



**Department of  
Education**

*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

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

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2015-2016**

**Forsyth Satellite Academy**

**High School M458**

**198 Forsyth Street  
Manhattan  
NY 10002**

**Principal: Ingrid Roberts-Haynes**

**Date of review: February 23, 2016  
Lead Reviewer: Debra Freeman**

## The School Context

Forsyth Satellite Academy is a high school with 221 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 2% Asian, 37% Black, 59% Hispanic, and 2% White students. The student body includes 7% English Language Learners and 22% students with disabilities. Boys account for 43% of the students enrolled and girls account for 57%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 64.0%.

## School Quality Criteria

<b>Instructional Core</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Developing</b>
<b>School Culture</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	<b>Celebration</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Developing</b>

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations and provide on-going training to all staff. School leaders and staff communicate high expectations to families connected to college and career readiness.

### Impact

Teachers are held accountable to expectations that are aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Ongoing communication to families provides feedback regarding their child's progress.

### Supporting Evidence

- The principal started the year with a clear message that she expects a school-wide focus on reading writing, speaking, and listening. The school would focus on improvement aligned to the *Coalition of Essential Schools* Common Principle number 3: "Student as worker, teacher as coach" to move teaching practice. The principal stated that she expects all teachers to ask themselves "Who is doing the work in your class?" and "Are your students thinking?" Staff receives weekly memos that include instructional reminders, for example, at the completion of Cycle 2, the principal expects to see students engaged in final project presentations and receiving peer feedback. Memos also offer a school-wide academic word of the day and reminders of school-based and Consortium professional training. Teachers receive ongoing feedback on curricula maps, lesson plans, and team meeting agendas with the expectation that revisions be made on Google Docs. The principal also uses these memos to name what she expects to see in all classrooms daily: close reading, student-centered discussions and presentations, and group work. This aligns to her theory of action, that if all faculty ensure that curricula is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and *The Principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools*, develop their practice, and assess student mastery in *Learning to Learn* (LTL) skills, then students will be prepared for college and career.
- At the close of each cycle, four times a year, teachers engage with the principal in scholarship report meetings. They are expected to bring mid and end cycle student reflections addressing LTL skill acquisition, samples of low, middle and high learners' work that show evidence of strategies tried and skills learned, a completed data analysis report, and three strategies incorporated into courses based on student and principal feedback that strengthen student voice and choice. For example, one teacher reflected on the value in implementing structured debates. This supported students with taking risks in their writing, and, "helps to meet the needs of nearly all my students."
- The principal expects all teachers to go beyond the mandated parent outreach, but also recognizes the complexity in this given the high needs facing their overaged and under credited population. The family group advisors are a consistent communication source for families, and provide a safe space for preparing students for their lives after high school. One parent offered that her son's advisor is in contact with her daily. This, she shared, is exactly what they both need. The online grading platform provides all families and students with access to student progress, and the Minimum Academic Standards Committee works with the advisor, family member, and student to meet graduation goals.

## Area of Focus

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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### Findings

Teachers engage in professional collaborations connected to school goals and to Common Core Learning Standards implementation and analyze student work and data. However, team meetings are not consistently structured nor intended to promote the achievement of school goals.

### Impact

Teacher teams are beginning to engage in an inquiry approach however, there is uneven impact on instructional practices or progress towards goals for targeted groups of students.

### Supporting Evidence

- The English Language Arts (ELA) team meeting's focus was on three students' argument writing pieces. Teachers continued a discussion that began the week before during which they collaboratively identified trends in the writing such as lack of stamina, concern with the right answer over depth, and being unfamiliar with exam topics. The team believed that this accounted for the students' weak performances. In order to support students and to meet their goal to raise exam scores, they discussed potential next steps. For example, one teacher shared that the student did not annotate the text, and therefore, it was hard for her to track comprehension. Several teachers offered strategies from providing post-its for the student who may be reluctant to write directly on the text and slimming down the number of annotation symbols to three, to chunking texts and offering sample essays as models of writer's craft in argument. The teacher shared her concern that this might lead to plagiarism as this is what happened when she tried this with the student. The meeting ended with a teacher asking for feedback on a new way he was approaching the argument essay.
- The ELA team discussed argument writing in the performance-based assessments. One teacher shared that while students have gained proficiency in creating plausible claims, they are not yet including counter claims. Therefore, this is their next step. The newly-formed math team considered ways to embed more literacy practices into lessons, and the science team to created performance based assessments (PBATs) grounded in students' lives. Additionally, a science teacher shared that they are working to decrease the amount of scaffolding by reducing guide questions and sentence starters to build students' independent and critical thought. Much of their literacy work, they shared, was informed by the ELA department.
- A group of teachers take the lead in meeting two days a week during common planning time to modify the online Literacy Design Collaborative courses, discuss upcoming professional development topics, look at individual students' work to discuss academic next steps, update student assessment data on the school's online grading platform, Skedula, and share their practices for feedback. One teacher shared her "Value of Life" assignment and the team offered alternative ways to facilitate whole class discussions to promote student-led questioning. However, the consistency with which teams meet and the uneven use of the inquiry approach did not yield ongoing impact on improving teacher practice, or student performance.

## Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Proficient

### Findings

School leaders and staff ensure curricula are aligned to both the Common Core Learning Standards and the principles of *The Coalition of Essential Schools* that integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits.

### Impact

School leaders make purposeful decisions to build coherence across classrooms. The school's curricula provides opportunities for all students to engage in higher order skills to promote college and career readiness.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school's focus on voice and choice for all students is reflected in curricula documents wherein structures for debate and small group work are emphasized. In a debate unit students engaged in discussion and debate of controversial and culturally relevant topics such as illegal immigration, same sex parenting, race relations, gun control, and does technology make us more alone? Throughout the course, students learned to use valid reasoning and relevant evidence to support an argument, analyze complex texts, and create thesis statements to ground their argumentative essays. Students were given guidelines to support analysis of texts include distinguishing claims from alternate or opposing claims, and using specific, relevant, and sufficient evidence from three texts to develop an argument.
- In a math unit focused on graphing, students learned to graph linear, quadratic, polynomial, and exponential functions based on real-world scenarios. For example, using their knowledge of graphing, students design a plan for a city that includes various infrastructures and provide a rationale for the design which includes graph features such roots, y-intercepts, and turn points. Another math unit offered students an opportunity to explore Algebra-related careers such as business, fitness, and animation and to consider the concept of a function. Additionally students have the opportunity to study various resources for research, including Bureau of Labor Statistics.
- In the first task in a short story unit, students read and analyzed *The Most Dangerous Game* to inform an argumentative paper about the value of human life. To build from this start, students considered their own growth and society's ethics. Essential questions drive the unit such as 'How do values shape the life of an individual and the choices he or she makes?' Students first defined ethics, values, and morals, and then apply their understanding to an ethical dilemma to determine what is right, wrong, or ethical. Students collaborated to come to consensus on an ethical course of action to take.
- In *The Great Gatsby* unit students unpack the meaning of the 'American Dream' and whether or not Gatsby is an appropriate symbol for it. Students engaged in a wide range of writing tasks, and created factual and interpretive questions to express personal, social, and cultural connections. Students demonstrated their understanding in PBATs by drawing evidence from the novel, an article, *Keeping the Dream Alive*, and the poem *A Dream Deferred* to support their thesis in a seven-page literary analysis.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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### **Findings**

Across classrooms teaching strategies and scaffolds inconsistently provide multiple entry points into curricula to engage all learners. Students were unevenly engaged in classroom discussions or provided with supports for challenging tasks.

### **Impact**

There were uneven levels of participation and engagement across classrooms. Students had few opportunities to challenge each other's ideas or demonstrate higher order thinking in their work products.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- In an algebra class, students were engaged in comparing the cost of two cars by conducting online research into the yearly cost of car payments, determining the cost of gas mileage, and calculating insurance costs. Several students articulated the mathematical connection to graphing and division, and the lesson plan indicated that this research would culminate in transferring the information to Google Slides for a presentation of their analysis. This was intended to be partner work so that students had the opportunity to collaboratively push each other's thinking, but most students worked independently.
- After researching assigned activists whose roles were instrumental in halting the genocide in Darfur, students prepared discussion questions to ask each other regarding the activist each group studied. In the portion of the lesson observed, several students engaged respectfully in response to each other's questions, however, only a small number of students had opportunity to participate.
- In preparation for a debate on whether or not illegal immigrants benefit the United States economy, students partnered to jot ideas and then share thinking about whether immigrants should have the same rights as native citizens. They were prepared for this exchange by reading arguments representing alternative perspectives, organizing debate points, and provided with additional support - discussion prompts and an anticipation guide. This resulted in a heated, student-led discussion during which the conversation moved away from the issue of the economy to whether immigrants should learn English if they choose to live here. On the one hand, a student stated that "Citizenship should not be based on knowledge but on actions. Knowing English does not make you a better citizen," while others argued that knowing even basic English is an important step to take. While students effectively owned this discussion, and the teacher stepped back to allow for it, more than in any other class visited, half of the class sat silently.
- In an ELA classroom, students engaged in a discussion of what motivates cheating to jumpstart analysis of two characters in the novel *The Great Gatsby*. Teachers posed questions and students responded to the teacher. A photograph was projected to create a visual context for the reading and students drew inferences such as the characters were rich and spoiled. While this unit was thoughtfully planned to provide entry points for all students, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, it was unclear whether all students required the supports or had opportunities to demonstrate higher order thinking and participation.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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### Findings

Most teachers use assessments and are beginning to align rubrics to curricula. The school is developing in their use of common assessments to measure student progress toward goals across grades and subjects.

### Impact

Across classrooms, students receive limited actionable feedback on their achievement toward goals and next steps on work products. Teachers are beginning to use assessments to make adjustments to curricula and instruction.

### Supporting Evidence

- The PBAT assessment is a hallmark of the school’s practice and is administered at the close of ten-week instructional cycles to measure student mastery of content and skills, with the goal for all students to have access and familiarity with the rubric at the start of each cycle. The principal and teachers are revising the assessments to move from a ‘cookie cutter’ model, to aligning more decisively with Consortium PAR Board recommendations. Additionally, the principal noted that she is working toward greater consistency in using the Consortium rubric across all content areas as several teachers are not. However, many students are not familiar with the rubric, one student thought it was for teachers’ use, because they do not see it until the PBAT is assigned near the end of the cycle. A student shared that PBATs involve text analysis that relate to a larger thesis, writing, and presentations of learning. The PBAT she worked on involved learning about how to buy a house, attain a mortgage, and the income needed. She learned that she could not afford it.
- The principal noted that after each round of PBAT presentations, the staff engages in analyzing the work, making inferences, discussing the impact on student learning and curricula, and making adjustments to PBATs to increase student performance. Additionally, several teachers shared that looking at student work and assessment data informs adjustments to their practice. When a teacher noted that students were not writing enough, she modified a wall talk activity to provide students with time to process their thoughts on large post-its before contributing. Two teachers shared that after looking at students’ work for common error trends, they presented their work to colleagues to get input on what they may have missed. The principal noted that such a list should have been generated by students, not the teacher. After reviewing student work, a teacher recognized students’ difficulty with close reading and annotation, and adjusted the graphic organizer to include question stems to get students thinking, wondering, and making connections. This resulted in students demonstrating a deeper understanding of Edgar Allen Poe’s short stories by the close of the cycle. For example, a student noted that Poe’s “writing of dark, gothic, and creepy tales” was born from a deep depression after his wife grew ill. However, this does not happen consistently across grades and content areas, and it has had limited impact on student performance.
- During the principal’s scholarship report discussions with teachers, student progress and assessment data are reviewed, and the principal provides teachers with next steps such as use *Easy Writer* as a resource, or provide opportunities for peer editing. However, this has not resulted in consistency in teachers’ feedback on student achievement. Across classrooms students were unaware of how to take concrete and actionable steps to meet targeted goals.