



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School

High School 682

**1021 Jennings Street
Bronx
NY 10460**

Principal: Nancy Mann

Dates of review: December 12 - 13, 2007

Lead Reviewer: Sue Alton

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School is a high school with 492 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 32% Black, 66% Hispanic and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 15% 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 83.2%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 81% eligibility.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is a highly skilled and respected leader with a clear vision for the school and the capacity to implement and manage change.
- Data is used well by the administration to set challenging, but attainable goals.
- Administration and cabinet have developed very good procedures to ensure the school runs smoothly within an informal framework.
- The school's culture is built on mutual trust and respect which supports students very well in their all-round development.
- The creative curriculum approach highly motivates students in their learning and encourages them to want to succeed.
- The portfolio process is well matched to student interests and capabilities and encourages students to develop as independent learners.
- The varied support team network which has been established for students is very effective and valued highly by students.
- Teachers work well in collaboration and there is a strong sense of purpose.
- Professional development is effective and focused on the school's long-term goals.

What the school needs to improve

- Implement systems to establish interim goals at all levels which are objectively measurable and have relevant timescales.
- Develop processes to further analyze data to provide information on the achievement of different ethnic groups.
- Continue to develop teachers' practice in differentiating instruction to meet the needs of students working at all levels.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

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

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

The culture of mutual respect and trust at Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School is evident from the moment you enter the building. Students and staff greet each other informally as they meet in corridors. "We're treated like adults going out in the real world," one student observed. Students enjoy learning and the innovative curriculum, based on portfolios, because "it's about you, what you think, what you do, not what you've memorized." Students understand their achievements and what they need to do to improve through the effective use of rubrics and regular teacher conferences. This process enables students to take responsibility for their own learning and to gain independence. In lessons, they have good opportunities to discuss, interact and to learn from research and practical experiences. "What would I like to improve? That isn't even a question! Everything is great here," one student commented. Parents have similar views. Although many students enter well below grade level, having failed in earlier educational experiences, they make good progress because of the support and encouragement they receive from teachers, assigned advisors and counselors. Students are very well supported to catch up and set goals for a college education.

The principal is well respected and admired by the whole school community. She has a clear vision for the school, which is shared by everyone. Administration and cabinet use a wide range of data to set long-term goals. Teachers use rubrics to work with individual students to assess progress and use rubrics to discuss "next steps" with individual students. This process is not yet formalized into setting interim measurable goals for groups of students within the class or grade. As part of the inquiry team focus, teachers have identified three students, at different achievement levels for the basis of the research. The team is using all available data on these students, to look at issues and trends and to use this information to consider how they can be moved to the next level. The school has made some progress since the last review. Progress has been somewhat slowed because the school has grown in student numbers. This has necessitated the recruitment of a large number of new staff, who have needed induction and training which has slowed overall progress in some areas.

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 has very effective systems for collecting a range of data about individual students to track progress towards graduation. Teachers know their students very well and share this information effectively across all classes and grades. The effective use of rubrics is very well established to assess individual student progress and to identify the next stages of learning. This is discussed with students and their parents or caregivers. However, this information is not always collated formally to look for patterns and trends in achievement across classes and grades. The school has a very clear understanding of the performance and progress of special education students, which is tracked very carefully in liaison with support services. The progress of English language learners is also very effectively tracked, with an excellent focus on the individual student. The understanding of progress of boys has been a feature since the last review and as a result, resources which appeal to boys have been purchased and there has been an increased focus in ensuring that curriculum topics are offered which will interest both girls and boys. An example of this is that in social studies, students are studying ancient Greece. The teacher has included "sport and warriors" in the program and boys speak excitedly about what they have learned about the Olympic Games.

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.

The school's administration agrees the long-term goals in the Comprehensive Education Plan, using information from a range of data, setting timescales for implementation, in discussion with teachers. The inquiry team is focusing on a range of students at different grade levels to identify issues and trends in order to identify what needs to be done to move these students to the next grade. The results of this research will be shared with staff as part of the school's aims to further raise achievement for all students. Staff use rubrics very effectively to help students understand what they have achieved and what they need to learn next. Rubrics support the school's approach to helping students become independent learners very well.

Staff members work together very effectively to set goals and establish plans, using a range of data. The arrangement of grades 9 through 10, known as "La Casa", ensures that staff know students very well and how they need to be supported in order to progress. A similarly effective arrangement is in grades 11 through 12. Where there are concerns about a student, they are given a wide range of support opportunities, including guidance, counseling and/or involvement in after school activities such as archery or basketball. Although all staff involved with these students meet to discuss the impact of the support, planned outcomes are not usually documented or impact recorded.

The school has high expectations of all students and this is conveyed to the whole school community in a variety of ways, which range from the more usual parents' evenings and newsletters to phone calls and emails. These efforts are very much appreciated by parents. Teachers give parents their cell phone numbers and personal emails which encourage parents to contact the school to provide information and to discuss concerns. One student observed, "Teachers have high expectations of us and we have to reach them and take responsibility for this."

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.

The school offers a very imaginatively constructed curriculum which motivates students and encourages them to become independent learners. Each year, students create interdisciplinary portfolios. This process improves writing skills as well as research and critical thought. They use their computer access to review previous work to support current activities. One student observed, "It's like building up to one big topic and everything connects." She went on to explain how science lessons can link to social issues, which in turn are connected to history. Students are confident to discuss their learning. Lessons provide many good opportunities which encourage sharing ideas and learning from one another. Students observe how these opportunities build their confidence and teach life skills. For example, students who had made their own documentaries in a digital photography class presented their films to their peers, articulating their practice. Smart boards are beginning to be used to deliver lessons, but teachers are still exploring their potential and developing their own skills in using them. Students use computers effectively in their work. They enjoy out of school activities and these are often used to support students experiencing difficulties. For example, archery and basketball are used to support the development of self discipline and teamwork. Data is used to identify strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum. This has led to a focus on revising the math curriculum to strengthen a project based approach in the subject. Teachers say this is already impacting on students' understanding.

Teachers are held accountable for the progress and learning of their students. They are further supported through grade meetings and opportunities to plan collaboratively and to receive feedback before they teach a new unit. They work closely together to plan interesting experiences and opportunities for students. Behavior and involvement in lessons is very good. Teachers are beginning to differentiate work in lessons, particularly in relation to the level of texts. In some classes, students move around a range of activities, completing a variety of tasks, but the work set these do not always support and challenge the needs of all students. Attendance is still an issue for some students, and the school has rigorous systems to monitor this. It does all it can to support and encourage students to attend more often. There are excellent relationships between students and staff and the culture is one of trust and mutual respect. As one student observed, "This school is some experience. We feel safe and have a great connection with our teachers."

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 is very aware that the success of the innovative curriculum is reliant on teacher expertise. Therefore professional development has a very high profile. For example, teachers have had intense training to support them in the development of interdisciplinary units. The coaching team identifies areas for professional development based on whole school goals and classroom observations. Work with Teachers College support this very well. Staff members have opportunities to meet for professional development two afternoons a week, which they find invaluable to improving practice. Induction procedures for new staff are very effective and this is evident in the way that the large number of new staff have quickly settled into the school's way of working. As one teacher said, "I'm excited about the opportunities here to devise new systems to support learning and to be creative with the curriculum. It's good that we have so much input into everything that goes on." However, the administration recognizes that teaching still has to be very carefully monitored to ensure continued effectiveness. Therefore, there are frequent observations of teaching against an agreed rubric for classroom observations. This ensures that teachers know what is expected of them. Feedback from the coaching team is very focused, with very clear expectations for improvement being identified. Behavior is excellent. Expectations are clear, and the school has worked hard to establish this within a very informal atmosphere. Trained peer mediators work to support the resolution of issues between students before they become serious. The varied support team network provides excellent support for those students who are having difficulty, including counseling, conflict resolution and opportunities to take part in sport or to train as mentors for younger students to build self-esteem. Counselors work closely with parents and encourage their involvement and support. This team works closely with teachers to decide appropriate support and intervention. However, there is, as yet, no formal recording of the expectations of this input, or its impact. Partnerships with other organizations effectively support the academic and personal growth of students. For example, the very good art work is a result of a partnership with the Studio Museum.

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.

assessment and to compare these to long-term goals. They use this information to reflect on the school's work and to evaluate its strengths and weaknesses effectively. However, this The use of data has a high profile in the school. It is a focus for professional development in the school's drive to further improve achievement. The process of setting long-term measurable goals is embedded. However, as yet, the school does not set objectively measurable interim goals and timescales for reaching these. Teachers use rubrics very effectively to assess the progress of individual students and to identify future learning in the curriculum. However, this information is not collated to assess the progress of groups of students, or to identify trends or issues and to take action. Teachers compile regular assessments and outline what has been

completed and suggestions for improvement. Administration use data to track the outcomes of periodic information is not used systematically by teachers to modify practice and to set measurable interim goals for groups of students. All staff know all students very well. They track the progress of individuals in great detail and know exactly how each student is performing and what needs to be done to help them improve. The principal and school community have a very clear vision for the future development of the school and an understanding of the procedures and systems which are necessary to effect change. As one teacher said, "I celebrate the relationships here. The teachers are very cordial, intellectual and fun. I am excited to have opportunities to devise systems to support learning and to make it exciting for our students."

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom 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