



**Department of
Education**

Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

East Fordham Academy for the Arts

Middle School X459

**120 East 184th Street
Bronx
NY 10468**

Principal: Tancia Rivera

**Date of review: January 14, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Melodie Mashel**

The School Context

East Fordham Academy for the Arts is a middle school with 357 students from grade six through grade eight. The school population comprises 15% Black, 81% Hispanic, 2% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 23% English language learners and 21% 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 91.0%.

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	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	Developing
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	Proficient
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	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

The school's curricula is aligned is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. Students engage in challenging tasks.

Impact

The school's curricular decisions ensure instructional coherence. Students participate in rigorous tasks that promote thinking and college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses Columbia University Teachers' College Reading and Writing units of study. Students read across genres and engage in writing arguments that require them to take a stance and support their written claims with text evidence. For example, in a seventh grade special education class, students read excerpts from *The Stolen Party*, analyzed the relationship between the characters in a text and wrote persuasive essays that supported their description and analysis of the relationships between the story characters.
- Units designed by teachers in math serve as the curriculum for math. The units are supplemented with Engage New York modules ensuring these are further common core aligned. New York City scope and sequence serve as the school's curricula for science and social studies.
- Teacher lesson plans in all subject areas emphasize higher order thinking. In all classrooms visited, written lesson plans indicated numerous tasks ranging across depth of knowledge levels.
- Written lesson plans include modifications for English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities which identify the use of a variety of leveled texts and graphic organizers to use to support these two groups.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

While the school's written units address components of the Common Core Learning Standards, teacher practice that reflects key instructional shifts is emerging. The level of student work varies across disciplines and classrooms.

Impact

The majority of teachers have yet to make the instructional shifts needed in their practice to support students in meeting the demands of the Common Core Learning Standards. As a result, there are missed opportunities for students to produce meaningful work at standard levels.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders believe students learn best through structured lessons with teachers planning lessons that engage students in learning. In some classrooms visited, students participated in either turn and talk or discussions about their work. In other classrooms, lessons reflected a lecture style where lessons were teacher dominated.
- While the school has developed a clear set of cohesive practices in the use of Teachers' College reading and writing workshop, the use of questioning techniques that are informed by Danielson's Framework for Teaching that are high level and promote student thinking is not yet a fully embedded practice.
- Students write across genres, disciplines and engage in the writing process. However, opportunities for on demand writing are limited and students state it takes them a long period of time to complete one writing piece within a unit.
- A review of student work folders in math reveals students engaged in work that required them to solve problems. However, in some of the classrooms visited, students did not complete complex problems that required them to solve problems with multiple steps.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school uses common assessments to monitor student progress toward standards. Teachers check for student understanding and students assess the quality of their work.

Impact

The school uses common assessments and the analysis of data to track student progress to inform adjustments in instruction, units and lesson plans to meet students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses common assessments in all subject areas. Teachers administer pre- and post-assessments for all units. In addition, Teachers College assessments are used to monitor student progress in English language arts.
- Teachers monitor student progress through Skedula and adjust instructional practices that provide students with added support such as; student fluid groupings, guided and independent practice and targeted re-teaching.
- Teachers consistently check for student understanding of lessons taught through conferences and the use of exit slips. Student misconceptions of lessons taught are addressed and reviewed in the following days "Do Now" activity.
- Students use rubrics to assess the quality of their work and gain understanding of the next steps that elevate work to standard levels. For example, in a sixth grade integrated co-teaching class, students used rubric criteria to self and peer assess after completing a multi-step math problem.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

High expectations are consistently conveyed to staff through the use of Danielson's Framework for Teaching as well as through other communication streams. Feedback that keeps families informed of student progress is messaged through a variety of venues.

Impact

Structures that disseminate the school's high expectations ensure all stakeholders are accountable, thus promoting high levels of learning and achievement and preparing students for a college and career path.

Supporting Evidence

- Frequent classroom observations using Danielson's Framework competencies, leadership conversations with staff, return visits to classrooms, hold staff accountable for meeting expectations that elevates the level of their craft.
- Weekly professional learning sessions around selected topics informed by Danielson's Framework for Teaching and teacher interest and challenges, and a consultancy with Columbia University Teachers' College provide teachers with support that further raises the level of their instructional practice.
- Positive Behavior Interventions Systems (PBIS) and a daily student pledge emphasize the school's expectations that support student behaviors. Parent orientation sessions, monthly "Pancakes with the Principal" meetings, Curriculum Nights, Career days, Senior Nights and guidance meetings keep parents informed of the school's expectations. Sessions devoted to High School selection maintain parents abreast of the requirements of the High School admission process.
- Skedula provides parents and students information about student academic and personal growth.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teacher teams engage in structured collaborations. Teachers share in curricular and instructional decisions.

Impact

School leaders and teacher team participate in structured collaborations and share in key curricular decisions that promote student learning outcomes and build teacher capacity.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams further align the school's curriculum to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). For example, teachers integrate CCLS writing standards across all content area subjects by embedding additional writing opportunities into content lessons. Visits to classrooms reveal students writing across disciplines. For example, in an eighth grade math class students were required to write a short response which explained what two equations had in common.
- Teacher teams meet regularly with Teachers' College consultants to support them in elevating the level of their reading and writing instructional practices and make adjustments to units. For example, teachers determined that it was necessary to adjust the pacing of particular units and to embed additional short text reading material to meet students' learning needs.
- Teachers facilitate grade level or content subject area meetings. Teachers meet weekly to look at student work and discuss instructional practices that support student learning. For example, in a meeting of English as a second language (ESL) teachers, ESL teachers from all grades analyzed the practice of having English Language Learners(ELLs) create and respond to their own Depth of Knowledge questions. Teachers determined that ESL students readily designed level 2, 3 and 4 questions and wrote short responses to their questions.
- Teachers expressed that they provide input about teacher practice that works and are instrumental in developing additional curricular resources that supplement the school's curriculum.