

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

Frederick Douglass Academy III

Middle-High School X517

3630 Third Avenue

Bronx

NY 10456

Principal: Rahesha Amon

Dates of review: September 27 - 28, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Elena Papaliberios

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Frederick Douglas Academy is a secondary school with 587 students from grade six through grade 12. The school population comprises 57% Black, 41% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 8% English language learners and 7% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 90.4%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Teachers consistently gather and analyze classroom level data to evaluate student progress and to identify strengths and areas of need in order to improve student outcomes.
 - Teachers regularly analyze the Acuity periodic assessments, as well as their own classroom assessments to address students' needs. This helps teachers identify the strengths and areas of concern for each grade level. They have created strategies to use on each grade to raise the level of instruction with a focus on higher order thinking skills in math classes.
 - The staff analyzes a range of classroom level data, including student work. They have developed a baseline assessment for each grade and teachers analyze their own classroom data. As a result English teachers are addressing the writing needs of specific 7th grade students identified as struggling writers through individual instruction so that writing abilities improve.
- School leaders make sound organizational decisions which help to support the school's instructional goals and the needs of specific cohorts of students resulting in an effective alignment of teachers' expertise with the appropriate grade level.
 - Hiring practices support the instructional needs of students. The middle school progress report indicates the school is struggling in academic growth in math. Therefore an additional assistant principal was hired to work collaboratively with a director for the middle school program to provide feedback through classroom observations and provide support towards teacher practice. Additionally, most new teachers receive assistance and are scheduled to work with students so as to support their academic needs and meet graduation requirements.
 - A new schedule effectively assigns students to the appropriate classes and accommodates all teachers to meet in collaborative teams on a daily basis. This has resulted in the development of a professional collaborative culture across the entire school and allows teams to create challenging tasks which involve higher order thinking skills during common planning time. Teachers have also begun work to align the common core standards with current curricula.
- Teachers are engaged in collaborative professional teams that are structured, data driven, and focused on improving student outcomes.
 - All teachers meet in collaborative teams where student work and teacher practices are addressed. Each team is effectively led by a teacher who makes decisions regarding agenda items, topics to be discussed and strategies to be used in classrooms. The English language arts team members analyze baseline assessments and student essays in grades 7 and 10, looking for trends in order to identify individual students' strengths and weaknesses. As a result, they have developed strategies to improve student outcomes. The math team reviewed a

set of problems to determine if they were problems that met the highest levels of Bloom's Taxonomy and as a result teachers create math problems that foster higher order thinking. Within these teams, distributive leadership is providing a voice in the decision making of the school.

- School leaders and staff have structures in place to regularly evaluate how data is gathered, organized, and shared with the school community resulting in better communication with staff and parents.
 - The administrative team regularly evaluates the systems they have in place to gather and share data. A review of SnapGrades revealed that attendance data was not included, as a result, daily attendance data was added to the system. This has allowed the school to provide more immediate feedback to parents regarding student attendance. With network support, the school has reorganized their student data and can now present the information to staff and parents in a more effective way, improving communication with staff and enhancing knowledge of how the school is doing.
- The staff communicates high expectations to students and families thus promoting a college preparatory environment where students are motivated to reach higher academic levels and to attend college.
 - Students spoke about the International Baccalaureate Program and indicated that teachers have high expectations because they challenge and expect students to do well and succeed in college. As a result, students are motivated and interested in attending college after graduation. A parent shared, "Before my daughter came to this school she had no interest in going to college, now she goes to visit colleges and talks about going to college."
 - Parents are active members of the school community. During Open School Week, the school provides parents the opportunity to visit their child's class at any point of the day. In an effort to provide on-going communication regarding student progress, parents receive training on ARIS and SnapGrades which are accessible online. As a result, parents are better equipped to monitor their child's progress, review assignments, view exam grades, and check daily attendance.

What the school needs to improve

- Create consistency in pedagogy based on data so that lesson planning reflects differentiation in content, process or product.
 - Strategies used in classrooms lead to an uneven level of engagement and poor pacing of the lesson left students unable to keep up. In a sixth grade class, routines were not evident and instructional time was lost distributing materials, leaving little time for productive and meaningful instruction to occur. Some student work was posted in some classrooms and did not reflect a high level of rigor. Teacher feedback was extremely generic, without any differentiation as to student's strengths and next steps for improvement. In most classes, students underwent the same process to complete the same task. Lesson plans did not reflect differentiation in content, process or product and instruction lacked rigorously engaging tasks focused on meeting the varying needs of all students.

Consequently, students were left unchallenged in the production of meaningful outcomes.

- Enhance teachers' ability to set data-driven, differentiated, measurable instructional goals for individuals and subgroups of students in order to increase student progress both at the high school and middle school level.
 - Instructional goal setting based on data from assessments and from student work is developing in classrooms. Some students have set overall goals such as passing a class with 75% or 85%. However, they are unclear as to what specific skills they need to improve on in order to achieve better outcomes. The analysis of class data is developing inconsistently. A math teacher uses an excel sheet to collect skills students are deficient in based on class assessments. The absence of a consistent goal setting practice hinders measurement and tracking of student progress from a targeted perspective.
- Increase rigorous academic tasks at all levels so that there is consistency throughout the grades and content areas in order to keep all students engaged and challenged.
 - Some curriculum maps do not reveal a high level of rigor. A review of the English curriculum demonstrates a misalignment between themes and genres to the assessments of the unit. This lack of alignment limits teachers' ability to create lessons that are engaging and rigorous. Some curriculum maps and lesson plans reflect uniform tasks for all students, which was evidenced in classroom visits where instructional tasks were identical for the entire class. The lack of differentiation embedded into the curriculum and instructional tasks leaves advanced students unchallenged and students in need of additional support unable to keep up with the pace of the work.
- Build on the observation process to provide support and professional development opportunities to enhance teachers' pedagogical skills.
 - A range of supports are provided to teachers through professional development, coaching, and lead teachers. Training has been provided on differentiated instruction, but very little evidence of impact is observed in classrooms. The administrative team provides timely feedback based on observations conducted which focus on improving academic and pedagogical practice. So far the impact of this feedback is not evident in all the classrooms.
- Create opportunities to evaluate and adjust curriculum and instructional practices across all grade levels in order to increase rigor and improve students' outcomes.
 - Curriculum maps in most subject areas have been created, but no evident structures are in place to evaluate their overall quality and function. Lack of these structures has prevented the school from adjusting to the ever-changing student needs through instructional coherence.
 - A common planning time with professional development sessions led by teachers is emerging. Planning has begun to address curriculum and assessment revisions throughout the academic year. As of yet, evidence is not present to measure the impact this structure has in supporting student mastery of State standards, teacher needs, and alignment of resources and assessments.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: Frederick Douglas Academy III	UD	D	P	WD
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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		
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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 Align assessments to curriculum and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, 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	

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>	UD	D	P	WD
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	

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>	UD	D	P	WD
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		

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>	UD	D	P	WD
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		

Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed