

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Frederick Douglas Academy IV Secondary School

High School 393

**1010 Lafayette Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11221**

Principal: Elvin Crespo

Dates of review: March 22 - 23, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Michael L. Schurek

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Frederick Douglass Academy IV Secondary School is a high school with 254 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 84% Black, 14% Hispanic, and 2% Other students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 79.9%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal makes informed and effective organizational decisions across all aspects of the school to achieve school goals and to support improvements in teaching and learning. (1.3)
 - The newly appointed principal's hiring of a programmer ensures that students are enrolled in courses needed to graduate, and an assistant principal with a literacy background supports instructional priorities that include rigorous student writing products across grades and subjects. In addition, a talented middle school science teacher provides after-school support to high school students having trouble passing the Living Environment Regents. Licenses to use online programs for credit recovery, test preparation, and literacy improvement, have been purchased and a 1.2 million dollar grant has been obtained to upgrade technology. These decisions are in direct alignment with the school's goals of increasing the percentages of students earning 10 or more credits per year for tenth and eleventh graders.
 - Students are programmed based on their academic needs creating heterogeneous groupings and students from multiple grades. Ninth grade students receive double periods in literacy and math to support their transition to high school and to build a foundation of rigorous skills needed for postsecondary education. Teacher teams meet weekly to methodically focus on varying groups of targeted students, including high achievers, to ensure success for all students in high school and beyond. As a result, progress report data indicates that 72% of last year's graduating class went to college, 22% above the Citywide average college enrollment rate.
- Teachers and school leaders design rigorous Common Core-aligned tasks that emphasize key standards to ensure that all students make progress and are prepared for college and a professional career. (1.1)
 - School leaders and staff attend retreats each spring to discuss goals and action plans for the next year and modify curriculum maps in accordance. Teacher department and inquiry teams meet weekly throughout the year to modify the maps and to create accompanying lessons, assessments, and homework assignments integrating Common Core Learning Standards, (CCLS), and emphasizing literacy to successfully accelerate student outcomes. In addition, a trigonometry course has been added this year with plans to add a pre-calculus class next year to further elevate academic rigor.
 - All students have completed multiple CCLS literacy tasks that require students to plan, draft, edit, and publish argumentative essays to support or oppose the work, writing, or teachings of selected authors or key historical figures, thereby merging English language arts and social studies foci. This rigorous interdisciplinary practice contributes to improved Global History Regents' pass rates from 14.71% in June 2011 to 68.18% in January 2012.

- Teachers develop differentiated task-based learning activities based on real-life applications to give students the opportunity to solve problems and support arguments in an active and engaging manner. (1.2)
 - Teachers use assessment and student learning styles to strategically group students and offer multiple methods for students to express themselves. An argumentative writing task in English language arts allows students to use a rubric to individually defend, claim, and counterclaim positions, while other students choose to work in groups to engage in the same activity and participate in debates to express their thinking. In addition, teachers routinely differentiate questioning for students and groups of students to ensure success for all levels of learners.
 - Students are generally well engaged in learning in most classes as evidenced by their conversations during cooperative learning and their ability to explain and discuss their work. Students in the advanced algebra/trigonometry class explain the steps they use to predict how the graph of a tangent would look and connect its use to modern bridge design. Hallway and classroom bulletin boards contain copious displays of student work, demonstrating students' abilities to articulate their thinking. As a result, the school increased its extra credit for closing the achievement gap on last year's progress report and 50% of all special education students have already passed Regents' exams with scores of 65% or greater.
- The school has established systems for monitoring teaching practice with a clear focus on improving instructional practices. (4.1)
 - Administrators conduct on-going walkthroughs that enable them to visit each teacher bi-weekly utilizing iPads to quickly provide teachers with feedback and next steps based on an established teacher effectiveness framework. This feedback provides suggestions to improve effectiveness in specific areas of focus. These procedures have improved classroom management where needed and all classrooms now use cooperative learning techniques to improve student engagement. In addition, teachers use these comments to formulate professional goals and conduct intervisitations to improve pedagogy in a supportive and collaborative fashion.
 - Student work portfolios and classroom data tools such as binders, spreadsheets, and grade books, are scrutinized by school leaders as part of the learning walk process to promote instructional practices that improve student outcomes. Administrators use these observations to inform professional development and differentiate support to staff utilizing consultants, webinars, and targeted intervisitations to improve pedagogy. As a result, an English language arts bulletin board contains multiple drafts of student work utilizing a rubric and the writing process to refine work quality and teachers routinely record student responses to track progress and adjust instruction. These practices contribute to teachers' professional growth by continually analyzing student outcomes to measure pedagogical effectiveness.
- Teachers collaborate frequently to examine student work, plan together to rewrite and align curriculum, and visit each other's classrooms to share ideas and best practice, through a desire to improve student outcomes. (4.2)

- All teachers meet regularly in both grade interdisciplinary inquiry teams and separate department planning teams. Inquiry teams combine teachers of English language arts with social studies teachers, and teachers of math with science teachers. As a result, the teachers are creating a combined English language arts and social studies curriculum that enables social studies teachers to utilize English language arts rubrics and strategies. This practice is helping students make connections at an increased pace and has contributed to the increased Global History Regents pass rates referred to earlier.
- Teams regularly item analyze data and use inquiry observations to build CCLS literacy and math tasks that are incorporated into units of study, which have real life applications thus making the activities relevant and motivating. A unit that focuses on students acting as modern crime scene investigators includes writing a criminal investigation report with three pieces of evidence to support a conclusion.
- School leaders and staff work as a unified team to create a calm, respectful, and orderly environment. (1.4)
 - Students have a voice in school-level decisions through the school leadership team and student council. In addition, the school's small size and the principal's open door policy allows students to discuss their needs and make suggestions regarding the school's on-going development. As a result, after-school cheerleading, dance, and basketball activities have been established, thereby improving morale and enabling overall student attendance rates to increase 1.7% so far this year.
 - Learning Environment Survey results prompted the school to improve socialization through its fall and spring anti-bullying workshops. Teachers have effectively used feedback from the Danielson framework to improve classroom management while deans and school leaders participate in building safety, and building council meetings improve overall plant safety. As a result, both parents and students report that the school is safe and so far this year the suspension rate has decreased by 50% without any major incidents reported.

What the school needs to improve

- Expand the practice of utilizing data to set student's differentiated learning goals that are measurable, time-based, and are shared with students and parents in order to promote ownership and success. (3.2)
 - Some teachers use data to set differentiated learning goals that are clearly articulated by the students. A student in social studies conferencing with his teacher was able to describe his goal of improving the accuracy of his multiple-choice selections by explaining a bracketing strategy and a vocabulary improvement tool he uses, thus improving his social studies achievement. Unfortunately, this practice is not utilized across grades and subjects, limiting the school's ability to focus students on his/her individual skills and areas of need.
 - While some teachers set goals for groups of students as evidenced by a framework of time-referenced goals and objectives posted outside of classrooms, it has not yet become a common practice across all grades and

departments, constraining efforts to establish clear expectations for all students

- Refine action planning by establishing interim student achievement goals linked to explicit projected gains at indicated intervals of measurement so that school, team, and teacher action plans, can be monitored to maximize impact. (5.3)
 - School action plans, inclusive of department and teacher teams, list intervals and instruments of periodic review, but do not include projected gains for each interim measure of progress. The lack of these structures provides missed opportunities for the school to determine the effectiveness of their actions, to make timely adjustments to further improve student outcomes, and compare year-to-year interim assessment benchmarks to align planning from year-to-year.
- Deepen the school's use of rubrics by utilizing them in all subjects to provide clear expectations and self-assessment opportunities for students while enabling teachers to provide next steps for improving student work. (2.2)
 - Most teachers of English language arts, math, and social studies use variations of instructional rubrics to guide student work. However, not all teachers use the rubrics to provide next step suggestions to students, and these tools are generally not used by teachers of other subjects. In addition, not all students use rubrics to self-assess their work. Therefore, opportunities for students to evaluate the rigor and quality of their own work is restricted, as is the coherence of teachers' responses to student work.
- Enhance communication and collaboration practices with parents to increase their capacity to assist in their children's learning and to participate effectively in school decision-making and school activities. (2.4)
 - The school sends parents three progress reports each semester to ensure they are aware of their children's academic standing. These reports track student transcript progress, attendance, behavior data, and scholarship standing in each course. In addition, teachers call families on a regular basis to discuss student needs and successes. However, only some teachers communicate specific academic strengths, weaknesses, and next learning steps for their students, limiting the role of parents in supporting their children, and reducing the effectiveness and quality of these on-going communication practices.
 - Parent-teacher association executive board members express the need for increased communication with the school's principal. While students praise the principal's open door policy and parents generally acknowledge numerous positive developments under his leadership, some parent board members feel that transparency has not risen to the level that builds the trust needed for success in the school community. As one parent stated, "Teamwork will make the dream work." As a result, effective numbers of parents are not regularly engaged in important decision-making events.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Frederick Douglass Academy IV Secondary School	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 as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			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, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use grading policies and tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends to inform instruction and curriculum?			X	
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students progress toward school and class expectations?			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 staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?			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, guidance/advisement 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, with particular attention to the CCLS?			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
-----------	-----------------------	----------	-------------------	----------	-------------------	-----------	-----------------------