



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Frederick Douglass Academy VI High School

High School 260

821 Bay 25 Street

Far Rockaway

Queens

NY 11691

Principal: Linda Alfred

Dates of review: March 5 - 7, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Linda Hill

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Frederick Douglass Academy VI is a high school with 268 students from grade 8 through grade 11. The school population comprises 72% Black, 19% Hispanic, 1% White, and 7% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 4% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 83.5%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 68% eligibility.

Opened in 2004 with grade 9 students only, the school has now expanded to encompass the full high school range. The school shares its building with two other schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal provides strong, highly respected leadership.
- The new administration team means the principal is able to drive forward her vision for the school more strategically.
- High expectations permeate every level of the school and its community and are reflected in the polite, friendly and hard working students.
- The principal and administration use resources, budgets and staffing very efficiently within the constraints they have in a shared building.
- The school knows its students well and supports them effectively according to their needs.
- Guidance, staff and parents work collaboratively and successfully in an atmosphere of trust to ensure students' high self-esteem and care.
- The school uses a wide range of data and regular assessments to inform its work and adapt instruction appropriately.
- Staff work collaboratively and offer extremely strong support to one another and to develop instruction.
- Following appropriate professional development, better differentiates instruction challenge and support the full range of students.

What the school needs to improve

- Make certain that goals at all levels have clear timeframes for regular, interim monitoring.
- Develop opportunities for teachers to visit other schools for personalized professional development and to make meaningful data comparisons.
- Find more ways to engage greater numbers of parents and the wider community to enhance their awareness of the school.
- Develop further the curriculum and activities to attract and retain more students.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

It is Frederick Douglass Academy VI High School's belief that all students have a right to attend college and its goal is that it will provide them with the opportunity to do so. Students appreciate this philosophy and respond extremely well to it. New appointments enhance the quality of the school and support the leadership's extremely high expectations and vision. The principal appoints staff because of what they can offer to more than one aspect of the school's life. Similarly, administration deploys other resources and budgets carefully; especially as the school shares its space with two other schools and this constrains some of the aspects of the school's work.

Frederick Douglass High VI knows its students well and operates in an atmosphere of trust and respect. The small numbers and the collaborative links between the inquiry team, guidance, teachers and parents ensure good communication and an understanding of all aspects of students' lives. This provides good role models and helps engender self-respect and aspiration. Students are rapidly becoming one of the school's best assets. An area for development is to provide more curricula opportunities and to establish the school's reputation and profile in the wider community. Similarly, parents are insufficiently engaged in the full life of the school community so that the opportunities provided for both parents and students can grow.

Led by a strong, very highly regarded principal and a recently developed administration, the school now gathers a good range of data that it analyzes to drive forward all aspects of its work. The inquiry team is concentrating on writing skills, resulting from analysis of work and assessments that showed a need to enhance students' ability to convey their learning more accurately. Although not all levels of planning have clearly established time frames, some do, and this is more strategic than in the last quality review. This represents good progress, as does the greater understanding and use of differentiated instruction resulting from professional development. A next step is for the school to find wider opportunities for teachers to visit and learn from other schools, particularly with regard to data use and to the development of their own subject's practices.

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 the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The school no longer relies solely on formal assessment using standardized tests to gather an understanding of students' progress. It now collects and analyzes a range of other information such as interim assessments, portfolios, quizzes and teachers' ongoing

recording of student progress. As a result, the school now has a comprehensive view of how well students are doing and what they need to improve, because it makes very good use of the information it gathers.

The appointment of two further special education teachers, who meet an identified need and work to support both students and teachers in general education classes, means that there is careful tracking of special education students. Similarly, the school gathers information about more advanced students in order to place them in more challenging classes and extend their progress. There is also good data collection and analysis on progress against ethnicity and gender. For example, the school is considering the impact of sporting opportunities aligned to academic progress, which appear to favor boys.

The school has found fewer opportunities to measure itself with similar schools, partly because it is still relatively newly established, and this, along with professional development for teachers in comparing their work and their use of data with that of other schools, is an area for development.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student’s next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student’s learning.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

In line with the improvements in gathering data, the school now aligns its interpretation of information systematically in ensuring students progress well. Students have individual learning goals at an informal level, resulting from teachers’ assessments of their ongoing work, more robust medium-term goals following school assessments, quizzes and tests, as well as longer-term goals with measurable outcomes against Regents and other formal assessments. These strategies enable swift intervention should students fall behind in their work.

The school’s more systematic approach to the analysis of information is shown in the outcome of the inquiry team investigations. Having assumed that math would be the area for focus, analysis proved that it was English language arts where students needed greater assistance. This has led to increased support and resources in that area, including collaborative team teaching and planning. Teachers and guidance work closely with parents to track and enhance students’ outcomes. The school provides comprehensive information to parents including encouraging their own participation in Saturday programs to ensure they have a full understanding of their child’s progress. Parents themselves believe that if they want extra information about their child “all you have to do is ask” because teachers are so responsive and know exactly how students are doing. The school is now looking for ways to engage even more parents in the goal setting process and other aspects of school life.

An exemplary aspect of the school is how the principal and all members of her staff convey high expectations to ensure students can achieve their potential. The way the school refers to students as scholars and, as students themselves acknowledge, the fact that, “the principal cares about every student in the school”, exemplify these high expectations.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

Despite its small size and shared resources, the school has expanded its curricular provision to engage and extend student interest. It has developed humanities, is looking for ways to increase its advanced performance classes, and offers a good range of sports, educational visits and other activities designed to enhance the learning experience of students. However, insufficient numbers of students choose the school for their education. In order to make the best use of budgets, the principal hires well-qualified staff who can offer more to the school, such as music, than simply their good subject knowledge, to enhance the curriculum. Whilst it would like to offer a wider curriculum, parents appreciate that the “quality sure surpasses quantity”. Parents also describe how the school tries to expose students “to everything possible” to give them even greater chance of being accepted into prestigious colleges and careers. The student congress plays a vital part of the process of preparing students for life beyond school, as congress members have to apply for a position and are interviewed and selected by their peers. These approaches and the extremely strong mutual respect and care within the school mean that students want to come to school and their attendance is good.

The school has built on the need for instructional differentiation noted in the last quality review, and teachers feel they now fully understand what differentiation is. Consequently, students have tasks and resources that match their abilities, strengths and weaknesses and learning styles to help them improve. Simple techniques such as exit notes enable students to hold their teachers accountable for progress, and clear structures of formal and informal classroom observations, teacher mentoring and a truly open-door policy all ensure that instruction is well matched to student need.

The inquiry team focus, staff training in data use and the development of collaborative team teaching, contribute to coherent whole-school approaches to the curriculum that promote good progress. However, there are still some gaps in the time frames identified in monitoring these approaches.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

Administration, teachers, students and parents all understand the school’s open door policy that enables staff to share and learn from one another. Weekly scheduled and recorded collaborative planning sessions, team teaching, support from guidance and the inquiry team all promote staff development effectively. Now that the school has an administration, and subject specialists, it is able to be more systematic in structuring professional development and in conducting formal and informal classroom observations to ensure high quality instruction. There is very good support for teachers new to the school or to the profession because of a carefully organized mentoring program and an inspirational mentor. The school has rightly concentrated on building its teams and creating whole-school professional development in areas such as differentiation of instruction. Although there are some opportunities for staff to receive more personalized professional development, these are more limited. Having successfully established the school’s teams and ethos, all members of its community are now ready to extend the awareness and reputation of Frederick Douglass Academy High VI and work with other

entities in the wider community. As one student said, "We now need to get our name in the lights."

The collaboration between teachers and guidance is exemplary in providing the best possible progress and life chances for students. Teachers describe the support they receive from guidance in understanding students as "awesome".

The principal's high standards, shared by the whole school community, enable the smooth running of the school. The school does not use bells for lesson change over, for example, but plays classical music that creates an atmosphere of calm and learning. Staff appearance and the student uniform establish a businesslike approach that students can extend into their future lives.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school has made good progress in developing a systematic approach to evaluating progress throughout the year with regular checkpoints, but there are still some plans, particularly at individual student level as they respond to teacher assessment, that need firmer time scales for monitoring and evaluation. Similarly, some next steps from meetings do not have time delineated monitoring and review points.

The school has developed considerably its ability to respond to progress measures through targeted professional development. It now has its own frequent systems for interim and ongoing assessments that lead to immediate and flexible revision of plans, teaching and groupings to increase rates of progress. More advanced students receive teaching with higher-grade classes to challenge them further, teachers re-teach aspects that monitoring shows students have not understood and, now that there is a clear administration in place, the school is in a good position to extend this even further.

The most well-established goal of the school is the vision that every student, or scholar, will attend college. Whilst the school is still in the early stages of development, the principal's approach, the twelve non-negotiable rules, the student code of conduct and the total commitment of every member of the school's community fully supports this vision.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Frederick Douglass Academy VI High School	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
Quality Score				X	

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

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?				X	
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?				X	
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?				X	
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?				X	
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?				X	
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?			X		
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1				X	

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set rigorous, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?				X	
2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?				X	
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?				X	
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?					X
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?				X	
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?			X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?			X		
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?			X		
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?				X	
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?				X	
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?				X	
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?					X
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X	

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?				X	
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?			X		
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?				X	
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?				X	
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?					X
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning, and effectively address discipline related incidents?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?			X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 4					X

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?			X		
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?				X	
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?			X		
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?			X		
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5					X

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped