



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Frederick Douglass Academy VIII

**Middle School 452
1400 Pennsylvania Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11239**

Principal: Tamara Thomas

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Reviewer: Derek Pattinson

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Frederick Douglas Academy VIII Middle School is a new college preparatory middle school which opened on July 1st 2006 on the top floor of premises occupied by an elementary school from where some of its students come. It currently has 74 grade 6 students enrolled, and will reach its full capacity of approximately 225 students in September 2008. The school's population is made up of 92% Black, 7% Hispanic and 1% White students. The school has no English language learners or special education students. Average attendance is 94%, which is well above that of similar and City schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is recognized by the whole school community as a dynamic leader with a clear vision for the school and its scholars.
- Since its opening, the development of a unified, collaborative approach and the establishment of a sustainable culture of accountability have been a high priority.
- Professional development is given considerable emphasis to help meet identified school-wide needs as well as the individual needs of teachers.
- The team structure in place facilitates effective organization and development and contributes well to decision making processes.
- Links with parents, already strong, enable them to contribute to their child's learning.
- Adults have good relationships with each other and with the scholars, who like the school and all that it provides and feel confident asking for help when needed.
- The curriculum acknowledges and celebrates cultural diversity and makes meaningful real-life links to facilitate learning and stimulate interest and involvement.
- Cohort advisory systems and popular enrichment programs show that scholars' all-round development and strong growth of the school community are high profile.
- The school's data gathering is thorough and leads to in-depth analysis, which helps it to identify areas for further development.
- Attendance levels are high because attendance is effectively promoted.

What the school needs to improve

- Help teachers use data to set clear, challenging and measurable short-and long-term goals for all groups of scholars and rigorously review progress.
- Develop, implement and regularly review strategies and approaches to involve scholars more in their own learning so that they know what to do to achieve well.
- Improve teachers' ability to use data to help them differentiate instruction to the individual needs of scholars to enable all to make the best possible gains in learning.
- Monitor carefully the impact of professional development on scholars' outcomes.
- Create portfolios for work samples that can be used by teachers as a reference book of agreed standards for calibrating scholars' work.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

Frederick Douglass Academy VIII Middle School is a first year school, which places significant emphasis on developing both the academic and personal qualities of its students, increasingly through an analysis of data. As a college preparatory middle school, students are referred to as scholars, to help establish a clear working atmosphere as it strives to make continual incremental improvement. It has made an impressive start to its work. This is in no small part due to the strong, purposeful and effective leadership of its principal, as she seeks with staff, to realize her vision for the school and its scholars. Because of its unified approach and culture of sustainable accountability, it has established a firm platform to build on the successes already achieved. Both targeted professional development and the promotion of collaborative approaches are strong features of the school's work and are helping the school to move forward.

The school's team structure clearly facilitates effective organization and development. The curriculum, which acknowledges and celebrates cultural diversity and seeks to break down barriers between subjects, is helping to bring instruction to life for scholars, develop key skills and knowledge as well as positive attitudes. Parents are already very supportive of the school. However, the school does not, as of yet, effectively set clear and challenging goals. Additionally, differentiated instruction is not consistent in all classrooms. The school has already started to plan for the challenges ahead as it considers how to build on the strong culture it has created.

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's data gathering procedures are thorough. Soon after the school's opening, it analyzed scholars' data from the last three grades seeking patterns and trends and to identify areas of strength and weakness in order to target instruction to scholars' specific needs. Routines were then quickly established to enable it to continue to gather data on areas of agreed focus. In addition, the school began to use systems for gathering, storing and reporting data electronically. Routinely collected data includes State examination scores, outcomes of conferencing, teacher observations, attendance rates and scholar portfolio information. Teachers gather data based on periodic interim assessments, practice exams and scholars' projects and monthly test days in all content areas. Examinations are analyzed to identify the strengths and weaknesses of every scholar and to begin to look at their performances and progress over time in this new school. As a result of this analysis and because of the school's unified approach, adjustments are made to the planning of lessons, pacing of the curriculum and delivery of instruction to help address scholars' needs. Teachers have much ownership in the creation and use of rubrics against which data is collected. Disciplinary and attendance data is analyzed to look for trends and dips, and if required, the school rigorously acts upon its findings.

All of this data regularly feeds into staff meetings, cabinet meetings and family conferences to help address scholars' needs. The school uses data to note gender disparity, the performance of different ethnic groups and is constantly reviewing the picture for each student as new data becomes available. While it is starting to make comparisons between classes, it is not yet able to make comparisons between grades, although it has established the structures and the degree of rigor to enable it to do so. The school measures its performance against other similar schools. The school has the capacity to interrogate data as it continues to be gathered to find new patterns, trends and solutions.

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 undeveloped.

In general terms, gathered data is always used to improve the academic, social and emotional progress of every scholar. This is done by utilizing the data gathered to assess all teachers' professional development needs, as well as to ameliorate and drive instruction. The school plans and sets goals in a number of areas. For example, goals are set in relation to project assignments, to address specific topics and skills, create more unified expectations for individual students from progress reports, family conferences and from an analysis of attendance data. Some teachers set goals for scholars in individual lessons, although approaches are not consistent and goals are often not high enough to challenge the high achievers. The school, since opening, has concentrated on gathering and analyzing relevant data from which to plan and set goals. It has identified appropriate systems for supporting its vulnerable scholars and has decided on appropriate intervention strategies. It has already established challenging goals for next year's State tests based on a comprehensive analysis of this year's performances. However, the planning and setting of goals is not yet a high priority in the school's work. Many school-wide and students' goals are not precise enough nor are they easily measurable to enable the cabinet or teachers to evaluate progress towards their achievement. For example, students' goals include 'paying attention' and 'passing our tests,' which are not focused enough to help maximize learning. As a result, scholars do not have much ownership in what they need to do to improve.

Parents value the principal's work, her high expectations for student achievement and the support the school gives to their children. However, they are not involved in the process of goal setting and reviewing so that they can support their children effectively. There are no formal procedures to ensure that the in-depth scrutiny of data leads to a unified approach for the setting of challenging goals. Targeted professional development is not yet planned to help teachers become more skilled at goal setting and reviewing.

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 curriculum is clearly aligned closely around the school's key goal of creating a high quality learning environment while also emphasizing that the personal development of scholars is as important as their academic work. Teachers are held accountable for their

achievement. The curriculum also has the capacity to generate meaningful interim data of benefit to teachers. As a result, the curriculum acknowledges and celebrates cultural diversity as well as provides relevant learning experiences, which engages students. Academic intervention services help service the needs of identified scholars, with instruction aligned from gathered data. Teachers are thoughtful about wanting to use data to align instruction and programming to students' needs and are clearly focused on individual student behavioral and academic growth. For example, gathered data has been used to create popular after-school enrichment clubs, such as, French, scrabble, violin and science. However, opportunities for greater differentiation through group work to help align instruction are often missed, and as a result, some students are not always challenged or actively involved in lessons. While scholars maintain two separate portfolios, which show some evidence of progress, the school does not yet have portfolios of students' work to use as a reference book of agreed levels to help calibrate their work. However, the school provides a lively environment and students feel valued. They feel comfortable approaching adults about any personal or academic issue that might arise.

In addition to careful scheduling, the school has also aligned its budget and staffing very clearly around the needs of its students. Attendance is above similar and City schools because it is a high priority. Parents are fully involved and attendance is monitored closely and regularly in class and at whole school level.

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.

The principal is recognized by the whole school community as a dynamic leader with a clear vision for the school and its scholars. She selected staff based on their commitment to use data to increase student performance. She has already implemented systems, procedures and approaches which have provided a secure platform for further improvement and innovation. She understood from the beginning that building the capacity of the teaching staff was essential in order to help accelerate learning and raise achievement. As a consequence, professional development has been, and still is, a very high priority of the school's current work. Key areas of focus, to support her targeted, well-planned and followed-through observations of her teachers, have included arranging inter-school visitations, differentiation, and lesson pacing. However, not all initiatives have been successful, and as a result the school plans to monitor more systematically the impact of professional development on scholars' outcomes. The team structure facilitates effective organization and development. Each team has a clearly defined function, but all complement each other, involve a cross-section of the school community, and contribute well to decision making processes. Professional reviews are regularly conducted to identify areas of need and the principal's performance review is an effective evaluation tool that assesses whether school goals are being met.

Well developed systems are applied consistently across most aspects of school life. As a result, the school day runs smoothly. Much has been done to ensure that scholars behave well because expectations for them are clear. However, approaches are not yet always consistent. Teachers and students consider the principal is strong and focused yet very receptive to their needs. This is a view shared by parents who feel part of the school and part of their children's education. Partnerships with academic institutions and community based organizations have proved constructive in helping to support the school's work. For

example, counseling agencies assist with referrals and the Office of Youth Development plays an integral part in the development of the scholars' health awareness.

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 high quality leadership is constantly seeking to evaluate its initiatives and developing practices to help ensure that they meet their scholars' needs and help address the school's long-term goals. For example, data collection is focused on areas where instruction has been designed to address a weakness. Advisory surveys have been conducted to identify how the school needs to adjust curriculum planning and target professional development.

Teachers are reflecting on their practice against the classroom observation rubric. They also reflect on the quality of policies and documents introduced. The school has created a professional climate where all staff members hold each other responsible for meeting agreed expectations. There is much discussion and reflection about the school's schedules and structures which help establish clear goals for next year. As a result, a cycle of continuous organization improvement has been created, which is supported by external groups. Programs and goals are immediately changed if they are deemed not to be effective. However, the leadership recognizes that there is not yet a secure structure for setting clear school-wide and scholars' goals or a rigorous system for measuring them.

This year's professional development focus on differentiation has not yet led to consistent improvement in teachers' ability to match work carefully to their scholars' needs, especially for the highest achievers. Despite these areas of needed development, the school has made a good start in establishing some structures against which the work of the school can be measured and evaluated. The school has set clear, challenging, rigorous and shared goals for next year to help it build on this process and enable it to more systematically measure its future achievements more systematically.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Frederick Douglass Academy VIII (MS 452)	∅	✓	+
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	