



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Frederick Douglass Academy V**

**Middle School 273**

**2111 Crotona Avenue**

**Bronx**

**NY 10457**

**Principal: Deborah Cimini**

**Dates of review: May 12 – 13, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Elizabeth Lopez**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Frederick Douglass Academy V is an intermediate school with 261 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 41% Black, 56% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 9% 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 93.0%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 79% eligibility.

Frederick Douglass Academy V is a relatively new school, having opened in 2004. The school occupies the top two floors in a five-storey school building, which it shares with an elementary school. Frederick Douglass Academy V uses the elementary school's cafeteria, but does not have access to the gymnasium. A recent grant from the Schwartz Foundation has enabled the school to obtain a new technology room. The allocation of additional funding from the Schwartz Foundation is designated to further enhance technology throughout the school.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal is highly visible, has the respect of the school community, and the capacity to move the school forward to meet goals.
- A good range of data is collected and analyzed to understand patterns and trends across the school.
- Small groups of students in greatest need of improvement receive good intervention to support their learning needs, particularly in reading.
- Parents and students are well satisfied with the work of the school, dedication of the staff, and home-school partnership.
- The “Accelerated Reader” program is providing high levels of engagement and is contributing to improving students’ reading levels.
- Budget, scheduling, and hiring decisions, based on data, support student learning and help raise achievement.
- The school effectively modifies the curriculum and its schedule to help maximize student performance.
- Students are positive about the support they receive from the principal and staff with regard to their social, emotional, and academic growth.
- The school is well organized, with clear systems, roles, and expectations for the school community.

### What the school needs to improve

- Use information from the data to analyze the progress of different subgroups to rigorously monitor the impact and effectiveness of instruction.
- Improve the practice of using data to set objectively measurable goals with interim steps for students and teachers.
- Analyze data more effectively to understand the performance of students at the class and individual level.
- Ensure that teachers use available data to differentiate their instruction more consistently and rigorously.
- Develop the use of periodic assessment data to track progress at the individual, classroom, and grade level more consistently.
- Build upon professional development initiatives to train and support teachers in data usage to improve outcomes.

## 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 proficient.**

There are emerging practices in place with respect to gathering and using data. This is particularly evident in English language arts. The school is utilizing the “Accelerated Reader” program, which is enabling students and teachers to set objectively measurable goals in reading and to provide students with small group differentiated support. This is a developing practice, which has not yet taken root consistently throughout the school in other content areas. The principal understands the areas for improvement and has a plan to ensure greater consistency across the school and that best practices become more widely spread.

The school has made good progress in addressing areas identified in need of improvement by the previous Quality Review. A consistent system for setting short-term goals for individual students aligned with specific skill development is firmly in place in English language arts. The principal plans to extend this good practice to math in the upcoming school year with the purchase of the “Accelerated Math” program. There are examples of teachers providing differentiated instruction to students to match identified needs. However, this is an emerging practice and has not yet had time to be used effectively to raise achievement. The school collects and uses a good range of data to help understand student performance across grades. However, not all teachers and subject areas are fully involved in the analysis of data so that it can have an impact on the teaching and learning in the classroom. In addition, the school is in the process of developing a system of using data to monitor the performance of individual students over time. This means it is difficult to monitor individual progress during the year or to share targets with individual students to give them a clear understanding of what they need to improve their performance. Professional development and frequent formal and informal observations by the administration are helping to improve the consistency of instructional practice across the school.

The work of the inquiry team focuses around gaining a deeper understanding of how to use a broad range of data to understand student learning. The team utilizes standardized test data, as well as periodic assessments, to track the performance of targeted students. The use of periodic assessments for the rest of the school, however, is inconsistent. Therefore, the impact of using this data on a daily basis to inform instruction has not yet progressed to an effective level.

The school is characterized by a culture of collaboration, teamwork, and care. Mutual respect between teachers, students, and parents fosters very good relationships. Levels of student attendance and punctuality are high. Students are respectful and follow the code of “Non-Negotiable Behavior” and “Student Creed.” Administrators and teachers know the students well. The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis as all follow clearly communicated procedures.

## **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 proficient.**

The school collects a good range of data to help understand student performance across grades. Results of State tests are analyzed and are used to gain an overall understanding of the progress of the school and its students. The State exams are analyzed and the staff does an item analysis to identify trends, patterns, and learning gaps. The administration and academic coach meet with teachers during grade level meetings to discuss specific gaps identified and plan instruction accordingly. Data analysis is not sufficiently well developed to understand the performance and progress of students at the class and individual level. Running records and student folders provide some evidence of individual student progress. However, the practice in this area remains inconsistent and is not analyzed well enough to monitor student progress over time.

Data is not routinely analyzed for differences among subgroups and the school is in its beginning stages for addressing the instruction of its English language learner population. Baseline and interim assessments are used to monitor the progress of special education students in order to modify learning to match the identified needs of this population.

The principal has identified the need to be more systematic in the use of assessment data throughout the year for comparative purposes. A growing understanding of data is helping the school to compare performance with similar schools and the principal has been proactive in identifying areas of success in other schools with a plan to visit the schools to experience good practice.

**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 proficient.**

The school is beginning the practice of using data to better understand the learning needs of students and to set objectively measurable goals. This is observed in English language arts where teachers use data obtained from the "Accelerated Reader" program to set individual reading goals with students and track progress over time. This is not a consistent practice in other content areas. A good analysis of overall results for English language arts and math is done by school staff, but has not yet been undertaken for subgroups and individual students. Students in greatest need of improvement receive good academic intervention in small groups based on skill and strategy to help master identified needs. School staff monitor mastery of strategies and students cycle in or out of intervention programs based on identified need.

The principal conveys high expectations to students, parents, and staff through the "Frederick Douglass Non-Negotiable Code of Conduct" and "Student Creed," weekly grade, subject, and common prep meetings, and monthly progress reports to parents. The school sees parents as key partners in the education of their children, so keeps them fully informed of their children's progress. This does not yet extend to individual goal setting across all areas. The parent coordinator is very effective in reaching out to families

and organizes many workshops that strengthen the home-school partnership. As a result, parents highly praise the work of the school and the regular feedback on their children's progress.

**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.**

In response to a decline in achievement in English language arts scores, the school redesigned their English language arts curriculum. The addition of the "Accelerated Reader" program enables teachers to set goals with children that are monitored over time. The use of running records also enables teachers to group students for guided reading. Guided reading groups allow teachers to focus on specific skills and strategies which has led to a more rapid growth in student reading levels. The purchase of levelled libraries permits students to select appropriate texts at their independent reading level. English language arts curriculum maps are seen as works in progress that are continuously monitored in response to student needs.

The principal uses resources so that decisions are focused on the needs of students. For example, creative budgeting decisions allow for push-in teachers in every English language arts class to further assist struggling students and target specific learning needs. Classroom teaching is frequently observed and feedback is given. This, together with other professional development opportunities, is helping to improve professional practice. Lessons in many classes are interactive and actively engage students. There is little differentiation in classes, however, so teachers do not always address the individual learning needs of students. In addition, some classes lack academic rigor so students are not consistently engaged and lose interest and motivation.

Students trust adults and are confident of receiving academic and personal help, if needed, within the school's caring culture. There are effective systems in place to monitor attendance, which as a result is over 93%.

**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 proficient.**

The principal is highly visible and has the respect of the school community. Her leadership, along with the assistant principal, forms an effective administrative team. A culture of collaboration and teamwork exists in the school, as evidenced by weekly grade, subject, and common prep meetings. Some teachers have developed intervisitations with their colleagues to share good classroom strategies, although this practice is not formalized across the school. This collaboration is beginning to promote consistency of instruction across grades. The administration regularly visits classrooms to observe teaching and to conduct both formal and informal observations. Teachers welcome these visits and are pleased to receive guidance and constructive advice. This openness and willingness to develop demonstrates that the school has good capacity to improve the quality of education and raise standards.

Parents, students, and staff are confident in the principal's ability to move the school forward. The climate of respect and high expectations contributes to the smooth running of the school. The framework of "Non-Negotiables" and "Student Creed" keeps the whole learning community on the same page and drives high behavioral expectations. A successful partnership with the Schwartz Foundation resulted in a two-year \$35,000 grant to fund the school's multimedia center. Because of this successful partnership, the Foundation has committed to an additional \$25,000 for the 2008-2009 school year. There are very good systems within the guidance and personnel teams which support the personal development of students. Students feel cared for and are positive about the comprehensive support they receive from the principal and staff with regard to their social, emotional, and academic growth.

**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.**

As it is in its early stages, the school's monitoring and review processes are beginning to develop. The use of data to set student reading goals with the "Accelerated Reader" program provides a good foundation. The administration uses periodic assessments and school-generated data suitably to track whole school and grade level progress. At present, the school does not use data to track progress at the classroom and individual level or to set associated goals. The school uses data to modify curriculum during the academic year. This is more formalized in English language arts, where curriculum maps are routinely changed based on teacher assessments of student need. Prompt revision of plans based on ongoing data in order to reach stated goals is not yet consistent across the school.

The principal is aware that a more careful assessment of data is needed in order to develop a systematic analysis and comparison of student progress. She has recognized the need to establish revised improvement plans that include long-term goals, frequent interim goals, and assessments of progress in its planning cycle. Data shows that there are significant gaps in achievement between boys and girls, but the school has not yet effectively realigned practices and resources to improve performance of subgroups. The leadership is currently refining a comprehensive plan to put this process in place and drive the school improvement agenda forward. The school community shows willingness and commitment to effect the necessary changes in order to establish consistency and improve student outcomes further.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Frederick Douglass Academy V</b>	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
<b>Quality Score</b>			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		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>				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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X		

◇	<b>Outstanding</b>
+	<b>Well Developed</b>
✓	<b>Proficient</b>
➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>
Δ	<b>Underdeveloped</b>