



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Frank Sinatra School of the Arts

High School Q501

**35-12 35th Avenue
Queens
NY 11106**

Principal: Donna Finn

**Date of review: April 15, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Philip A. Composto**

The School Context

Frank Sinatra School of the Arts is a High School with 790 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 14% Black, 33% Hispanic, 39% White, and 10% Asian students. The student body includes 0% English language learners and 6% special education students. Boys account for 31% of the students enrolled and girls account for 69%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 94.0%.

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	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	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

Curricula across grades strategically and consistently integrate the instructional shifts and rigorous tasks that push all students to high levels of achievement.

Impact

Students produce work products that demonstrate high levels of engagement and thinking that promote college and career readiness for all students, including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers in each subject area created curriculum maps and a syllabus for each course that is offered at the school. Teachers aligned curriculum and integrated the instructional shifts required of the Common Core Standards and/or the Blueprint for the Arts, which has resulted in curricular coherence across the school.
- To address the shift from the New York State Regents exams to New York State Common Core Regents exams, teachers developed new unit plans, lesson plans, and assessments aligned to the Common Core Standards that prepare students for college and career success. This year the school has implemented a trigonometry course to be given over two years, added a physics course and offers additional advanced placement classes. Additionally, all 10th grade students are now required to take chemistry. As a result, over 97% of students are college and career ready which is well above the citywide average of 51%.
- Department teachers developed learning projects for each academic subject area that require students to synthesize and apply content knowledge and skills in authentic student work products that demonstrate deep understanding by all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities. For example, in the global studies unit and lesson plans it indicated the heterogeneous grouping of students by reading and writing levels, incorporated an array of reading materials written on varied Lexile levels and included videos to support ELLs and students with disabilities. In one global history lesson plan, the task required students to write an argumentative essay to address the following question, "Were the Crusades beneficial or harmful to the medieval world? Be sure to gather evidence to support your argument and create a well thought out thesis statement."

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics and common assessments aligned with the school's curricula, which provide actionable feedback to teachers and students that inform instructional and curricular adjustments.

Impact

Teachers use the information and data from students' rubrics and assessments to identify learning needs that allows them to make adjustments to curricula and instructional practices; however, during instruction in academic classes there was little evidence to support checks for understanding and immediate instructional adjustments.

Supporting Evidence

- Rubrics are used across classrooms in order to support students to take ownership for their learning. A student shared, "We receive rubrics before assignments so we know what is expected and the components that we will be graded on. It tells us what we need to include in each area to get the grade we want like 'meeting' or 'exceeding standards.'" Teachers use rubrics that have been collaboratively developed to make expectations clear and transparent to students resulting in consistency and coherence across the school. Several teachers stated, "Since implementing these rubrics, the quality of students' work and grades have improved."
- School leaders and teachers monitor students that have not mastered the necessary content and/or skills required on the Regents exams. Particular attention is given to students that have failed a Regents exam and will need to re-take it. Additional supports in the form of teacher tutoring, peer tutoring, on-line videos and Regents practice sessions are provided during and after school for these students. Even so, there is limited use of checks for understanding during class, limiting teachers' opportunities to make timely adjustments to curricula and instruction.
- Teachers use the item analysis reports from Regent exams and common assessments to make adjustments to the depth and breadth of curricula as well as inform intervention. For example, US History teachers used an item analysis from a mock Regent's exam and noticed that students did not score well on questions related to the structure of the United States government and federalism. As a result, teachers adjusted future lessons to re-teach this content by using a character profile with relationships to groups of people so students could relate and understand how groups like bankers and merchants would want to support the federalists and ordinary people like farmers and laborers would be want to support the anti-federalists for fear that a stronger government would threaten their personal liberties.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty share a clear set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by a research-based framework and consistently engages students in high levels of thinking and participation.

Impact

The school's coherent pedagogical approach supports students in building conceptual understandings, leading to higher levels of engagement and awareness that has helped to improve student progress and student ownership. This pedagogical approach has created a culture where students are cognitively engaged, support one another and take ownership of their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and faculty believe that students need to be actively engaged in learning and have clear and transparent expectations. This belief is evident where the school provides a course syllabus for each course students are interested in enrolling. The syllabus outlines a description of the course with units of study, expectations, grading policy, and provides choices in major assignments. This practice actively engages students in learning and allows them to take ownership of their own educational journey.
- Teachers across the school provide tutoring sessions during the school day and after-school to assist students that struggling with a particular lesson, topic or to prepare for Regents exams. This practice has contributed to the school's impressive Regents' pass rates, which is higher than the average of the city and one of the highest in their peer group. 98% of students earned enough credits in 10th grade to be on track for graduation in four years. 100% of students graduated in four years.
- Teachers across the school use questions to promote high levels of student thinking using an array of Webb's Depth of Knowledge levels and tasks that provide multiple entry points. For example, in a 12th grade English class students were engaged in an analysis of *Animal Farm* discussing the key allegorical themes. Students were asked to analyze select phrases and interpret what they really mean and answer the predictive question, "Why are these phrases used instead of saying things directly?"

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and staff consistently communicate high expectations that are connected to a path of college and career and successfully partner with families to support student progress toward those expectations. Students are provided with clear, focused and effective feedback and guidance/advisement supports.

Impact

These clear and consistent expectations and focus on learning outcomes bolster the school's learning environment where students own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level. As a result, there are high levels of college readiness while the infusion of performing arts into the curricula motivates and positively impacts student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- The school holds an orientation for incoming freshmen where students are informed of the school's academic and behavioral expectations. Students are acquainted with the school's grading policy, studio performance policy, credit accumulation process and the importance of work habits, organizational skills, self-regulation, focus, persistence and perseverance. They are provided with their schedules and introduced to their guidance counselor and the *Naviance* college and career system that empowers them to identify their individual strengths and learning styles and explore college and career options.
- A course syllabus is given to students that outlines the material covered, required readings, major assignments and a culminating project. Checklists and four-point rubrics are tailored to assignments and presentations that guide students in their work. Expectations for assignments are clearly stated including the required elements and descriptions for each level of performance. When speaking with students, they articulated how they use these rubrics. One student stated, "I use the checklist to make sure I included everything and I use the rubric to make sure I have met all the criteria to get the grade that I want."
- It is the school's belief that "only when students have mastered their art form are they free to achieve their fullest potential as artists." All students are enrolled in studio art classes or conservatories based on their area of interest and talent. The school focuses on the integration of the arts and academic subjects that are enriched by experiences with cultural institutions. One of the school's guiding principles is "Art Across the Curriculum" that urges academic subjects to infuse connections between their disciplines and the arts. As articulated by the principal, "When a student can see the relationship between a discovery in physics and how it connects to music or painting, we have succeeded in widening his/her world." One student stated, "What I learned in global history has allowed me to better understand the emotional tone and meaning of various operettas."
- Families and students have access to the on-line grading system, Pupil Path. They can check grades and get information about homework, test scores, projects, assignments, attendance, upcoming events, and contact teachers. One parent stated, "We monitor our child's grades using Pupil Path." Another stated, "The school does an excellent job helping students in college application process and marking sure they are on-track for success." The High School Quality Snapshot revealed that 97% of students completed college preparatory courses and assessments and 80% of graduating students enrolled in college or post-secondary programs; however it was actually 98% including conservatories.

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

Teachers benefit from participating in inquiry-based professional collaborations that foster reflection and growth as well as provide insights for adjusting instructional practices. They also grow professionally by making school-wide decisions that focus on improved student achievement.

Impact

Teachers play an integral role in key decisions that are resulting in shared improvements in teacher practice and leading to school-wide instructional coherence and increased student outcomes across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders, teacher teams and guidance counselors monitor credit accumulation, course pass rates and attendance of students using data from Automate the Schools (ATS), Student Tracking Academic Reporting System (STARS) and Skedula, the school's on-line grading system. Guidance counselors meet with students and parents that are not on track to develop intervention plans and supports for each student. At one team meeting, grade level teachers were discussing students they share that were in danger of failing. The team brainstormed intervention strategies to assist this group of students. Some of the intervention strategies discussed included buddying students with other higher performing students, providing recommendations of on-line video lessons on topics not yet mastered, and scheduling students for individual tutoring sessions. Teachers identified step one strategies for each of these students.
- Throughout the school, teacher teams have built capacity by working collaboratively in subject teams focusing on looking at student work, aligning common assessments to the Common Core Learning Standards and Regents exams, and incorporating additional supports for all students to access curriculum, including students with disabilities. For example, the math team collaboratively worked to re-align the Integrated Algebra Regents course to the new common core Algebra I course. From analyzing results from mock Algebra I exams, teachers have begun to adjust lessons to include the re-teaching of quadratics and function transformations since these were areas where students experienced the most difficulty.
- Across the entire school, teacher teams collaboratively work together to create and refine individual rubrics that are used for homework, classwork, group work, presentations, paragraph writing, and research papers. Teachers stated that they developed these to make grading expectations transparent to students and are consistent across the school. Several teachers shared that these rubrics have helped to improve the quality of students' work as well as their grades.