

Quality Review Report 2009-2010

Frederick Douglass Academy VII

High School 514

**226 Bristol Street
Brooklyn
NY 11212**

Principal: Tamika Matheson

Dates of review: February 8 - 9, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Donald Conyers

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Frederick Douglass Academy VII is a high school with 430 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 90% Black, 8% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 9% special education students. Boys account for 44% of the students enrolled and girls account for 56%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 87%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Led by a dynamic, driven principal, the school, carefully engineers plans and creates a sense of cooperation that produces 98% college acceptance and a common drive to reach school improvement goals. As a result, students benefit from a rigorous, real-world and challenging education, and they count themselves as contributing members to the community. Teachers support students at lunchtime, after school, during early morning sessions and on Saturdays. Consequentially, classroom teachers know the students and their strengths well and they go to great lengths to promote student academic progress. As a result, students report that they benefit from teacher support and are able to make successive moves to improve their learning. However, the school is aware that differentiated instruction is not yet an embedded practice and therefore, not all students are making significant achievement gains.

Parents feel a connection to the school. They helped the school select an online tool to support their needs for knowing about student and parent activities, viewing student grades, and sending and receiving messages from staff. This has increased student and parental understanding about expectations and concrete plans for college. The principal has strategically organized data to support teacher collaborations through professional development, and grade and department teams, in order to drive teaching and learning through data. This has been productive as teachers inter-visit, model for peers, launch study groups and research curriculum. Effective monitoring and evaluation of these collaborations improve teacher practice. However, teams have not consistently organized the breadth of data to set and monitor goals, in order to maximize students' learning outcomes. This diminishes the opportunities to inform improvement practice.

The principal and school leadership team are keen to evaluate processes and practices in order to make improvements. This has resulted in an alignment of resources, personnel, policy, and support to envelop all learners within the community. Their thoughtful decisions and actions have promoted student independence, a dedicated and supportive teaching staff, extensive external collaborators, and an ever-improving practice to increase the academic and personal growth of the students. Teacher teams have not taken full advantage of understanding student progress over time, based on the aggregation of data and goal setting exercises. This restricts the teams' ability to make meaningful adjustments in teaching and assessment.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school presents an exciting and rigorous curriculum that supports student needs and promotes achievement and development very well.
 - o Well-crafted curriculum maps support an interdisciplinary approach to student learning and highlight the successful alignment across grades and departments that improve learning. For example, students reading *Things Fall Apart* in English are simultaneously studying colonization and imperialism in social studies.
 - o Students receive many opportunities and support that either accelerate their learning through advanced placement courses or fortify their academic deficiencies with specialized programs. Debate, Read 180, Achieve 3000 and the scenario-based Classroom Inc. provide targeted support, excite students and motivate them to succeed.
- School leaders consult data and make thoughtful organizational decisions and adjustments that create conditions for positive student learning.
 - o The principal constantly pours over data to celebrate successes, determine trends, and identify the next steps for the school. Consequently, the school aligns resources effectively, creating advanced learning conditions for students. School leaders increased the instructional minutes from 45 to 60 minutes per period. As a result, the student pass rate has improved significantly.
 - o The school uses the United States History Regent results to target the key skills and content needs of students. Moreover, it has revised professional development for selected teachers to intensify their work in the identified areas of need. This relates to where they are setting short-term goals, providing regular assessment and adjusting instruction and has been very successful relative to greater student understanding in this area.
- Powerful collaboration and communication efforts have increased the school's central focus on teaching and learning, resulting in good progress for learners.
 - o The popular online communication tool, periodic workshops, consistent leadership meetings, and ongoing dialogue with teachers actively link parents to the school. As a result, parents and students are highly aware of what their learning challenges are and can consistently articulate the plans that address these concerns.
 - o Teachers successfully emphasize meta cognition, persistence, taking responsible risks and questioning problems. Therefore, students continually play an active part in their classroom learning while teachers participate as facilitators. Additionally, all students have success plans for reaching college and spend time with staff, working and adjusting the plans. Thus, students are more aware and successful in school.
- Strong and progressive professional development collaborations fortify the instructional delivery for all teachers and create greater success for students.

- o The principal skillfully weaves the instructional foci into observations and snapshots to support teachers. All teachers work diligently on differentiated instruction, and the principal consistently fortifies that commitment through professional development and monitoring. Professional development aligns with the school improvement plan and addresses specific staff needs. Consequently, teacher competence and intellectual curiosity have greatly increased.
- o The school established critical friends across the building to create sustainability of practice with portfolio and smart goal development to promote consistency and accuracy. Additionally, the school started Japanese lesson study, resulting in teachers benefiting from the adult learning, which also supports student achievement.
- Ongoing data collection and precise evaluation of professional collaborations have promoted adjustments that increase leadership opportunities and teacher capacity.
 - o Administrators continually evaluate professional development sessions through surveys, specific focus in the classrooms, and through periodic conversations with teachers to make adjustments. For example, data revealed that previous training offered around the analysis of student work and the development of portfolios needed revisiting. After revisiting, more students are now using the portfolios effectively to help gauge their progress and highlight their best work.
 - o The principal, after gathering evidence, determined that teacher teams needed to accelerate their use of collaborative inquiry. Therefore, team representatives assembled to develop the current pacing calendar. This now successfully guides other teacher teams through a course of activities designed to promote collaborative inquiry and improve students' learning outcomes.
- Very effective planning and targeted implementation of activities support and accelerate the academic and personal growth of students.
 - o In light of economic and social conditions, the school effectively established external partnerships to create solutions, to include leadership development and mentorship. School administration provides information and training to teachers about dealing with teen-crises and maintaining a healthy balance in life. Teachers then convey these sessions to students. One example is the "Gentleman's Scholar". In all, this has promoted a greater sense of preparedness and opportunities for students.

What the school needs to improve

- Deepen the organization and aggregation of data at the team level so that more strengths, needs and trends inform instructional support at the classroom level.
 - o Individual teachers do a good job within their respective content areas in accessing and using data results to support learning in the classrooms. However, grade teams are just improving the practice of organizing and manipulating grade-wide data in order to gain a better understanding of student learning by subgroup, across disciplines or by skill requirement.

As a result, the school does not yet maximize its opportunities to strengthen its precise response to students' needs.

- Increase goal setting at the team levels to target identified subgroups of students precisely so that accelerated student learning and achievement results occur.
 - o Individual teachers aggregate and disaggregate student data results for acceptable entry points and progress monitoring across various subgroups well. However, unlike teachers, the teams do not yet magnify goal setting for clusters of students in order to focus team decisions about instructional change strategies or to measure student progress. This diminishes the momentum needed to accelerate student improvement opportunity at this scale.
- Continue to strengthen the coherent delivery of instruction so that it consistently reflects the school's decisions about how students learn best.
 - o The school has successfully connected its professional development with articulated desires to use data, goal setting, and differentiated instruction that improve student-learning results. Teachers and school leaders have made strides gathering the data, generating goals to plan and support the teaching where students are involved. However, instruction promotes generic levels of student engagement when teachers do not tailor work products so that they cater to varying achievement levels.
- Fortify existing tracking practices at the team level to ensure that all students make meaningful progress.
 - o Classroom teachers track progress well with student reflections and unit exams against stated class and individual goals. Teams, however, focus on data results but have not yet routinely created plans for various subgroups, driven by goals and supported with assessments to inform progress. This impedes the teams' knowledge of effective teacher practice and student learning.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: Frederick Douglass Academy VII	△	▶	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>				
	△	▶	✓	+
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?				X
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?			X	
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?				X
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1				X
Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>				
	△	▶	✓	+
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?				X
2.2 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the team and classroom level?				X
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance trends?			X	
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				X

Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+			
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?				X			
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?			X				
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			X				
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?				X			
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X				
Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals and student learning and emotional needs.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?				X			
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?				X			
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?				X			
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals 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 progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+			
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?				X			
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X				
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?			X				
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?				X			
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
Δ	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed