



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School

High School X682

**1021 Jennings Street
Bronx
NY 10460**

Principal: Jeffery Palladino

**Date of review: March 23, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Leticia Pineiro**

The School Context

Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School has 464 students from grade nine through grade twelve. The school population comprises 30% Black, 68% Hispanic, .50% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 8% English language learners and 29% 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 80%.

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	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	Celebration	Proficient

Area of Celebration

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

Teacher teams consistently engage in organized collaborative work utilizing an inquiry approach that focuses on analyzing a variety of data and student work. Leadership structures provide teachers with opportunities to engage in instructional decisions.

Impact

The work of teacher teams has led to improved teacher practices and progress toward student learning outcomes that are aligned to school-wide goals. A distributive leadership structure engages teachers in instructional decisions that impact student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams participate in peer observations. Peer observation feedback notes for fifty-eight peer observation feedback sessions include information on each teacher's area of focus and goals, low inference notes, observer commendations, observer recommendations, and next steps determined by the observer.
- Humanities team minutes and math/science team minutes demonstrate the collaborative nature of the teachers on these teams. Minutes reflect that teachers co-construct curricula together, track teachers' pacing through units of learning, and track students' progress of completion toward summative assessments known as masteries. The successful completion of a range of masteries across content areas are included in students' graduation portfolios. An increase in portfolio submission was one of the school's Comprehensive Educational Plan goals, and data shows an increase in portfolio submission from 75% in June 2014 to 92% in January 2015..
- During targeted team meetings, teachers utilize the ATLAS protocol for examining student work. Minutes submitted by the math /science team demonstrate use of this protocol in which student work is analyzed, with teachers making observations of areas in which students' needed more instructional support such as, "The student states a lot of science facts without evidence and the student needs to explain the equation algebraically rather than geometrically."
- Distributive leadership is evidenced in structures such as the Professional Development Committee. This committee meets bimonthly to discuss the school's professional development goals, and develops plans for specific sessions. These planning meetings are open to all staff, and always include a lead teacher, four model teachers, and two administrators.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Teacher pedagogy does not consistently demonstrate questioning and discussion techniques, scaffolds in English, and instructional supports that would enable all learners to utilize higher-order thinking skills and produce meaningful work.

Impact

Students have inconsistent access to multiple entry points into the curricula that engage them in appropriately challenging academic tasks. Across classrooms, student work products and discussions reflect uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- During an English as a Second Language class, students debated if a memoirist has a legal and/or moral obligation to tell the truth in his/her autobiography. However, the structure to the debate lacked clarity, and the teacher's expectation was limited to requiring that all students speak at least one time. Students were not encouraged to cite texts to support their arguments. One student referred to a text to support his claim. While there was student to student discourse, students were engaged in a circular discussion, and did not consistently build off of each other's ideas to deepen an assertion. For example, a student stated, "You should get punished if you are lying about someone else and getting money." A student responded, "If it is not true why would it affect me?" During the debate, the teacher did not employ questioning techniques to redirect the conversation or to challenge students to deepen their thinking by considering alternative perspectives.
- Across classrooms visited, students worked in flexible groups or independently. However, some students were not appropriately challenged. For example, in a grade 11 and 12 math class, students were revising their quadratic functions projects. Students were given a choice of three contexts to which they could apply formulas such as the distance formula, the change of rate formula, and the Pythagorean theory. Some students said that they had completed similar work in their grade 9 and 10 math classes. While these students may have been able to create more sophisticated graphs and tables on their own, further differentiation of content, process, or product was needed to make the task more challenging for students who struggled with the task.
- There was inconsistent student participation in rigorous discussions and inconsistent demonstration of skill in producing work products that showed mastery of skills and content. In a grade 9 and 10 science class, while students were engaged in a real world application about microbes, they did not display sufficient knowledge about experimental design to set up their labs effectively. The teacher circulated the room and monitored the students for progress. However, the teacher did not ask higher order questions about each group's hypothesis or the design of their experiments. The students did not demonstrate an understanding of the significance of a control or variables in experimental design. As a result, although both breads they were testing contained preservatives, one group of students hypothesized that the bread that did not contain preservatives would grow microbes more easily.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Curricula and learning activities are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and incorporate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and adjusted using a variety of data that reflects the needs of diverse students.

Impact

Curricula and academic tasks illustrate habits of mind and higher-order thinking skills that are embedded vertically and horizontally. English language learners and students with disabilities have access to the curricula and tasks, and are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- Curricula coherence for the grade 9 and 10 is ensured through a two-year curriculum. The construction of curricula by using a team model results in embedded interdisciplinary project-based learning with opportunities for real world connections. For example, in a grade 9 and 10 math class, one unit plan focuses on an interdisciplinary project entitled *Redesigning the Bronx*. Students analyze changes within the community and conduct a needs assessment to create a vision for a public space. Students engage in rigorous learning tasks such as writing a proposal, creating an architectural blueprint, and conducting a mathematical analysis of their site.
- The school uses the Atlas Curriculum Management System to facilitate the alignment of the curriculum to Common Core Learning Standards, and to ensure that the principles of Universal Design for Learning are reflected in plans to create multiple entry points for all learners. In an Atlas grade 9 and 10 humanities unit plan using the *Facing History and Ourselves* curriculum around the Holocaust and human behavior, students engage in rigorous academic tasks promoting historical inquiry and research. Students proceed through lessons and engage in independent research using video, photographs, texts, a visit to museum, and other sources to form claims and support their claims with evidence from multiple sources to address essential questions like, “How do individual choices influence history?” Another unit plan designed for a grade 11 United States History course focused on the Montgomery Bus Boycott of the Civil Rights Movement and integrated rigorous learning activities such as Socratic seminars, debates, and persuasive writing to explore whether the success of the boycott should be attributed to the Supreme Court or the citizens of Montgomery.
- Adjustments to the curricula occur during teacher team meetings. During an observation of a teacher team meeting, a humanities teacher articulated that she was going to give more opportunities for on-demand writing in her units to support all learners in their ability to form a claim and support it with three pieces of evidence. Teacher teams have common planning time once a week for two and a half hours. This enables individual teachers and teams of teachers to strategically plan and refine curricula to meet the needs of all learners. This year, teachers were trained to use Fred Newman’s Authentic Intellectual Work Rubrics to assist them in norming and reflecting on higher order thinking standards as they planned academic tasks.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers create and utilize common assessments and rubrics to track student progress toward mastery of content and skills in all subject areas and grades. Teachers utilize an online tracker to assess student learning and identify next learning steps.

Impact

The schools' common assessments and system for monitoring student progress results in effective curricula revisions and actionable feedback to students.

Supporting Evidence

- Portfolios are the main assessment tool for students. Students complete four language portfolios in grades 9 and 10. The work for this portfolio consists of projects from each course. Successful projects are expected to reflect mastery of the learning goals and essential questions from each course. Grade 9 students receive written feedback from advisors that are reviewed by the faculty. Grade 10 students present their portfolios at the end of grade 10 for evaluation by a committee that includes the students' advisor, another teacher, and up to three other students. Upperclassmen complete projects called masteries in seven different content areas. These projects are designed for students to explore one significant issue in-depth in the context of the discipline of study. Students select pieces for their graduation portfolio, and present their graduation portfolio to a committee for evaluation.
- Systems are established for ongoing formative assessment and summative benchmark collection and review. Google Docs is used as the primary assessment tool. All students post their work on Google Docs. Students share their work with teachers and teachers give students feedback using Google Drive. A tracker on Google Drive is utilized by teachers to conference with students and to provide feedback for actionable next steps. Students utilize the tracker to monitor their progress as they work on a project. The establishment of a digital portfolio system has increased the portfolio submission rate from 50% in spring 2014 to 85% in fall 2014. Additionally, teachers utilize the Hapara Teacher Dashboard for Google Apps to get a real-time view of all of their students' Google Doc activity and can use the dashboard to send differentiated assignments to individual students or student sub-groups.
- Common rubrics from the New York Performance Standards Consortium are used across grades and content areas to assess literary analysis, social studies research papers, math and science projects, and oral presentations. The use of these rubrics clarifies learning expectations for students, facilitates assessment practices and curricula revisions, and provides students with ongoing actionable feedback.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations and provide training to the entire staff to improve instruction and communication. Frequent updates, workshops, and resources apprise families of student progress connected to college and career readiness goals.

Impact

High expectations and training for teachers have resulted in a system of accountability for those expectations. Supports provided to families ensure that they understand student progress toward college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers have received training from the Eagle Rock Professional Learning Community to learn how to engage in a structured peer observation process. Teams established their own protocols for establishing a focus, taking low inference notes, delivering effective feedback, and providing colleagues with a space to critically reflect on their practice to determine next steps for instructional moves that will increase student learning. This training has promoted accountability for instructional expectations as well as expectations regarding effective communication among teachers. One teacher stated, “It has been helpful to use a protocol. It depersonalizes the process, and helps teachers to critically reflect on the practice of both teachers. We are here to get better.”
- The use of digital portfolios provides systematic communication that promotes a unified set of high expectations for students, families and staff. Presentations on how the digital portfolio system works were given at parent teacher conferences and at a parent association meeting to show the content, skills, and standards students needed to master in order to achieve mastery levels for portfolio projects. Parents can access this system as well. One parent stated that the system, “Prepares students for college writing, research, and understanding what a thesis is.” Another parent liked the idea of the tracker. She stated, “If the work has a red tag, it does not go forward until the student changes it.”
- Parents receive supports to understand the path to college and career readiness. A new Student Success Center has attributed to creating a forum where high expectations around college and career readiness are communicated to families. At this point in the school year, the graduating class of 2015 has an 84% college acceptance rate and 88% of the class has post-secondary plans. Additionally, the percentage of students taking the Scholastic Assessment Test went from 64% in 2013-2014 to 90% in 2014-2015. Events such as the City University of New York Application Night, Free Application for Federal Student Aid Night, and a college fair held at the school were also cited by parents as effective structures that help families support students in ensuring progress toward those expectations.