



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

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

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2015-2016**

**Fordham Leadership Academy for Business and  
Technology**

**High School X438**

**500 East Fordham Road  
Bronx  
NY 10458**

**Principal: Fiorella Cabrejos**

**Date of review: April 12, 2016  
Lead Reviewer: Tracie Benjamin-Van Lierop**

## The School Context

Fordham Leadership Academy for Business and Technology is a high school with 410 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 2% Asian, 28% Black, 68% Hispanic, and 2% White students. The student body includes 15% English Language Learners and 30% students with disabilities. Boys account for 62% of the students enrolled and girls account for 38%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 83.4%.

## 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>Focus</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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</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 to the entire staff, have a system of accountability for those expectations, and provide training. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations and offer ongoing detailed feedback and guidance to students.

### Impact

A system of accountability holds staff accountable to meet the school's instructional expectations. Guidance supports prepare students for the next level.

### Supporting Evidence

- The principal has communicated and engaged all staff in conversations based on school-wide instructional goals. The principal explained, "...the idea was to shift our practices and create a school that we would be confident sending our own children to." A new teacher professional series provides support in navigating the pressures of being a new teacher. Teachers take turns facilitating discussions during the series. One recent session was a professional book-study on instructional practice.
- The leadership team communicates high expectations regarding instructional goals, increased scholarship rate, and building teacher capacity through emails, the faculty handbook, and one-to-one conferences facilitated by the principal and assistant principals. The school also uses Google Docs as a platform to share staff reflections on professional learning sessions based on intervisitations and analysis of student work and subsequent curricula revisions. A review of schoolwide professional learning agendas and reflections indicate that trainings have also centered on the use of discussion protocols, purposeful grouping, the New Visions for Public Schools data sorter to look at credit accumulation and Regents exam pass rates, and Webb's *Depth of Knowledge* integration at levels three and four.
- Students stated that the College Now program and Advanced Placement courses have exposed them to college level experiences however, the exposure to post-secondary career opportunities are not as expansive. A twelfth grade student shared that "The school has a heavy focus on college and for students who may not want to go to college and begin a career right out of school. There needs to be more options for them." The school hired a full-time college and career counselor who provides professional development to teachers and works with students on the college and scholarship application process. The school has partnerships with Lehman College and Bronx Community College and offers off-site college courses for academically eligible juniors and seniors.

## Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to the curricula and beginning to reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and the instructional shifts. Although opportunities for discourse are built into lessons, student work products reflect uneven levels of thinking and participation.

### Impact

Across classrooms, all students are not fully engaged in high levels of thinking.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school believes students learn best when they are leading their own thinking and engaged in high-level work and discussions that allow them to grapple with their ideas and the work. School leadership and Renewal School coaches have worked with teachers on the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* components of designing coherent instruction and engaging students in learning.
- In an English Language Arts class, the learning target concentrated on gathering evidence for an argument by discussing and annotating text. Students wrote short responses addressing the writer's claim providing textual evidence to support pros and cons of the argument addressing, "Are we as a society far too dependent on technology?" Students in heterogeneous groupings assisted each other with the task and engaged in discussions using accountable talk stems such as "I agree or I disagree because..." referencing the text to defend their claim.
- During a social studies lesson on the Chinese Ming Dynasty, students were expected to analyze secondary source documents and identify the methods taken by Ming leaders to secure the country's power and extend it overseas. Students watched a video connected to the lesson's learning target but some students had their heads down on the desks and some engaged in side conversations not related to the video clip. The teacher asked and answered the following question, "Where did his fleet travel?" The teacher asked students if they could predict what the explorers might encounter, whereupon a student raised a question and the teacher proceeded with the lesson without addressing the question. One of the students who was not engaged while the video played raised his hand when the teacher asked a question in relation to cultural diffusion and she told him to "hold on" but did not come back to his question and he placed his head back on the desk.
- During a ninth grade science lesson, the teacher circulated through the room and met with students who were grouped in fours. Once the teacher left a group to work with another group, however, students went off task and engaged in personal conversations. The majority of the class did not complete the assigned task. Conversely in an earth science class, the teacher interacted with the students using technology, a gallery walk, and groupings. All students interviewed knew the purpose of the lesson and how their tasks were preparing them for the upcoming Regents exam. Students explored factors affecting geologic change while the teacher facilitated group discussions during his gallery walk check-in's with student groups.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

### Impact

Purposeful decisions are building coherence to promote college and career readiness for all students so that a diversity of learners, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners, have access to the curricula and tasks that are cognitively engaging.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school uses curricula resources from *EngageNY* for math and English Language Arts and New Visions for Public Schools curricula for science and social studies. Writing is Thinking through Strategic Inquiry (WITsi) writing curricula are used in the ninth and tenth grades. The principal noted that, “The integration of the quick outline organizer has allowed students to improve upon their thesis statements, organize their thoughts, and student’s overall writing has improved.” Teachers noted that, “from fall to spring, a comparison of student writing indicates that students are better able to articulate and demonstrate their thoughts.”
- In preparation for the 2015-2016 school year, teachers worked over the summer to increase curricula alignment to the Common Core Standards. Teachers also work with the Office of Renewal team on curricula planning and revision. A review of emails, unit plans, and curricula maps show that teachers incorporate WITsi strategies across content areas. For example, the math department added an exit ticket to an algebra lesson on commutative and associative property, which tasked students with writing complete sentences to explain how two expressions are equivalent using a strategy named sentence combining.
- Teachers use Google Docs to share student performance tasks, curriculum maps, and strategies and tools for conferring and annotation. Science curricula plans, included information on how to support students who were struggling with annotation through small group learning routines designed to teach students how to engage with a text. In an emerging practices share-out folder, teachers included an annotation rubric for the Living Environment course and a think-talk-exchange document to guide student conversations.
- To increase, Living Environment Regents pass rates, a teacher recommended the addition of an elective course containing complementary curricula on infectious, neurological, metabolic disease and cancer. A new elective course using curriculum from Tufts University was developed and offered.

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

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are loosely aligned with the school's curricula. Across classrooms, teachers' assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

### Impact

Teacher and students have limited feedback regarding student achievement. Teachers inconsistently make effective adjustments to meet students' learning needs.

### Supporting Evidence

- The School Leadership Team's goal is for teachers to provide feedback to students in the same manner and with the same depth that supervisor feedback is provided to teachers. A review of student work showed that teachers' comments to students did not consistently communicate actionable and meaningful feedback with next steps. However, hallway bulletin boards with student work that included rubrics with comments focused on what was done well and next steps. One hallway bulletin included the working and final drafts of graded student work and showcased improvement in the quality of their writing. A review of students' folders showed variation in feedback given. Whereas, in an opinion essay on the death penalty, a student received check marks only without any comments. On a student assessment on *Romeo and Juliet*, the student's work was graded based on the rubric which focused on evidence accuracy and trait, correct use of "so", punctuation, and capitalization, with feedback stating, "This [question 2] needs to be explained a bit more clearly."
- During a social studies lesson, students were unclear about what tool to use to guide their thinking. However, during a bilingual math lesson, students used the exemplar document provided to guide their next steps and assess their understanding of the task as the teacher circulated around the room to check-in with students. Students with a stronger command of the language supported their classmates who asked them for assistance.
- During a science lesson, students were provided with rubrics and checklists and understood their purpose when asked. However, they did not use either tool to guide their learning during the lesson. The teacher and paraprofessional circulated through the room to check-in with the student groupings, but when the reviewer asked students about their learning target, out of eighteen students, six were able to respond.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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**Findings**

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations that promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards. Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students they share or on whom they are focused.

**Impact**

The instructional capacity of teachers is being strengthened. Teacher practice is improved resulting in progress toward goals for groups of students.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teacher teams engage in weekly meetings during professional learning sessions, which include but are not limited to curricula planning and refinement, analyzing student work, and monitoring student progress. For example, the cohort team focuses on students who are almost on track with their credit accumulation and in collaboration with faculty members the school has an on-line blended learning program for English Language Arts.
- The content teacher team commented that as a result of working with their coaches they are incorporating additional resources in their teaching practices such as informational texts in science and using instructional strategies to meet the needs of students that learn differently. To support the student population that includes a high percentage of students with disabilities and English Language Learners, a math teacher stated, “I am now more purposeful in how I sequence steps during my lesson and also how those steps are communicated both verbally and visually. I am addressing my auditory and visual learners.”
- During a Wits team teacher meeting, teachers stated that the team has focused their work on lesson cohesion, identification of the skills and sub-skills that students need to master, and lesson implementation. A review of grade 9 and 10 student writing samples from September showed writing pieces with one to two incomplete sentences that did not coherently express full thoughts. Spring semester work samples for the same students, showed improvement in the number of complete, grammatically correct sentences written within full paragraphs. Teachers attribute the progress to taking a hard look at student work. As one teacher stated, “There were some bumps. We wanted to focus on paragraphs right away and we pushed the work a little too fast. Our students were scoring “no’s” for mastery levels and now these same students are scoring “yes.”