



**Department of
Education**

Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

**Quality Review Report
Office of Accountability
2008-2009**

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

Frederick Douglass Academy III

Middle – High School 517

3630 Third Avenue

Bronx

NY 10456

Principal: Rahesha Amon

Dates of review: November 19 - 20, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Richard Woolf

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Frederick Douglass Academy III is a middle-high school with 556 students from grade six through grade 12. The school population comprises 58% Black, 40% Hispanic, 0.5% White, and 0.5% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 8% special education students. Boys account for 45% of the students enrolled and girls account for 55%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 89.9%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 60% eligibility.

The school shares the building with two other middle schools. Space is an issue with grade six students receiving lessons on a different floor to the rest of the school.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Being a middle-high school, Frederick Douglass Academy III receives two report cards and there is currently a disconnect between the two. The high school demonstrates growth and a high level of achievement whereas the middle school is currently less successful in providing challenge and enabling its students to progress. As a result of the school's ability to collect and analyze data, there was an anticipation of such issues and remediation activities took place including some staff dismissal. The impact of this on student learning is only now beginning to show with improving outcomes from diagnostic tests. The school still has to use this wealth of data to identify and positively challenge its most able students. Similarly, there is a lack of consistency in rigorous teaching through the use of varied differentiation techniques. The principal is skilful in using the resources available to her to maximize their impact in terms of instructional delivery. Currently, the school is developing a number of scenarios to replicate potential budgetary constraints and minimize the effect on students and their learning. This also includes how best the school can deliver innovation, particularly into the middle school curriculum, to challenge further the learning of its students and raise their achievement levels. Parents are more active in the life of the school than in previous years. However, the school does not utilize them fully in the goal setting process for their children. The staff and students show each other considerable mutual respect and learning takes place in a safe and secure environment.

A strong professional development program that has a clear focus on improving instructional practice provides staff with the motivation to succeed. This school is able to meet those needs on an individual and on an organizational basis. This is helping to move forward a school that knows where it has still to develop and is rising to the challenges ahead. Teachers have a sense of responsibility towards their students but now feel more than ever empowered as professionals to meet that challenge. The school monitors itself on a regular basis. This occurs from the classroom through to the administration and leads to modifications of programs and strategies as and when it is necessary. This is a powerful way of keeping the school under constant review. The school welcomes the extremely effective support it has from a growing number of organizations. They currently fill a need for after-school programs that enhance and develop students emotionally and socially.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school's collects and analyzes data very effectively at an individual, student and cohort level.
- The staff and students show each other considerable mutual respect and learning takes place in a safe and secure environment.
- The principal's careful and focused use of resources helps ensure that every student has the opportunity to reach their learning goals.
- Lesson observations and monitoring of teacher performance allows for the structuring of professional development plans that meet teachers' specific needs.
- The school has a very effective after- school program to meet the academic, social and emotional needs of the students.
- The school regularly monitors itself to verify the progress of its staff and students and adjusts targets in accordance to identified need.

What the school needs to improve

- Rigorously identify the most able students in each grade and subject and ensure they are suitably challenged in order to accelerate their learning.
- Raise further the standards of teaching through a more consistent use of differentiated instruction, based on data, to better meet the students' diverse needs.
- Further enhance the middle school curriculum through the introduction and development of new curricular initiatives.
- Develop strategies to further involve parents with the school in order to engage them in actively supporting their children's learning, including in setting and meeting learning goals.

Part 3: Main Findings

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

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

A positive strength of this school is its ability to collect and analyze data. The school already has detailed data on every cohort through to 2012. This includes evidence of baseline data on entry broken down into a number of different categories. This allows the administration to make predictions and closely analyze student performance. Each teacher has a binder that links to the school's student assessment management system (SAMS). These binders carry very specific information on the students. Following an introductory phase last year the SAMS binder is now an integral part of school life. It is proving an invaluable tool for teachers to guide and inform their instruction. These binders are central to meetings between administration and staff to track student progress. In addition to academic data, other pieces of information, such as attendance, are also important. The close monitoring of attendance over the last few months has shown a significant increase and this is having a positive impact on student learning outcomes.

The school's special education students and English language learners perform exceptionally well in relation to other students. The data shows improvements not only in alignment to their specific requirements but increasingly their ability to demonstrate growth within the general education population. Over 90% of the English language learners test out each year. The school continues to seek ways of sharing with families the importance of more direct involvement in their children's education, and there is now more parental participation than ever before. However, the school does not fully include them in the goal setting process as rigorously as they do in other aspects of their work. An ever-growing number of parents are taking up opportunities to meet with staff on a regular basis. The development of the online "Snapgrades" program is proving a motivation for parents to check upon their child's progress. Over the last five years, the school has put in place systems to analyze previous data and make predictions. This enabled it to take immediate action to rectify the situation when middle school results took a down turn, for example by hiring new staff.

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 increasing its ability to set rigorous learning goals with its students. The goal setting process has gone through numerous stages of evolution but the school has evaluated the current one of a personal intervention plan (PIP) for every student to be the most effective. Staff regularly conference with students and set them targets.

Students themselves contribute by setting goals they see as being beneficial to their personal growth. To complement this process the principal meets with all staff to set their own goals through data driven instructional plans (DDIP). These are measurable and have a high level of accountability to ensure achievement. The senior leadership team, which includes parents, staff and students, meets bi-weekly to oversee the management of whole-school goals. The combination of these systems is proving a valuable tool in ensuring that goal setting has a strong focus on improving achievement and student learning.

The inquiry team comprises of a different group of teachers from those involved in the previous year. They all have a good understanding of the importance of data in driving instruction and raising academic achievement. In establishing the focus group the team gave close consideration to areas of the school in need of specific attention, for example grade levels six, seven and ten. At this identification and initial development stage, the work undertaken with external consultants in this area is proving beneficial. The team produces a newsletter to update staff as to the progress of the groups. The school reaches out to parents in a variety of ways to assist them in helping to improve the education of their children. There are signs of more parental involvement. However, the school has still to involve them fully in the goal setting process, especially in how to help with the students' next-step learning strategies.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students' learning goals.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The delivery of the curriculum is both a strength and an area for further development. The school follows the mandated curriculum but makes adjustments to meet student need or when data demonstrates a lack of effectiveness. Data, particularly attributable to the middle school, shows a number of students are not performing at their ability level. The principal is seeking to improve this by the introduction of the International Baccalaureate (IB) structure of examination. Currently, the school does not identify and challenge its more able students in the same rigorous manner as other students and the school feels that an IB course contains elements to address such issues. The principal has a range of other curriculum initiatives in mind to raise further the performance of the middle school and bring it into line with the very successful high achieving upper school. There is already in place a strong fine arts program for all students, especially those in the high school. Outcomes from this course are most encouraging. Teachers increasingly are developing a range of assessment tools to develop their instruction but there is inconsistent practice across the whole school in the application of such assessment to inform differentiation and challenge.

The principal is an exceptional resource manager. By careful analysis and interrogation of data, she has a clear understanding of the strengths and weakness of the school and staff. This enables her to make the important decisions in relation to the hiring and dismissal of staff, her primary focus always being on the enhancement of student learning. In material terms, the staff feel they have more than adequate resources to meet their instructional needs. However, the entire faculty acknowledges the restrictions imposed by limited space, and they work hard to ensure that delivery of the curriculum does not suffer. The relationship between staff and students is special and there is a great deal of mutual respect. The tone of the school is positive and this stems from the daily morning assembly of the entire school. At this time, the members of the school

community reaffirm their pledge to each other as scholars and staff of the school. In addition, the school has a dress code that is popular with the students as it stands them out from the crowd as coming from a “very distinctive school”. Parents fully support the school’s work and at every opportunity endorse its growing reputation as being a safe and secure environment in which their children can succeed.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

There is a very good system in place for the identification of teachers’ professional developmental needs to inform professional development planning. The principal considers these needs at her initial meeting with staff at the start of the year and through the data driven instructional plans (DDIP). Additional information comes from the data gathered from the numerous informal and formal observations the administration undertakes during the course of the school year. These follow a set format and staff know the focus of any type of observation. They value the feedback as being positive in assisting them to improve instruction. The school has a number of scheduled meetings that allow teachers to gather in either grade level or subject teams. These meetings enable members of staff to increase their individual and collective understanding of students and the different ways in which they learn, which is having a positive impact on student achievement. New teachers receive considerable support from mentors and, more importantly, from other teachers. This collegiality among the staff is contributing to teachers’ eagerness to improve their teaching and therefore student learning. The administration is working diligently to develop a professional learning culture. This includes the organization of a series of classroom intervisitations that contribute well to their efforts to improve instruction and learning, and are welcomed by staff as a non-threatening way to learn about different practices.

The school receives invaluable support and assistance from its outside organizations and partners. Students are strong advocates of the after-school programs these organizations provide, which give them additional guidance across a wide range of issues. These include social, emotional and academic challenges they may have to face in order to gain the credits and examinations to move on to college. Parents also contribute to the academic and personal growth of the students and the development of the school through their involvement in numerous activities.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and 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.

There are very effective systems in place that afford the administration opportunities to monitor the work of the school at a number of levels, particularly for individual and whole groups of students. This process begins with individual student-teacher conferences taking place at least bi-weekly. Teachers are constantly monitoring and assessing student work. Teacher accountability extends from the class teacher to the academic chairs who in turn report to their immediate line managers. Collating all this information, the principal is quick to readjust goals for the different constituents within the school.

This is an on-going process and one which helps the principal to keep all members of the school community on track. Checkpoints are in place and are reviewed at regular intervals, with the administration meeting weekly to re-evaluate strategies and make necessary changes to school planning. The school is data rich, so is able to analyze itself in a considered and well-informed manner. It uses information from its variety of sources and acts upon them. One example is the action taken following the last Quality Review and the improvements already achieved in terms of attendance. Another is the prompt way in which teachers' individualized learning goals and plans are readjusted. The principal is a strong leader whose vision permeates throughout the building and is shared by the entire school. As a college preparatory school, the whole school community is focused on achieving that vision which sees every student being able to go to a college of their choice.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: Frederick Douglass Academy III	Δ	➤	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?				X
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?				X
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?			X	
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?				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 student’s learning.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?			X	
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?			X	
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?			X	
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DYO, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.

To what extent do ...	Δ	➤	✓	+
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?			X	
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?			X	
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?				X
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X	

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent do school leaders...	Δ	➤	✓	+
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?				X
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?			X	
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?			X	
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X	

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and 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 and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?				X
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?			X	
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?			X	
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X	

Quality Review Scoring Key							
Δ	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed