



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**Frederick Douglass Academy V**

**Intermediate School 273**

**2111 Crotona Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10457**

**Principal: Ms. Deborah Cimini**

**Dates of review: May 1 - 2, 2007**

**Reviewer: Chris Andrews**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Frederick Douglass Academy V is a relatively new school, having opened in September 2004 as a replication school. It is situated on the top two floors of a five story building which it shares with an elementary school. It utilizes the elementary school's cafeteria and gymnasium on the ground floor, and the elementary school currently shares the music room and computer suite within Frederick Douglass Academy V.

Frederick Douglass Academy V has 264 students enrolled in grades 6 through 8. The students are primarily Hispanic (75%) and Black (24%) with the remainder from other ethnic communities. Currently 10.5% of the students are special education students and 5% are English language learners. The school receives Title 1 funding for 91% of its students which is well above the figures for similar and City schools. Attendance is very good, and at 95% is also above the figures for similar and City schools.

In September 2006 Frederick Douglass Academy V became an empowerment school, and as such has more flexibility to make key decisions and control the resources for its school community. Empowerment schools are free to develop or purchase professional development services, choose schools to affiliate with and benefit from reduced reporting and paperwork requirements.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school collects a good range of data which is used consistently by teachers to monitor student progress.
- There are excellent procedures in place to understand the performance and progress of students needing special support.
- There are regular team meetings to evaluate the progress of individual students and to determine support programs.
- The school has high expectations of its students which are well understood by all.
- The teaching staff is committed to developing the potential of all of their students whom they know well.
- Students feel safe at school, trust and respect the adults and feel comfortable in asking for support and help.
- The principal is widely respected, is seen as a role model and as an excellent manager of change.
- The school curriculum ensures that the students have a range of valuable experiences with excellent opportunities for cross-curricular work.
- The extra-curricular activities enhance the students' learning experiences while also contributing to the achievement of whole school goals.
- School plans are monitored and evaluated regularly against the available data.

### What the school needs to improve

- Provide short term goals for individual students to help them develop specific skills within relatively short time frames.
- Provide differentiated instruction to all students to match their identified needs.
- Develop active and engaging instruction to all students to develop their capacity for individual learning.
- Plan opportunities for teachers to undertake intervisitations within the school.
- Develop professional peer and self-evaluation within the broader framework of professional development.
- Develop whole school planning to secure year-to-year progress.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a proficient school.**

The Frederick Douglass Academy V is led by a new principal. She opened the school and has rapidly built a reputation which makes the school a popular choice for parents and students. The teaching staff is highly qualified but relatively inexperienced, with four young America's Choice teachers in their first two years of teaching and several older teachers who have undergone very recent career changes. These bring a range of valued interests to the school, but they are also still developing instructional skills. It is clear however that they all share the principal's vision of the school as a learning community, and their work is characterized by an openness and willingness to reflect collaboratively on what they are doing.

As an empowerment school established in 2006, the use of the designated periodic assessment materials to generate data is very much in its infancy. These materials contribute to the overall monitoring of student performance and progress, but it is too soon to make concrete judgments about the impact of these materials specifically. However, as the result of a series of retreats, decisions have been made which reflect the degree of independence which empowerment schools enjoy. In particular the mandated 37½ minute sessions after school have been consolidated into three elective sessions of 50 minutes before or after school. These allow for teachers to provide opportunities for enrichment, based on their own interests or skills, as well as to support students needing extra guidance.

### 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 collection of a good range of data which is used consistently by teachers to monitor student progress is a strength of the school. There are excellent procedures in place to understand the performance and progress of students needing special support. All teachers are required to use E-Z Grade Pro, an electronic grading book which generates monthly progress reports for students, who are taught to read these for themselves and thus monitor their own progress, but which will also produce comparative reports for students by class or grade. The categories generated from E-Z Grade Pro are rather generalized but this system is supported by a range of other systems including the Princeton Review. The use of the data has led, for example, to a focus on level 2 students in mathematics who were identified as group of particular interest as they were clearly having difficulties with certain skills. These are being addressed through focused interventions, while honors students have also been identified. In the 7th grade honors students are given extension work, and then are placed in homogeneous peer groups in 8th grade.

The principal reviews performance against similar schools as far as possible but externally moderated data for this school is limited due to its newness. There is growing evidence of the monitoring of ethnic groups and English language learners. The progress of boys and also of more able students provide areas of special interest, and steps have been taken to address the needs of these groups. There are comparisons of students to their own progress over time or that of their class, but not systematically to previous years as yet. However, the principal visits other schools, particularly within the network of empowerment schools, to observe strategies used in these institutions.

**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 with some well-developed features.**

There are regular team meetings to evaluate the progress of individual students and to determine support programs. At these meetings data is used precisely to target individuals and group of students. Teachers work in teams to set the goals, while planning is both individual and collaborative, supported in particular by the literacy coach and mathematics coaches. The overall goals for the school within the Comprehensive Education Plan relate to gains as measured by the Standardized Assessment Tests, but these are used in conjunction with the other data collected by teachers to judge which students to target in terms of specific skills. While the data certainly drives the activities of all members of the school community, sharing short term goals with individual students to help them develop specific skills within relatively short time frames does not, as of yet, occur at the school.

To support English language learners and special education students, the academic intervention services team works with those identified. Other students are often placed in cooperative team teaching classes to support them. A group of local high school seniors also come into the school to assist the lower achievers, and a series of poor report cards quickly triggers a case conference with parents involved.

Overall, the school has high expectations of its students which are well understood by all members of the school community. Parents feel strongly that their children are well-supported in school, and that they are able to contribute to the educational process. They are, for example, given training at a workshop to enable them to understand the E-Z Grade Pro grade reports that are sent home to 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 proficient**

The curriculum aligns well with the mandated curriculum and through the E-Z Grade Pro program and the Princeton reviews generates data regularly to support teachers’ own data sources. Teachers are held accountable to the principal for their instruction, and they are monitored through observations and analysis of the data relating to their classes. Faculty meetings all have a strong focus on instruction. There is no doubt that the teaching staff is committed to developing the potential of all of their students whom they know well, but

differentiated instruction is not a strong feature of the school. The school uses push-in and pull-out strategies. Data is used as one of the main tools for determining budgetary and other resource decisions, and these decisions link to the Comprehensive Education Plan.

The quality of instruction varies, but students clearly enjoy many of their classes. Many of the teachers are young and relatively inexperienced, so professional development is a priority for the school to develop their skills and so provide active and engaging instruction to all students to allow them to become individualized learners. However, examples of excellent cross-curricular work linking art with mathematics and English, and challenging experimental work in science, show that the potential within the teaching staff is high.

Students like coming to school and feel safe there. Their relationships with adults in the school are excellent, and feel very comfortable in asking for support and help, whether academic or personal. Attendance is very good, reinforced both by clear systems in place to pursue absences and through positive reinforcement such as monthly home room contests and dress down days.

**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 with some well developed features.**

The school has a much smaller proportion of teachers with more than five years' experience of teaching than in other schools, so professional development is given a high priority. The principal hires staff who can further her vision for the school and who can broaden the range of experiences the children enjoy. Priorities for professional development are based on the needs identified through the data and through the teachers' self-evaluations. Therefore half of focused observations are based on school issues and half on the areas identified by teachers. The school does not have formal and planned opportunities for teachers to undertake intervisitations within the school, and for the development of professional peer and self-evaluation. However, the teachers in each grade do have common preparation periods, and during this time they work as teams to review student progress and plan their instruction to meet the needs identified.

The principal is widely respected. She is seen as a role model and as an excellent manager of change. She is highly visible around the school, and parents appreciate how accessible she is to them. She and her assistant principal make frequent visits to classrooms and feedback their observations. There are weekly team meetings at lunchtimes, which include two for collaborative planning, and at these meetings discussion about goals for groups or individuals is commonplace.

Communication is good, and the school runs smoothly in spite of the problems of accessing rooms which are four floors below the main school area. The developing program of extra-curricular activities enhances the students' learning experiences and contributes to the achievement of whole school goals. Within the curriculum students enjoy excellent opportunities for cross-curricular work, especially linked to Art.

**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 Comprehensive Education Plan acts as a focus for the school's development, although this is still in its early stages. The departments contribute significantly to the writing of the plan and reviewing their sections at the end of the year. Monitoring takes place, again in teams, after each period of interim assessments, and this allows for the revision of plans and of individual and group goals. Changes in instructional practice also derive from this process using consultants or the network of principals from other empowerment schools as a source of expert advice.

The school is developing its whole school planning cycle to secure year-on-year progress. However, this is still in its early stages as the profile of the teaching staff is such that even the most senior are relatively inexperienced. Consequently the process of monitoring and review is evolving in partnership with the teachers' experience and their instructional skills. However, these reviews have already led to the establishment of Advanced Placement classes for level 4 students capable of taking the Regents examination in 8<sup>th</sup> grade and the decision to purchase mini-sets of textbooks in science and English with differentiated reading levels so that all students can access the curriculum without being identified by their peers as having different needs.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Frederick Douglass Academy V (IS 273)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>		X	

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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"> <li>• each student, classroom, grade level,</li> </ul>		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"> <li>• ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students*</li> </ul>		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"> <li>• all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>		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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>		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.

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>		X	

<b>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.</b>	Ø	✓	+
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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>		X	
<b>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.</b>	Ø	✓	+
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>		X	
<b>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.</b>	Ø	✓	+
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>		X	