

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Frederick Douglas Academy V

Middle School 273

2111 Crotona Avenue

Bronx

Principal: DEBORAH CIMINI

Dates of review: Nov 28 - 29, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Myrna Rodriguez

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Frederick Douglass Academy V. Middle School is a middle school with students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 30% Black, 67% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 23% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 90.2%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school's curricula is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and key standards provide rigorous and engaging learning experiences for all students with emphasis on tasks to address English language learners' and students with disabilities' academic needs, resulting in improved student achievement. (1.1)
 - The school's life management course offered to all students develops college/career awareness and skills, and includes experiences such as career days, college visits, and guest speakers. The school emphasizes the use of non-fiction reading throughout the curricula and all subject teachers stress that students use text based evidence and accountable talk to respond during lessons. This purposeful alignment to the Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE) and (CCLS) provides for a high level of student success by enabling them to develop a keen understanding of the skills that are needed to succeed in high school and college.
 - Teacher teams, using data from student work, develop CCLS aligned tasks in all subject areas. Via analysis of levels and complexity of responses to questions, (verbal and written), in the core subjects, teachers determine if tasks are appropriately rigorous for English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs). The school's English as a second language coordinator pushes into classes and works with students and teachers In order to sufficiently meet student needs, resulting in high levels of student work and achievement.
- The school uses a research-based framework that informs curricula and instruction, which is supported by all teachers and evident in classroom practices, thus allowing for the engagement of students in learning. (1.2)
 - The school's participation in professional development rooted in the Danielson framework for teaching allows teachers to express that they know explicitly what they need to do to improve instruction and curricula. This is evident in students' grades and written work, which indicates academic improvement. All teachers share the belief that students learn best when teaching strategies and class structures include the workshop model, accountable talk, and questioning, that elicits higher order thinking skills. In most classes, students begin their responses by saying "I respectfully disagree/agree with your answer" and use excerpts from texts to defend their responses. Students throughout all classes demonstrate through their responses, conversations with partners, and work products, high levels of thought and academic learning.
- The school has structures that produce a safe and welcoming culture of mutual respect, and a risk free environment for teaching and learning for adults and students resulting in high levels of engagement and academic progress. (1.4)
 - The leadership and staff value student voice. Every class has representatives in the student council, which allows students to discuss

social, academic and extra-curricula issues and concerns. Extra time for students enables them to participate in various activities geared towards their interests and needs, such as reading time and recess, and rewards for positive behaviors, including "Gotcha" prizes for getting caught doing the right thing, promotes a respectful climate. Disciplinary structures are not punitive, but allow for reflection time and community service when appropriate. Students share that they have various adults who they can speak with, such as the student council advisor, life management teachers and support staff, all of whom help them to coordinate positive academic and social and behavioral experiences,. As a result, students have improved levels of attendance in the past two years, courteous behavior is the norm, and they are achieving high grades and reading scores.

- The school has various assessments including student self assessments which are aligned to the curricula and inform instruction focused on improving student outcomes. (2.2)
 - Across classrooms in all subjects, teachers develop common assessments and rubrics to assure that teaching and learning are consistent inter- and intra- grades. The leadership and teacher teams review and revise grading policies to closely align them to student achievement in English language arts, math, and reading scores. In addition, the assessment of academic results supports professional development planning according to student and teacher needs. Teachers use assessments from an exemplar of performance tasks from the Talent Management Pilot that emphasize high levels of questioning as a priority skill for all teachers to provide feedback to students. As a result of continuous, targeted feedback based on their goals, each student is aware of what they need to do to improve their work. Students self-assess using rubrics, and partner with peers to further review and revise work, leading to effective adjustments. Thus, all written work that is revised many times by students before being published and displayed evidences high levels of student work in class work, bulletin displays, and portfolios.

What the school needs to improve

- Further support and evaluate teacher practices through observations in order to provide actionable feedback targeting school goals with specific next steps to enhance professional development. (4.1)
 - The leadership conducts frequent cycles of informal observations using the Danielson Framework. Feedback to teachers is provided in a timely manner via emails and captures some of the strengths and next steps for improvement However, precise and targeted feedback regarding clear expectations for teacher practices such as providing clear learning targets for each lesson, and attention to rigorous academic vocabulary enhancement is not sufficiently aligned to the school's goals and vision. As a result, targeted professional development is not completely evident, thus missing out on providing even higher levels of support for teacher learning and student achievement.

- Teacher teams have lead teachers, and all staff indicate that they communicate effectively through emails, with the leadership. However, the structures for capacity building are not fully developed to include lead teachers in regularly scheduled meetings with the leadership. As a result, opportunities to enhance teacher leadership through face-to-face meetings preclude an important way of sharing of information and all parties participating in decision-making.
- Add to existing structures and systems in order to regularly evaluate school level decisions with a focus on the CCLS to adjust curricular and instructional practices based on student needs. (5.1)
 - The school is developing structures and systems to improve the quality of school culture so that families and students have more voice in school policies and activities. However, the expectations of the CCLS and CIE have not been clearly communicated to families and students, which results in limited engagement and support by families and students of the new mandates, impacting further improvement of student academic performance.

The school is developing the process and structures to regularly evaluate school level decisions given the addition of two new assistant principals. Both assistant principals are supporting teachers in developing skills needed to address student learning. Each assistant principal brings their own strengths to their position, relative to curriculum or routines but a common sharing of expertise is not yet optimized to affect all aspects of the school.

School name: Frederick Douglass Academy V	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score			X				
Instructional Core							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula, including the arts, physical and health education, 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 that is informed by a research-based, common teaching framework and is aligned to curricula, engaging and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?			X				
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels?			X				
School Culture							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X			
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve them?			X				
Systems for Improvement							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet students' learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			X				
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X				
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching with a research-based, common teaching framework 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				
5.1 Evaluate the quality of school- level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?		X					
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed