, curriculum is spiraled so lessons build on prior knowledge. For example, skills such as number ordering and solving for a system of inequalities in graphing are scaffolded for learners with visual aids, kinesthetic approaches, and student selection of assignments and tasks.
- Increased rigor in curricula, where students integrate skills into processes and solve real world problems enhancing college readiness, has led to substantial gains. Student present research-based inquiry projects to the faculty each year during the Spring. This year's School Quality Snapshot rates science teachers as "excellent" in moving student levels from their incoming level toward passing their respective Regents examination.
- Lesson plans in all content areas emphasize higher order thinking skills including multiple strategies students may choose from in completing rigorous tasks. For example, in a ninth grade Instructional Support Services (ISS) Algebra class, students create equations in two or more variables to represent relationships between quantities, graph equations, and act as problem solvers by using varied tools to analyze the integrated study of number sense and operations. Students use real world application of these concepts in a salary analysis project with modifications such as model examples, visual aids, peer collaboration, varied levels of equations, and hands on activities to complete the task.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty share a lucid set of beliefs on how students learn best informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Teaching practices and student ownership of work products vary across the school.

Impact

Teaching practices aligned to the Common Core instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching support students to engage in high-level discussions and to produce meaningful work products, yet there are missed opportunities for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's instructional focus is student engagement, with teacher teams and professional development taking a pivotal role in improving the levels of engagement reflected in the classrooms. For example, in an eleventh grade Advanced Literacy class with English language learners, students act as detectives to cite textual evidence in an assigned case and assess their peers' oral presentations using a writing checklist with established criteria. According to the School Quality Survey, 96% agreed that school leaders place a high priority on the quality of teaching. Some classrooms exhibited collaborative structures, yet it was not consistent across all classes.
- Assignments and activities are scaffolded for most learners with differentiation allowing for them to engage in the lesson. In a tenth grade Global History class with English language learners, students evaluate articles of the Treaty of Versailles and determine its impact on World War II. Students are strategically grouped by language ability, directions to the assignment are printed in multiple languages, with translated texts, visual maps, and graphic organizers, allowing students access to Common Core aligned tasks. Students complete meaningful work products in the form of an essay integrating multiple sources and using argumentation to prove the main causes of World War II.
- Teachers utilize Bloom's taxonomy and Webb's Depth of Knowledge to promote higher order thinking skills. In a Physics lab on centripetal force, students are asked pivotal questions such as, "Why does the radius have no effect on the centripetal force in this lab?" Students share findings, repeat procedures and express answers in both narrative explanations and in the forms of equations. Questioning techniques varied across classrooms, with some discussions being teacher centered.
- Technology is used sporadically to enhance student engagement. In a tenth grade Geometry class, students view a clip of "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?" in a study of the Pythagorean Theorem. In an ISS Math class, the Interactive Board is used to show linear equations, relationships between quantities, and coordinate axes with labels and scales. The school celebrates technology awards and recognition, it has garnered first place in the Virtual Enterprise Queens Business Plan Completion and first place in the Catalog Competition at the NYC Trade Fair.

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

Teachers consistently examine data and student work within inquiry based teams promoting the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards. Leadership structures provide a supportive means for teachers to have input on key leadership decisions regarding curricula and teaching practices.

Impact

The work of teacher teams has built a culture of professional collaboration resulting in improved pedagogy and student progress on assessments. Shared leadership structures build capacity and improve student achievement for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has made significant adjustments to scheduling structure in order to support teacher collaboration. Teachers meet two periods a day for common planning and professional development time. This has fostered an environment of professional collaboration and conversation with the goal of improving student academic achievement.
- Teacher teams meet to examine Common Core standards, instructional shifts, and realign curriculum according to these shifts. For example, teacher teams examined academic vocabulary and devised units and lessons building on vocabulary students need to engage in grade specific texts, key words, tiered words, and for them to adjust lessons accordingly.
- Data inquiry teams identify students at-risk academically or behaviorally and implement systems with guidance and teacher teams to support students. Scholarship reports, assessment data, guidance data, and teacher observation data, are used to inform decisions. For example, teacher team inquiry work with a focus on subgroups in science has impacted student gains with 90% Citywide averages for Regents examinations including gains for English language learners and students with disabilities.
- Distributive leadership structures are in place to ensure collaboration, with team leaders and teacher leaders presenting new projects and revised plans weekly to the team and administration. For example, teachers present on using argument-writing strategies across content areas with counter arguments and claims being central to the revisions made to curricula and instructional practices.
- Teacher teams discuss the importance of rigor by content and skill level and to deepen the work of the school's varied academic programs: Carl Sagan Research Program, Law and Humanities Program, Drama Academy, Music Academy, and Health Professionals Academy. Students in the Law Academies take part in a four -year course of study that takes them from an introduction to law and legal writing through a study of civil and criminal law as well as constitutional law as well as have the opportunity to take part in internships with New York law firms, the Queens District Attorney Office and benefit from partnerships with NYU, Fordham Law and Hughes, Hubbard and Reed.