



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**Frederick Douglass Academy IV Secondary
School**

**High School 393
1014 Lafayette Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11221**

Principal: Marian Bowden

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Reviewer: Keith Edwards

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Frederick Douglass Academy IV currently has 424 students from grades 6 through to 10. There are plans for the school to expand to have students up to grade 12 by 2008. The school is home to a large Black and Hispanic community. However, the Black students make up the vast majority (95%) of the school population. Almost 75% of the students are Title 1 eligible. There are 30 special education students with their own individualized education plans. Less than one per cent of the students are English language learners.

The school building is modern and home also to an elementary school. There is adequate space for the current number of students, but the school lacks the capacity for the planned increase in the number of enrolled students. The school has a clear uniform policy. In the last academic year, attendance levels, at 88% were favorable in comparison with similar schools and the City average. The school has a low incidence of suspensions. The school has a high ratio of staffing mobility, which is particularly evident at assistant principal level, although there are good indications that this situation is improving.

The school was judged to be in good standing in the 2005-2006 School Accountability Status review.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- A key strength of the school is the vision, leadership and commitment of the school principal.
- There is significant strength in the caliber of the administrative team.
- The capacity for school improvement is growing as the strands of accountability are strengthened.
- The school ethos has a strong focus on high aspirations with an emphasis on college.
- Much of the instruction is good and informed by an accurate use of assessment.
- Students make good gains in their learning and grade results are above average.
- Students enjoy school and attendance rates, at 88%, are above average.
- The school has won the confidence and respect of the community that it serves.

What the school needs to improve

- Raise the quality of teaching by improving the analysis of data to inform planning so that work is better matched to the needs of the students.
- Make greater use of assessment data to identify trends and modify the curriculum accordingly.
- Improve the discipline in school by fostering a greater sense of self control and clarifying the sanctions.
- Improve punctuality rates.
- Continue to develop the students' higher-order reading skills.
- Strengthen links with the family of Frederick Douglass schools to facilitate a greater focus on performance.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

Frederick Douglass Academy IV is a proficient school that has a clear aim to raise the expectations of all of its students. The principal, effectively supported by her assistant principal and senior staff, has established a climate in school where the students feel safe and secure. Through their careful nurturing, this team has ensured that all students are valued and respected. This has boosted the students' self-awareness and self-esteem and has enabled them to do much better. Almost all of the students respond well to the climate for learning and are highly motivated to reach college. However, the punctuality of a minority of students is not good enough and has a negative impact on the learning of these students.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. The students speak warmly of the commitment of their teachers. There are examples of outstanding practice, for example in global history and in science, where the teachers have high expectations and enthuse the students. However, other classes are characterized by a lack of pace and weak class control. Most staff use data to monitor and analyze the students' progress, but this practice is not consistent and there is too little differentiation of task in some classes. Although in 2006, 30 percent of the students were judged to be performing below grade level in English language arts and 41 percent in mathematics, standards are rising and compare favourably with similar schools and others in the City. The school has a very clear plan to raise standards further and uses a range of strategies to meet its goals. For example, an academic intervention team, which meets bi-monthly, has been established to evaluate student progress.

The parents are warmly encouraged to become active partners in their children's education and they are very supportive and appreciative of the work of the school.

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school has very effective systems for collecting data relating to the performance and progress of students. From grade 6, tests are administered to gauge the students' starting points and potential. This information is used successfully to identify those students who would benefit from accelerated learning programs and those who would benefit from intensive support programs. The information is also used successfully to inform other grouping arrangements, particularly in English language arts classes and mathematics. All staff members maintain files with this assessment information.

The school monitors very carefully the progress of different groups of students as they progress through the school. They compare the progress of students in each subject, class by class and grade by grade, to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is

equally effective for all students. This information, discussed at regular departmental and administration meetings, is used to identify students at risk of falling behind and those who, with extra support and challenge, could increase their scores and move up a level. For example, the school has identified that ensuring that the level 4 girl students reach their potential level as they progress through the school is a particular challenge. Furthermore the school uses a range of diagnostic tests to identify those students who are not making sufficient progress, particularly in writing and grammar.

The higher aspirations that the school promotes result in many students taking advantage of additional tuition that the school offers. The school's data analysis and the use made of these assessments is a key aspect of the school's development strategy. The teaching staff are not, however, proficient in their own data-analysis skills, or in using the data effectively when planning work for different groups of students. Also, assessment information is not used effectively to identify trends and to draw comparisons with similar schools. For example, although there are regular meetings between representatives of the family of Frederick Douglass schools, the comparative achievement of the students is not at the top of the agenda. However, with the shrewd appointment of the current assistant principal, who has the analytical expertise and rigor to translate the principal's vision into reality, the school's capacity for improvement is therefore very promising.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The principal has worked hard to collect and analyze a wide range of assessment data to gain an awareness of the level at which each student is functioning and to set clear and measurable goals for the school. She also has a good understanding of the social and emotional circumstances of each student and understands what instruction strategies would be the most appropriate. This information is shared with faculty leaders and teachers, who are expected to make full use of this background information when planning work in class. This process is not yet sufficiently consistent between grades and across departments. Teachers are consistent, however, in grading the work of their students. Much time is spent in discussion with individual students to share essential information to boost their performance. Students appreciate the helpful feedback.

An analysis of the students' performance against State standards in mathematics revealed that 41 per cent of students were performing below expectations. This prompted a series of strategies to raise standards and to boost achievement. Current assessment data suggests that this action has been successful. Staff share detailed information about student performance to inform scheduling arrangements, but the assessment data is not consistently used to inform programs of work for students of different ability within each class and across all subjects. Teachers have a good knowledge of the range of ability within each grade and this informs the grouping arrangements, but not all work is differentiated well enough to closely match the individual needs of students.

Most students are aware of the slogan "Being smart is not enough" and appreciate and avail themselves of the additional opportunities afforded to them at the end of each school day to improve their understanding in different subjects. Furthermore, their parents are happy for their children to take advantage of these additional, optional classes. They fully appreciate that the school has high expectations and that the teachers "go the extra mile"

to ensure that their children reach challenging goals. The level of homework is appreciated for its reliability and rigor.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school's curriculum follows mandated guidelines and is securely based on the high expectations of students and the regular review of their progress. Computer technology is used to support learning in a range of contexts. For example, as the school has no science laboratory, the science department uses a virtual lab program to great effect to develop the students' skills of hypothesis and drawing conclusions. The school utilises the time at the end of the school day well to provide a range of additional activities such as chess, violin, drama, languages and basketball to further motivate the students.

The staff members are involved in curriculum development through their regular departmental meetings to ensure the alignment of instruction with the necessary skills and concepts in all subject areas. For example, in response to the students' difficulties with grammar and higher order reading skills such as inference, the school has adjusted its English language arts curriculum to accommodate more classic texts for discussion. This raising of expectations is beginning to have a positive impact on standards as the students are challenged in their thinking and required to work harder.

Assessment information is used effectively to determine programs of work and intervention strategies to supplement the core curriculum to ensure that the students maintain good progress. This is more successful in some departments than others depending on the calibre and length of service of some of the departmental coaches. Remedial action is taken when necessary to support those students who are having difficulty at any stage of their academic development. The special educational needs students have well defined individual education plans which are monitored carefully to ensure that their learning is broken down into measurable steps. Again, information and communication technology is used to good effect for the older students to provide on-line information through the school's web site to assist their progress.

The analysis and use of data is central to decision making in the school. Budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions are all firmly based on documented student needs. The principal is shrewd in her use of additional programs, such as a comprehensive mathematics intervention program and the Saturday academy program, to raise achievement.

Most students have good attendance records and are keen to stay as long as the school remains open. However, a significant minority of students has difficulty in time keeping. The school has very good systems for checking on the whereabouts of the students when they are absent, but has not yet discovered a strategy to improve punctuality. Standards of behavior are satisfactory but there is scope for students to take greater responsibility for their conduct. For example, much of the order in class depends on the discipline imposed by the teacher, rather than an innate sense on behalf of the students of what is a mature approach to learning. There is also scope for the school to clarify its sanctions and detention procedures. Most students have good attitudes to learning, concentrate in class, and listen carefully to their teachers.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Although the staff has had difficulty with staff retention, which has put restrictions on the school's development, it is clear that this situation is improving. The school has now an established leadership team that is beginning to share the responsibility for school improvement. There is also a greater shared vision amongst many of the staff to move the school forward at an accelerated rate. This commitment is based on the recognition that "team is better than individual" and a desire to work together in collaborative teams to share good practice and to make more effective use of available data. There is an acknowledgement that if the school is to continue to improve, collaborative working is the key and the staff members need to be far more open about what is working well and what needs to be improved. At present, these are not happening consistently.

The school has a coordinated approach to professional development. The professional development team works together to support planning, assessment procedures, and curriculum development. It is understood that most of the training will be school based and will be clearly grounded in the principles of effective classroom practice. This is beginning to impact on standards as the staff grows as a team.

There is a regular program of monitoring the quality of teaching and the principal has a clear idea of where the key strengths lie and is aware of those members of staff who require greater nurturing and guidance. This process is beginning to improve the consistency in the quality of teaching. The school day runs smoothly and staff members know what is expected of them in terms of curriculum delivery. However, too few staff contribute to the overall discipline of the school and faculty heads are not sufficiently accountable for student progress within their subject area. This aspect of shared leadership is developing with the greater staff stability. Consequently, with the commitment and dedication of the principal, the school is very well set for future growth.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school has come a long way since its inception in 2002. The school has drawn up a Comprehensive Education Plan that rests at the heart of all that the school seeks to achieve. The plan clearly outlines how the needs of all of the students are identified and how these needs will be met, including rigorous intervention strategies and special programs for those students in greatest need. The strategies of annual college visits and a uniform policy have been successful in raising expectations both in terms of achievement and conduct. The recent appointment of a new assistant principal has strengthened the leadership team and has led to greater rigor in the school's performance management processes. For example, the school has now a clear agenda with appropriate time scales for further school improvement. The leadership team reflects carefully on possible alternative strategies to manage the planned increase in student numbers.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Frederick Douglass Academy IV (HS 393)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score		X	

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • each student, classroom, grade level, 			X
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students* 		X	
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all other categories of interest to the school* 		X	
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1		X	

* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.		X	
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject, and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area.		X	
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.		X	
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.			X
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2		X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.		X	
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.		X	
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.		X	
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.		X	
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3		X	
Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.		X	
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.		X	
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.		X	
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.		X	
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.		X	
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4		X	
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.		X	
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.		X	
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.		X	
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5		X	