

NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Office of Accountability

Differentiated Accountability - School Quality Review (SQR)

SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW REPORT

DBN:	12X682
District Name:	District 12
School Name:	Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School
School Address:	1021 Jennings Street, Bronx NY 10460
Principal:	Nancy Mann
Accountability Phase/Category:	Improvement (year-1)- Comprehensive
Areas of Identification:	English Language Arts - All Students; Hispanic Students; and Economically Disadvantaged Students High School Graduation Rate
Dates of On-site Review:	March 13-14, 2012

PART 1: MISSION STATEMENT

“The fundamental aim of Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School is to teach students to use their minds well and prepare them to live productive, socially useful, and personally satisfying lives. The Habits of Mind form the basis of our efforts to move students toward these goals. The school’s academic program stresses intellectual development and political and social involvement in our society. Five Habits of Mind are stressed.

- **VIEWPOINT:** Identifying and understanding various perspectives on an issue.
- **EVIDENCE:** Being able to support a particular point of view and critically examine different forms of evidence.
- **CONNECTIONS:** Seeing larger patterns and connections between ideas, the individual and the larger society.
- **CONJECTURE:** Being able to envision alternatives and ask “what if?”
- **RELEVANCE:** Understanding the importance of an issue and asking “what difference does it make?”

The Habits of Mind are at the heart of all our work along with sound work habits and care and concern for others: Habits of Work and Heart. The curriculum of FLHFHS affirms the central importance of students learning how to learn, how to reason, and how to investigate complex issues that require collaboration, personal responsibility and a tolerance for uncertainty. It is inquiry-based, emphasizing projects which students design and carry out themselves, with teachers as guides and coaches. Communicating skills, including reading, writing, public speaking and critical listening, are developed in all subject areas.”

PART 2: SCHOOL STRENGTHS

- The building is clean, welcoming and provides a family atmosphere. Parents, teachers, and students are satisfied with the school.
- A partnership with community-based organizations (CBOs) provides needed health, college and career readiness and internships for students in grades 9 and 10.

PART 3: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND UTILIZATION OF DATA

FINDINGS:

- Although the school collects multiple forms of data, it is not being used to inform planning and identify specific aspects of English language arts (ELA) that need to be addressed to bring about improvement in student performance.
- There is little evidence, based on classroom observations and interviews, that teachers are using the variety of data sources available to modify instruction.
- Although attendance data are collected and analyzed, there is limited evidence that the school has an action plan with corresponding intervention strategies to increase student attendance. The attendance rate was also considered a contributing factor to the school's graduation rate.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leaders should review the current system to disaggregate and analyze data to ensure that student, class, subgroup, departmental, grade level and whole school data are monitored to assess the impact and efficacy of the literacy program on instruction. Data should be monitored to identify the ELA skills and strategies where students need the greatest support. Teachers should receive professional development (PD) on using multiple data sources to implement and inform differentiated instruction for the identified subgroups to increase academic achievement.
- The school leaders should implement a system to use both formative, interim and summative student performance data to create instructional groups, design skill-based activities for small groups of students with similar needs and adjust the curriculum to include supports and scaffolds for at-risk students and identified subgroups.
- The school leader should work with key stakeholders, i.e., the attendance teacher, parents, school counselors and Assistant Principals, to develop and implement strategies to improve attendance that have proven to be successful in similar schools.

II. TEACHING AND LEARNING

FINDINGS:

- There were limited references to the current New York State (NYS) Learning Standards in the lessons or lesson plans observed.
- There was limited evidence of accommodations made for special education students and English language learners (ELLs) within the classes observed. Instructional materials were not adapted for special needs students.
- There was limited evidence of small group instruction in most classes observed that was based on the results of an item skills analysis to address the academic needs of the identified student subgroups in ELA.
- In the classes observed by the review team, there was no reference to differentiation in lesson plans or use of diverse instructional practices to meet the varied needs of all identified subgroups.
- There is little evidence of rigor and relevance in lessons observed by the review team where student experiences and real world applications are incorporated. There was limited evidence of high expectations and access to challenging learning opportunities for all students.
- Lesson objectives were inconsistently displayed and not discussed before, during and after the lesson.
- In most of the classes observed by the review team, student work was not displayed. The work that was displayed had no accompanying rubric, grade, or comments to inform next steps for improving student work.
- There were a number of students who were disengaged during the lessons observed by the review team. This was evidenced by a number of students arriving late, talking during instruction, and sitting isolated in a corner.
- There is no uniform grading policy schoolwide or by department. Interviews indicate that individual teachers have their own grading policy.
- Although there is technology available in the classroom, it was infrequently used by the students. The SMART Boards were used primarily to project teacher lesson plans and student assignments.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leaders should review lesson plans and ensure through classroom observations and walkthroughs that lessons are aligned with the current NYS Learning Standards. School leaders should ensure preparation for implementation of the NYS P-12 Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS).
- The school leaders should provide teachers with PD in modifying and varying instructional practices, including materials, to accommodate the academic needs of students with disabilities and ELLs. In addition, the school leader with the assistance of the Network should identify high performing schools

that have embedded these practices in their instructional plan and provide inter-visitation opportunities for teachers to improve their pedagogical practices within these areas. School leaders should monitor lesson plans and instructional practice to ensure that modifications are used to meet the needs of these students.

- Teachers should be trained in flexible grouping based on student performance. In addition, the school leader should introduce teachers to a wide range of evidence-based strategies in ELA that can be used to promote greater student participation in the learning process and that can meet the needs of the subgroups, including students with disabilities. Teachers should be expected to apply these strategies, and school leaders should monitor how effectively these practices are being implemented and provide additional support for teachers when necessary.
- Teachers should be provided with the necessary training and support to embed differentiation practices in their classrooms to meet the various needs of their students. School leaders should closely monitor this initiative and provide meaningful feedback to teachers.
- The school leaders should support teachers in developing various questioning techniques that target critical thinking and problem solving skills based on student development. In addition, lesson planning should include critical questions that generate active conversations and accountable talk to improve student engagement. The school leaders should monitor, through classroom observations and walkthroughs that all student work is appropriately challenging and demanding.
- The school leader should ensure through the observation process that teachers make lesson objectives explicit, refer to them throughout the lesson, and use them as a tool for checking mastery during and at the end of the activity. School leaders should ensure that this practice is embedded and monitor classrooms for implementation.
- Teachers should be encouraged to showcase exemplars of student work in classrooms and on bulletin boards in hallways. Rubrics to assess student work should be aligned to the current NYS Learning Standards and used as an integral tool in planning and assessing assignments. Teachers should participate in PD activities that model the use of rubrics to provide students with feedback and actionable next steps to improve.
- The school leadership should provide opportunities through PD and inter-visitation for teachers to develop a repertoire of skills and lessons to create an active learning environment to engage students and to develop positive behavior management techniques. In addition, the school leaders should develop and closely monitor a schoolwide plan to address lateness.
- The school leaders should develop a grading policy in each discipline that is reflective of uniform expectations for student academic achievement.
- The school leader should seek the support of the Network to identify high performing schools that have embedded the use of instructional technology to support student learning in priority subject areas and offer teachers inter-visitation opportunities to enhance their skills. In addition, teachers should be provided with PD on effectively incorporating SMART Board use into their lessons to support interactive and hands-on learning.

III. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

FINDINGS:

- The recommendations provided as a result of teacher observations did not focus on instructional skills that could help increase student academic progress. There was limited evidence of timely follow-up observations where teachers could demonstrate improvements within the recommended areas or be held accountable for incorporating strategies learned during PD.
- The school leaders observe weekly teacher team meetings to informally monitor the progress of educational practices being implemented. However, there is limited evidence that a formal evaluation system is in place with clear milestones and timeframes to assess progress or make adjustments to newly implemented initiatives or practices during the school year.
- There is little evidence that a comprehensive needs assessment was conducted to determine the specific academic issues that caused the school to not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders should establish, with assistance from the Network, a uniform system to monitor the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Teachers should be provided with written feedback that includes clear targets for improvement. Follow-up observations should be scheduled in a timely manner to check for progress. School leaders should ensure that outcomes of lesson observations provide a focus for the school's PD plan and that teachers are held accountable for implementing the skills developed within PD into their instructional delivery.
- The school leader should implement a system to assess the effectiveness of initiatives implemented and make modifications via data driven, collaborative instructional planning and continuous monitoring of the progress of all students and subgroups. Clearly defined timeframes to adjust practice during the school year that include interim benchmarks to measure progress should be established in advance.
- The school leadership should conduct an analysis of all school and subgroup data to determine the specific academic issues that caused the school to not make AYP. The results of this analysis should guide the school and staff in establishing the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) goals, adjusting curriculum and a creating a comprehensive PD plan.

IV. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

FINDINGS:

- In some of the classes observed by the review team, the pacing of instruction did not maximize learning opportunities. The pace of the lesson impacted some students' attention spans and, as a result, some students were off task and not engaged in learning. Consequently, during some lessons, learning objectives were not met, and there was insufficient time to bring lessons to closure or to check for student understanding.

- In a number of instances, students were observed in the hallways during class time and adults were not observed intervening.
- The school provides Academic Intervention Services (AIS) through smaller class size and reduced student ratio.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leaders should provide training for teachers to ensure appropriate pacing and sequencing of lessons. Teachers should plan effective lesson closure so that lessons are summarized and students' content mastery is assessed. School leaders should make the pacing and sequencing of lessons a focus of walkthroughs and observations.
- The school leaders, teachers, and safety officers should consistently monitor the hallways and effectively implement the code of conduct to ensure that students arrive to class on time and do not loiter in the hallway.
- The school leaders should develop a structured AIS program that is part of the students' regular programmed day and uses data to target students for support services. Programs should be continuously monitored and modified to meet the changing needs of students and to evaluate the program's effectiveness.

V. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FINDINGS:

- There is little evidence that the current PD plan is based on data, teacher input or classroom observations. There is little evidence that the PD provided has had an impact on instructional practices for identified subgroups, including students with disabilities.
- There is limited evidence of a feedback mechanism to evaluate PD offerings to inform future PD sessions.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leader should create, with assistance from the Network, a PD plan that is designed to improve the quality of teaching and learning by taking into account the differentiated needs of the staff and students as determined from surveys, needs assessments and teacher observations. PD offerings should include how to effectively meet the specific learning needs of the identified subgroups, including students with disabilities. School leaders should hold teachers accountable for incorporating the strategies learned through PD to improve instruction and student learning.
- The school leaders should incorporate a feedback mechanism as an integral part of the PD plan to enable the outcomes of PD to be assessed for relevance in meeting the needs of teachers and students. School leaders should use this feedback to plan future PD sessions that are aligned to the changing needs of students and staff and the CEP.

VI. FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

FINDING:

The school does not have a librarian. As a result, students do not have open access to the library. In addition, the books in the library and classrooms were limited and did not represent the different interest and reading levels of the students.

RECOMMENDATION:

The school leader should ensure that grade level literature is available to meet the needs of all students. The school leader should seek the support of the Network in identifying grants and supplemental funding to upgrade the books and resources within classrooms and the library. The school leader should consider reallocating funds to hire a library media specialist to further develop independent student research and study skills, promote academic rigor, and provide open access periods for student use. Inventories should be kept, and school leaders should monitor library resources.

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 school year 2012-13. The school should also continue its efforts in the implementation of the following Regents Reform Agenda initiatives: P-12 CCLS, Data Driven Instruction and the Annual Professional Performance Reviews for teacher effectiveness.