

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

Frances Perkins Academy

High School K632

**50 Bedford Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11222**

Principal: Kevin Bryant

Date of review: December 8, 2015

Lead Reviewer: Gary Knight

The School Context

Frances Perkins Academy is a high school with 111 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 2% Asian, 62% Black, 30% Hispanic, and 4% White students. The student body includes 5% English Language Learners and 31% students with disabilities. Boys account for 72% of the students enrolled and girls account for 28%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 85.2%.

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 <i>Framework for Teaching</i> , 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	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	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:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school leader consistently communicates high expectations and provides training to the entire staff. Similarly, the staff establishes a culture of learning that consistently communicates high expectations for all students and offers ongoing feedback and supports.

Impact

Structures and a system of accountability for expectations are in place for staff. The expectations and feedback shared with students prepares them for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal sends weekly memos to staff that focus on the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and the school's overarching goals. For example, one memo entitled, "You Can Have Excuses or Results, Not Both; If Not You then Who" detailed school wide expectations on student learning and academic success. Some of the topics included; ensuring that students receive rigorous instruction, the frequency of interim assessments and the use of data from assessments to make timely, intentional and effective changes to curriculum. In addition, there are regularly scheduled and unscheduled check-ins with the principal to address adherence to the topics mentioned in weekly memos.
- In addition to college tours, international trips, Scholastic Aptitude Test preparation courses, College Now and the addition of two Advanced Placement classes, the school and teachers partner with many programs that further guide, advise and support students academically. These programs also provide workshops for students on the college admissions process and prepare them for the next level. One example is the Sponsors for Educational Opportunity Scholars Program, which provides opportunities for students to gain the academic and social skills needed to successfully navigate the college and university experience. They track students' application process, provide feedback on next steps and assist with college essay requirements, recommendation letters, and more. A second program, New York City TOGETHER, works to empower youth and make them more accountable for themselves. The quantitative data on the participants of this program shows a 3.10% increase in grades and 36.55% decrease in absences. In addition, members of the 2015 graduating class were all accepted to four-year institutions.
- The school further communicates high expectations and training to staff through their structured teams. The instructional leaders provide professional development around the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. For example, a grade team leader agenda from September included teachers sharing a goal that they set for their teaching this year and in pairs they were to align their goal to one of the domains from the Danielson Rubric. Administration follows up with classroom observations and feedback, specific to the contents covered during professional development session.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect a set of beliefs of beliefs about how students learned best that is informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. However, high-quality supports and extensions were not evident across the vast majority of classrooms.

Impact

Students are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher thinking skills. Teacher practices include instructional shifts and provide multiple entry points, however, inconsistencies in practice do not allow for mastery of content for all.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses the equation, based on the Danielson Framework, 1e (designing coherent instruction) + 3b (using questioning and discussion techniques) + 3d (using assessment in instruction) = 3c (engaging students in learning), in which they believe student-centered lessons positively impact student achievement. Teachers are trained to use this approach when providing appropriately challenging learning experiences for the students in their classrooms.
- The school's instructional focus is to engage students in daily writing and speaking, and providing evidence from text to support their claims. This focus was observed in most classes visited. Evidence of multiple entry points and scaffolds were observed in 4 of seven classes. In a grade 9 English classes observed, students created claims to arguments providing evidence from text. Students worked in groups, were given a graphic organizer and an extension activity. In a grade 11 history lesson there were limited entry points observed. Similarly, in a grade 11 science lesson, students were asked to distinguish characteristics geologists use to identify rock formations and to a write a claim providing at least two pieces of evidence that support that claim. Due to a lack of multiple entry points, students struggled with unfamiliar words, resulting in some students repeatedly calling for teacher assistance to clarify the activity. Also, a related worksheet, on which students were to record their findings, was difficult to read due to unclear print, further limiting students' access to learning.
- Another example of alignment demonstrated in lessons was evidenced in a ninth grade English class. The learning objective was to use questioning of text to support arguments and analyze multiple forms of text to support student claims. This lesson included students completing a task sheet during group work, a copy of the scenario to refer to, and a picture that was used during a pair share to answer questions using evidence from the image to support their answer.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use assessments, rubrics and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula. These assessments are used to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subjects.

Impact

Results from assessments are used to adjust curricula and instruction and to provide actionable feedback to students regarding achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams and staff communicate with students via Jupiter, an online interactive grading system. Students also articulated receiving specific feedback on assignments via rubrics. In evidence provided, one student received the following feedback: "You did a good job of talking about evidence that backed up your thinking. Work on annotating more consistently and making more connections to the text."
- The school has a structured data cycle that includes assessing, analyzing, action planning and re-engagement. Curriculum-aligned interim assessments were implemented and occur four times a year. In addition to interim assessments, Regents and mock Regents are conducted and analyzed. Students also self-assess their work. Teachers also conference one-on-one with students to provide feedback and next steps. An example of an adjustment made to curricula based on assessments results occurred in global history, where the data revealed students struggled with making a viable argument so a "unit zero" class was created to re-address this skill deficit.
- Teachers also use learning plans that involve students meeting with their guidance counselor, scholarship reports, senior plan and peer-to-peer feedback as methods of analyzing student work and providing feedback with next steps. In addition, staff meets with all students in February with the specific goal of informing each student about what is necessary to move to the next grade.

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards, integrate instructional shifts, build coherence and consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher order skills across grades and subjects.

Impact

Purposeful decisions to build college and career readiness is promoted for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- All staff participates in Common Core Learning Standards training. Teachers use sample approved Common Core unit plans as a guide for creating their own plans. Content specific professional development is also done for math, English, history and special education teachers. Teachers were trained on Six Successful Strategies for Teaching Common Core State Standards to students with moderate to severe disabilities. Professional development was also provided to staff to help them differentiate between focus questions, planning cognitively engaging learning activities, provocative questions and essential questions, as well as when and how to use them.
- School-wide Common Core Learning Standards aligned templates were developed and are used for curriculum and unit plans, lesson planning and writing. Plans are submitted with attached performance tasks and rubrics, and teachers receive feedback on the plans from the principal. Teachers plan lesson and unit plans with instructional coach and principal. Individualized feedback is provided when plans are submitted to administration.
- Embedded in the curricula are higher-order thinking skills. Argumentative writing using text-based evidence to support claims is a major focus. The Claim, Evidence, Analysis, Link (CEAL) strategy is incorporated to reinforce the teaching of this skill. Bloom's taxonomy and Webb's *Depth of Knowledge* are incorporated into plans to address High Order Thinking skills.
- Curriculum plans integrate instructional shifts. Examples of instructional shifts for literacy include text-based answers, writing from sources and academic vocabulary. For math, shifts include fluency and applications.

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaboration that promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards. Teachers consistently analyze data and for students they share.

Impact

Inquiry team work has led to the instructional capacity of teachers being strengthened, typically resulting in improved teacher practice and progress toward goals for students.

Supporting Evidence

- During the observed teacher team meeting, the math team, which meets daily, had a mid-term debrief recognizing the strengths and areas for development for student based on data, with a focus on adjusting the sequencing of current math courses in an effort to better address the academic needs of the students based on mid-term results. Teachers were trained on Six Successful Strategies for Teaching Common Core State Standards to students with moderate to severe disabilities. Professional development was also provided to staff to help them differentiate between focus questions, provocative questions and essential questions, as well as when and how to use.
- One English teacher stated that the practice of curriculum refinement is ongoing. For example, based on student work, there had to be a change in reading and discussion questions to better engage readers. The selection of topics was made to be more relevant to the students, allowing for students to better make connections to the text.
- Teachers stated that through collaboration they are able to increase the rigor in tasks by sharing best practices and observing practices in action through inter-visitation. They also articulated that, through collaboration with the teachers of students with disabilities, they are able to get additional strategies to help with effectiveness of lessons. They able to modify and chunk work for students as well as differentiate the level of materials the students receive.
- Through the collaborative process and analysis of student work in English and social studies, teachers articulated that the writing requirements and skill deficits noticed in the students' writing caused them to build in more writing strategies specific to claim and evidence in order to reinforce students' abilities to make a claim and provide relevant evidence. Due to teacher collaboration and data analysis in conjunction with the adjustments of curricula based on findings, the school has experienced double digit gains (27%) in graduation rates over the last 2 years.