

NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Office of Accountability

Differentiated Accountability - School Quality Review (SQR)

SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW REPORT

DBN:	14K322
District Name:	District 14
School Name:	Foundations Academy
School Address:	70 Tompkins Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11206
Principal:	Jimmy Molina
Accountability Phase/Category:	Improvement (year-1) - Comprehensive
Area of Identification:	English Language Arts - All Students and Economically Disadvantaged Students
Dates of On-site Review:	March 13-14, 2012

PART 1: MISSION STATEMENT

“Foundations Academy is dedicated to enfranchising its students by providing a secondary education in a small school setting. We will prepare every student for a collegiate experience, as well as leadership opportunities during their lifetime. We effectively implement rigorous liberal arts, leadership, and social justice curricular while activity incorporating a multi-cultural curriculum.

Foundations Academy is a small college preparatory high school in Brooklyn planned by a group of educators who live and work in the borough. While working in schools they saw the need for leadership development amongst adolescents. To that end, a school was designed to provide all students with the skills necessary to be leaders of change in their communities and larger society. The school was also designed around the belief that college is a necessary step toward becoming an effective leader of change.

We see all of our graduates attending a post secondary institution and them serving as leaders of change in their communities. At Foundations Academy, we believe the “smarts” necessary for academic success can be demonstrated by all students through effective effort and post-secondary education is possible for every student. The mission of Foundations Academy is to prepare every student for college regardless of their previous academic experiences. All classes are scheduled for at least 52 minutes. This allows time for direct instruction as well as opportunities for students to work collaboratively on assignments and to then reflect on their learning experiences. We encourage teachers to work with students to develop clear learning goals and to implement a rigorous standards-based curriculum. These goals and curriculum encourage student inquiry and will lead to academic success for every student.”

PART 2: SCHOOL STRENGTHS

- The school has established planning structures to promote teacher collaboration across grades and disciplines.
- The school has introduced a new computer system to increase communication among parents, teachers and students.

PART 3: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND UTILIZATION OF DATA

FINDINGS:

- Teachers have access to summative data through the Achievement Reporting and Innovation System (ARIS). In most classes, summative data is inconsistently used to identify individual student skills, abilities or educational needs.
- Student formative data are not systematically collected and analyzed in either portfolios or student work folders. As a result, there is limited evidence that student work is being monitored or tracked throughout the year to assess student progress.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders should develop a system to analyze and disaggregate English Language Arts (ELA) data for all students, including those within the identified subgroups, i.e., all students and economically disadvantaged students. In addition, school leaders should provide professional development (PD) for teachers regarding how to use student data to plan instruction and support the individual needs of students in ELA. Teachers should use the data to set clear academic goals and interim benchmarks for their students. This benchmark data should be used to provide targeted academic interventions for individual students, as indicated, throughout the term. School leaders should monitor how teachers use data and its effect on student outcomes during formal and informal observations.
- School leaders should develop a structure for collecting and analyzing student work in ELA, by class and grade, throughout the school year. This will provide additional formative data to be used to identify individual student strengths and weaknesses, as well as inform school wide planning. The results of this analysis of data should be compared to external summative data to ensure efficacy and rigor in grading and assessment of student work.

II. TEACHING AND LEARNING

FINDINGS:

- In classrooms observed by the review team, there was limited evidence of questioning techniques that challenge students to analyze, problem solve, evaluate or synthesize information. Teacher questioning rarely supported students in developing higher order thinking skills. Students were asked to respond to questions that required the recall of facts and/or details.
- Some student work posted in hallways contained errors, needed further revisions, was not finalized and did not explicitly indicate “work in progress.” Some displayed work included generic rubrics. Teacher comments rarely provided feedback or next steps for students to improve.
- There was limited evidence of differentiated instruction in observed ELA classrooms. Data was inconsistently used to group students or to match tasks to the various needs of the students.
- Student work was inconsistently collected and analyzed to check for understanding or to monitor student progress. Additionally, there was limited evidence of goal setting with students to specifically establish progress benchmarks throughout the year to ensure measurable growth in reading and writing.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders should provide PD to support teachers in developing a variety of questioning techniques directed towards promoting higher order thinking skills for students in ELA. When writing lesson plans, teachers should include questions that require critical thinking and foster discussion. School leaders should ensure that teachers are implementing the higher order questioning techniques learned in PD through frequent observations and walkthroughs.
- School leaders should provide guidelines for teachers regarding the display of student work, monitor displayed work and evaluate the quality of feedback that is provided to ensure that feedback provides next steps for students to progress and meet or exceed benchmarks. Teachers should be provided with PD that models the use of rubrics that includes sample and exemplar feedback to students. Rubrics should be used as an integral tool in planning and assessing assignments.
- When planning lessons, teachers should reference the specific instructional needs of students in the class. Lessons should provide different entry points and instructional activities should be scaffolded to meet the instructional needs of all students, as identified through data analysis, including those students in the identified subgroups. The school leaders should provide PD in lesson planning that uses a variety of teaching strategies to differentiate instruction. As part of the observation process, school leaders should monitor the use of these differentiated instructional strategies to meet the needs of all students in ELA.
- School leaders should establish a protocol for the collection and analysis of student work that is aligned to defined units of study to check for student understanding and monitor student progress. Student goals should be based on interim benchmarks established throughout the year in ELA. Both formal and informal assessment should be continuous to ensure that students in the identified subgroups are making progress to reach and exceed proficiency in ELA.

III. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

FINDINGS:

- The Principal is new to the position. He indicated that frequent informal observations are conducted; however, he does not provide written feedback to teachers based on these observations. A review of observation reports at the time of the review indicated that four formal observations had been conducted by school leaders.
- The Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) does not contain a comprehensive plan for improving ELA instruction.
- Schedules are not structured to provide time for ELA teachers to meet, plan instruction and develop lessons aligned to the units of study to address the needs of individual students, including those in the identified subgroups.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders should develop a plan and schedule for conducting formal, written observations.
- The school leader should include a strategy for improving ELA instruction in the CEP. This plan should include the development and use of defined units of study in ELA that are aligned to CCLS. These units should be horizontally and vertically aligned to avoid gaps and redundancies and have specific resources to support implementation of all units of study.
- The school leader should provide common planning time for ELA teachers to meet collaboratively to develop lessons that align to the units of study in ELA and analyze student work. School leaders should conduct formal observations and focused walkthroughs to monitor that the lessons are planned, adjusted and executed to meet the needs of all students, especially those in the identified subgroups.

IV. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

FINDINGS:

- In the classrooms observed by the review team, many students were neither focused nor engaged during instruction but talked and used electronic devices. Additionally, no school Code of Conduct or rules were clearly posted in the classrooms. The Principal distributed behavioral expectations to students, but not to parents. Teachers rarely addressed the use of electronic devices or student behavior in classrooms or hallways.
- There was no established or clearly communicated data based system for identifying and effectively supporting at-risk students in need of Academic Intervention Services (AIS). The school's current AIS are focused on credit recovery, acquiring gym credit and meeting mandated seat time regulations. These services take place one half hour after the close of the school day and on Saturdays. These services were not directed to increasing academic performance in ELA for low achieving students. Students that would

be identified as needing AIS participate in the current extended day program only if they require additional credits, seat time or physical education credits.

- Although the school outreached to parents to attend the scheduled parent meeting and/or school leadership team (SLT) meeting with the school quality review (SQR) team, no parents responded. Consequently, neither meeting was held. The parent coordinator reports that getting consistent parent involvement has been challenging.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders, selected staff and student representatives, with the support of the Network, should review the Citywide Code of Conduct and develop a written schoolwide student behavior code. Sanctions for failure to follow the Citywide Code of Conduct and the school behavior code should be clearly explained to parents and students. A ladder of referral for infractions should be delineated, and teachers should be held accountable for implementing the school behavior code and following the ladder of referral, in classrooms and throughout the building. The school behavior code should be distributed, discussed and reviewed annually by students, staff and parents.
- School leaders should use data to identify at-risk students and develop an AIS plan for each identified student that provides academic supports in ELA during the regular school day. Credit recovery should be a supplemental program, distinct and separate from AIS. School leaders should monitor the AIS program to ensure that teachers are meeting the academic needs of individual students.
- The school leader should seek support to develop a plan to improve parental involvement. This plan should include a range of communication strategies and home visits as appropriate. The parent coordinator should continue outreach efforts to parents to increase parents' involvement in their children's education. The school leader and parent coordinator should consider visiting schools where effective strategies are in place to promote parent participation and work with school staff to implement similar strategies within the school.

IV. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FINDING:

PD opportunities are made available to staff. However, there was no comprehensive PD plan in ELA that is based on the observed or assessed teacher needs across all grades and intended to address the implementation of the CCLS.

RECOMMENDATION:

The school leaders should develop a comprehensive PD plan that is aligned to the CCLS. The plan should include PD for school leaders in developing professional learning community (PLC) protocols and for the SLT in developing SMART goals for the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) that are aligned to the assessed ELA school needs.

V. FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

FINDINGS:

- Classroom libraries, leveled libraries for independent reading, guided practice books and lending libraries were not observed in the ELA classrooms. Other core content area classrooms did not have libraries to support reading proficiency within content areas.
- Student work was not displayed in ELA classrooms.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders should ensure that students have access to sufficient classroom library resources, including resources that support leveled guided practice, independent reading, lending libraries and reading across the content areas. Classroom libraries should be expanded to include quality literature and books to support the reading needs of all students based on their varied assessed levels to facilitate both instructional and independent reading.
- School leaders should ensure that student work is displayed, and that it includes feedback and next steps for students, based on a rubric that clearly defines the standards used to evaluate the student work.

PART 4: CONCLUDING STATEMENT

The findings and recommendations noted in the report are intended to guide the school's inquiry, planning, and the development of the CEP for the school year 2012-13. The school should also continue its efforts in the implementation in the following Regents Reform Agenda initiatives: P-12 Common Core Learning Standards, Data Driven Instruction and the Annual Professional Performance Review for Teacher Effectiveness.