



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Frederick Douglass VII High School

High School 514

**226 Bristol Street
Brooklyn
NY 11212**

Principal: Tamika Matheson

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Reviewer: Veronica Young

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Frederick Douglass VII High School is a community school in the Brownsville area of Brooklyn. It is currently in its third year of existence and caters for grades 9, 10 and 11. Next year, when it reaches capacity it will serve grades 9 through 12. The first class will graduate in 2008. It shares a large building with another school and next year will occupy the top two floors.

This academic year the school has a population of 303 students. Almost 8% are special education students and less than 1% is an English language learner. Ethnically, the school has 85% Black students, 12% Hispanic, with the remainder being White, Asian or other.

The school receives Title 1 funding with 67 % eligibility. The attendance rate, which is currently 88.7%, is above average when compared to similar and City schools.

The school has partnerships with a number of external organizations including Carnegie Mellon University, Brooklyn College/College Now, Project Set (a film production program), the Dons and Divas life skills and college life preparation program and the 93 Street Y Science Panel Discussion Seminar.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Clear policies across the school are consistently applied and understood by all.
- There are very high expectations from staff and students for themselves and for each other.
- The principal is highly regarded and has the capacity to effect change, ably assisted by an effective and hardworking assistant principal.
- The small size of the school builds close staff to student relationships and a friendly atmosphere.
- There are excellent standards of politeness and behavior in and out of classrooms.
- Continuous use of data from both inside and outside the school provides a constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of all students.
- There are high levels of collaboration between individual groups of staff, leading to close monitoring of students and speedy response to necessary change.

What the school needs to improve

- Break down internal data formally into categories such as ethnicity and gender to identify trends and areas of good practice.
- Introduce more short-term and interim targets into student and other goals so they can be more easily monitored.
- Further develop peer observations to encourage more thematic approaches to the curriculum by looking for linkage, and to spread good practice.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

Since the school opened in 2004, there has been a culture of gathering, analyzing and using data to drive all areas of activity, including teaching, curriculum design and planning, professional development and classroom organization. The small size means staff and students form a close-knit team who trust and respect one another and collaboration is used throughout. The introduction of curriculum mapping has brought relevance and deeper understanding for students and given staff opportunities to work with others on common themes. The school runs extremely smoothly and efficiently, with clear policies and procedures which are displayed in all classrooms and corridors. Rubrics for achievement are posted throughout and understood by all. The administration has worked very hard to ensure communication in the school is open and is relentless at ensuring everyone and everything is working as they should. Students show extremely high levels of maturity and self-assurance. The uniform policy is strictly adhered to and there are high levels of politeness and good behavior throughout. There are very high expectations of success and students feel respected and treated as individuals.

The administration recognizes that target-setting in the school is not yet totally consistent, nor is it sufficiently used incrementally, but this is on the agenda for future professional development and staff are enthusiastic to develop this area further.

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 well developed.

Data is consistently gathered and shared with staff and students. The school works on a 26-28 working day cycle and produces regular reports on almost every aspect of the school's activity, including attendance and occurrences of inappropriate behavior, for example, where and when incidents happen, as well as continuous information on the progress and performance of each student, class and grade level. Examples of the latter include mock Regents', which have been introduced by the principal, scholarship reports, cohort scores and teachers' study group logs. Students' grade 8 scores are used to form a basis for improvement, as well as GROW reports. Students who arrive after the beginning of grade 9 are given past mathematics and English language arts papers to determine achievement levels. There are no statistically relevant comparators of ethnicity in the school and as yet, gender comparisons, whilst in place, are carried out only on an informal basis, but those for English language learners and special education students are used, as are other categories of interest, such as teacher and department. The school always compares itself to others in the area and those identified as peer schools in the pilot progress report. For example, The Frederick Douglass Academy VI which has very similar features to this school, and the school which shares the building, with whom there is a friendly rivalry and sharing of good practice.

Informal data is produced by the school leadership team, which conducts individual walkthroughs several times a year using a graded checklist. This is helpful to both the team, who can monitor how the school is working, and to the teachers, who gain feedback through the eyes of co-workers, parents and students. The school sees its data as an essential tool which dictates the activity of all within it. Item analysis scantrons are used by all staff to generate and analyze reports quickly and easily and trends are constantly monitored by the administration.

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 well developed.

Data is utilized regularly in departmental team meetings to identify trends and highlight issues. Departmental teams meet each week, when goals are set and reviewed for classes and grade levels, then monitored by the principal and assistant principal. The Read 180 system, which assesses and targets difficulties in reading, is being piloted at the moment, so reading goals can be better targeted for individual students next year. Short- and long-term goals are set for individuals, grades and classes at the start of each school year, based on current data. Timeframes and responsibilities are included in these plans. However, short-term goals are so-called because of time constraints and are not seen as increments towards long-term achievements. The administration recognizes this, seeing it as a priority for school-wide professional development. As the school is not yet operating at capacity and many of the teaching staff are inexperienced, formal grade team meetings are planned for next year. However, in department meetings, progress of students and curriculum progress are discussed and curriculum targets are set which are reviewed weekly. The universal target test score for all students on any program in the school is 80%, and any student under-performing in any subject is targeted for additional support, in the form of mandated intervention before or after school or during first period in English language arts, mathematics, Spanish, social studies and science. There is a full program of Regents’ preparation classes after school for any student wishing, or who needs, to attend.

Students and staff have high expectations of themselves and each other and all students plan on going to college after graduating. Students are called ‘scholars’ as the school is regarded as the stepping stone to college. College preparation classes start in grade 10. All activity in the school drives these plans for graduation and college. Parents are involved through the school leadership team and the parent teachers association. Report cards are sent to parents four times per year. Parents are encouraged to be partners in their child’s education and work with the school to set achievable targets for them.

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 well developed.

The school’s curriculum is based on the mandated curriculum, but there is a school-wide emphasis on English, especially reading and writing. The English curriculum is driven by social studies, so literature is carefully chosen to reflect whatever is being taught at the time. For example, when studying World War 1 in history, ‘All Quiet on the Western Front’

or the war poets will be studied in English. Curriculum maps based on the Heidi Hayes Jacobs model are used for every subject and are cross-referenced for reading, writing and other inter-disciplinary work. This means staff work collaboratively on every level, using a holistic approach.

Individual classes work in different ways to differentiate instruction based on student need, often using groups based on ability, or by using individualized tasks. Multiple intelligences are beginning to be used, following a professional development session. Differentiation is always based on progress and performance data, and next year, some students will be taught using double periods over a shorter time-span to improve student retention of facts, this need having been identified in test scores. The school's aim is to change the teacher role into a facilitator of learning rather than an instructor. The budget is driven by the needs of the school and quantified in the Comprehensive Education Plan. Monies are always set aside for extra tutors if certain subjects need it, and Saturday and after-school programs have been funded in this way, which has been instrumental in raising achievement. Staffing decisions and the organization of teaching is data-led with targeted, frequent staff observation and professional development arising from performance and progress data of classes, subjects and individual students.

Instructional activity engages students. In the majority of lessons a variety of methods are used, including inventive use of technology, but some pedestrianism and rote learning are present in a minority of classrooms. This is recognized by the administration and close monitoring of teaching and learning, combined with targeted professional development, is improving engagement. The small size of the school means all staff and students know each other by name and this has facilitated mutual trust and respect across the school. This is echoed by the mutual respect and trust between the staff and administration. Student attendance rate is a high priority, and at 88.7%, is almost at its target of 90%. Every absence triggers a phone call home that day from the dedicated attendance teacher or parent coordinator. They send letters or undertake documented home visits for longer absences. Perfect attendees are acknowledged and their names are displayed in hallways.

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 well developed

Staff at the school are selected based on their educational background, personal goals, life experiences, willingness to collaborate and passion for their subject and students. An understanding and buy-in of the school's mission, which is to prepare every student for post-high school or vocational studies, is essential. A committee consisting of administrators and teaching staff then interview candidates, adhering to strict criteria.

Professional development is carried out informally at the twice-monthly faculty and weekly departmental meetings, with regular input on how to review data and match curricula and teaching to needs. Student and curriculum needs also dictate more formalized professional development; for example, the whole teaching staff recently attended training on multiple intelligences which is being used to help differentiate learning strategies. Staff and student needs are always carefully matched to development opportunities and then impact is measured following the training. The principal and assistant principal each carry out six formal observations per term, and informal snapshots on an ongoing basis. Full and constructive feedback is always given. The frequency of formal observations is based on probation, tenure and needs arising from data. The first week of term is "Critical

Friends Week”, when each teacher invites two or three others to observe their classes and receive peer feedback. This has been so successful that it is to be expanded throughout the whole year. As previously mentioned, almost all activity in the school is collaborative. The smallness of the school is helpful in staff knowing each other well and being able to work together informally, but it also means staff must have many responsibilities and this makes common preparation time difficult. The principal is highly respected by the assistant principal, staff, teachers and aides and by the students, and has put in procedures and systems according to the needs of the school and the curriculum. Policies are clear and understood by all, so the school runs extremely smoothly. Grading rubrics are on display in every classroom, school rules and consequences are clearly displayed and there is even a chart in the corridor explaining which member of staff to go to if specific problems arise.

The school has close links with a number of community based organizations. Examples include the High School Law Institute, an intensive Saturday program at both Columbia and New York universities, and the opportunity to take part in a number of internships, programs, professional development and trips with the organizations listed in the school context.

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

Targets in the school, although used consistently, are quite broad, and although they are individualized, they often lack checkpoints and interim goals at present. This is recognized by the administration and is a priority for improvement

The principal is eager to use skills development as a tool for raising student achievement, and the school is exploring how this can be formalized. The current ongoing diagnostic tool is the mock Regents examinations which is useful but insufficiently skills-referenced to make detailed comparisons of student progress. Because of the widespread use of data and deep knowledge of students’ performance and progress, plans are revised very quickly and staff are able to change lessons, or methods very quickly which they do regularly. This is evidenced in study logs and minutes of meetings and in the Comprehensive Education Plan which is a living document and amended throughout the year as necessary, being used as a tool to progress the Principal’s Performance Review goals.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Frederick Douglass VII High School (HS 514)	∅	✓	+
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	