

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**Frederick Douglass Academy III Secondary School
09X517**

**3630 THIRD AVENUE
BRONX, NY, 10456**

Principal: Rahesha Amon

Dates of Review: May 6-7, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Carron Staple

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Frederick Douglass Academy III Secondary School is secondary school with 532 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 58% Black, 41% Hispanic, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 18% 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 85.5%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has a safe and caring environment where students are supported, academically and in their socio-emotional development in preparation for college, careers, and beyond. (1.4)
 - Through programs such as Habitat for Humanity, Generation Citizen, and Young Women's Leadership, students have been provided opportunities to make authentic contributions to their school and the community at-large. As a result of the numerous community, mentoring and peer mediation programs, the students, referred to as "scholars", discussed increased self-esteem, high expectations for themselves and their peers and confidence within themselves to implement their skills beyond high school as they enter college and careers. For example, one program that has enhanced the college-going culture has been College Summit. The school has partnered with this organization to create a curriculum that focuses on college readiness skills and is designed to motivate and inspire students to higher levels of achievement. This program is coupled with an advisory period where case conferencing and academic and guidance intervention also take place creating a dynamic venue for students across all grades and levels to realize their short and long term social-emotional and academic goals. There is also a special group called the Link Crew which is a transitional initiative designed for incoming 9th graders whose 8th grade attendance and academic history reveal that extra support will be needed in order to successfully succeed in high school. The impact of this program has decreased long-term absences by 50% and improved academic outcomes as evidenced by scholarship reports. Students expressed feeling safe, supported and listened to by all adults. This year, a school culture team was added to bridge the gap between academics and the social-emotional needs of students. This team, which includes grade leaders and discipline associates, looks at various data to support the whole child and what behaviors may impede progress. Individual students' needs are discussed and strategies are developed to provide targeted support. As a result, there is increased interest in academic progress and disciplinary occurrences have decreased significantly as observed in the OORS report.
- Teachers use a variety of standards-based assessments to analyze student work, make adjustments to instruction, and provide feedback resulting in students being more informed about their learning. (2.2)
 - The school systematically assesses their scholars to strengthen their understanding of the total child and his/her progress. Rubrics are created by each department and aligned to the curriculum and common core learning standards. The data gleaned from these assessments results in teachers being able to track student progress. Consequently, teachers are able to aggregate data from multiple sources on individuals and groups of students which inform lesson planning for students on all levels. Since evaluations and adjustments occur at various times during the semester based on formative assessments, a volume of information is available to teachers to analyze when meeting in teacher teams. Thus assessments serve as a basis for providing students with feedback and creating a catalyst for self-reflection which has positively impacted student achievement as evidenced in the fall semester scholarship report where

students accumulated an average of two additional credits and an additional passed regent exam as compared to last year.

- The principal consistently communicates high expectations to the entire school community around teaching practices and instruction with the goal of increasing opportunities for all students. (3.4)
 - In response to scholars' voices, the school survey and surveys developed by the school, the principal has developed relationships with community partners, parents and professional organizations to raise and support the high expectations of staff and students. The information collected from the surveys resulted in additional advanced placement courses being added to the instructional program which confirms the schools commitment to adding another level of rigorous classes to support students' interests while preparing them for college-level work. There is a culture of professionalism from the staff that is evident from the professional goals they have set for themselves around improving their pedagogy, an expectation from school leaders, parents and students that scholars will be prepared to meet the challenges of college and careers. The school consistently communicates with families by holding monthly meetings, sending newsletters, organizing informational sessions and involving them in the development of school goals as set forth in the school's Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP). This year as a result of parent feedback, parent meetings were designed by grade-level to illuminate the curricula and expectations of the common core standards aligned to units of study. These grade-level meetings have afforded greater and more in-depth opportunities for parents to discuss topics specifically related to their children's education resulting in a more personalized approach to parental involvement. In addition, the electronic grade book referred to as Jupiter grades, provides students and their families weekly updates on student academic performance and other social-emotional information that may warrant parental attention, enabling significant opportunities for parents to know, understand and support their children's goals, thus increasing the opportunities for students to increase mastery of learning across all subjects.
- School leaders provide effective written and verbal feedback and clear expectations to teachers about their practice, resulting in improved instruction and professional growth. (4.1)
 - Written observation reports show evidence that teachers are receiving feedback and next steps for improving their overall pedagogy based on the Danielson framework. School leaders use an online tool called Teach Boost which generates post-observation feedback and tracks the progress from previous observations based on rubric ratings, "Ineffective, developing, effective, highly effective". Teachers receive timely feedback about competencies aligned to the Danielson framework such as *use of questioning, engaging students in learning, and using assessment*. Additionally administrators can access a color-coded chart that depicts how individual teachers are performing per competency. This tool allows administrators to efficiently provide feedback, which results in improved instruction for many teachers who can review their progress and focus on targeted areas. One teacher's Teach Boost spreadsheet revealed the numerous times the teacher was visited, and the competencies being observed. The spreadsheet indicates the rating and whether the teacher's rubric score had either decreased, increased or stayed the same with comments from the evaluator. For every teacher observed, Teach Boost reports reflected

consistent implementation of feedback by the vast majority of teachers. This has resulted in a decrease of adverse ratings and an ability by the school to retain teachers who have an increased teaching capacity to effectively support the majority of students in reaching their academic goals and specific learning objectives. Teachers discussed feeling supported by the frequent cycles of mini and full-length observations and appreciated the feedback they believe elevates their practice. The collaborative support from administrators and peers results in teachers feeling comfortable to discuss their practice with others and accept constructive feedback.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine curriculum and unit maps, to consistently ensure that cognitively engaging lessons and academic tasks meet the learning needs of all learners, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners. (1.1)
 - Frederick Douglas Academy III aspires to "Minds-On" instruction, which is grounded in the belief that curriculum and teaching must provide students with a firm foundation of knowledge and understanding, so students can apply that knowledge to analyze, synthesize and problem-solve, a belief that integrates the instructional shifts and CCLS. However, the school while ambitious in infusing art, technology and multi-sensory approaches to learning, lacks specific supports in delineating how English Language Learners and students with special needs will achieve their learning goals. Although modifications were evidenced in teacher lessons via graphic organizers, vocabulary helpers, sentence starters, modeling, outlines and frontloading of vocabulary, the curriculum reviewed does not specifically state how instruction will be scaffolded or modified for students in the lowest third, ELLS and SWD's thus there are no foundation strategies/modifications/scaffolding/alternate texts, etc., within the curriculum to support these types of learners. Lack of attention to these subgroups may hinder certain students' ability to meet essential learning targets and the school's ability to close the achievement gap.
- Improve instructional practice so that across classrooms teaching strategies lead to student participation in higher order discussions, accelerated student learning and increased student achievement. (1.2)
 - Instruction is aligned to a common set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the research-based Danielson framework. The belief that curriculum and teaching need to provide students with a firm foundation of knowledge and understanding in pursuit of their courses of study embraces the premise that authentic application of knowledge and understanding through tasks will promote problem-solving and analysis and strengthen the learning process. Teachers are trained to facilitate habits of thinking, perspective building, and evaluation with an informed context, with the understanding that engagement and rigor will always be considered the cornerstone of their professional practice. The principal has also invested resources in professional development for teachers and provides extensive training via "Turnaround for Children". This year-round training supports teachers in developing aims, tasks that lead to critical thinking, the use of questions to encourage higher student engagement and responses that are informed and text-based. This thrust to improve the quality of teaching school-wide is commendable, and for the majority of teachers has been implemented well. However, not every teacher demonstrated evidence of implementing the training that would yield effective pedagogy. For example, in one classroom the teacher asked

questions about the internal and external factors that led to the collapse of the Soviet Union. Many students were unclear as to the reasons, because they had reading comprehension problems or were unable to understand the content vocabulary. Tasks to scaffold the instruction for the diverse group of learners were not managed properly, and the answers were immediately provided to them by the teacher, even though she arranged them in groups. The lack of prompts, probing, utilization of grouped peers, and teacher clarification hindered learning and students being able to actively participate on a higher-level, which is the major focus of the "Turnaround for Children" professional development. Although the learning objective and lesson plan were developed to create higher levels of thinking, and the grouping was arranged to meet the needs of learners at multiple learners, the expected outcome was not evident and the learning objective was not achieved by every student in the class, resulting in inconsistent work products and uneven student participation. The inconsistency between how the school community believes students learn best and the implementation of how this teacher transfers those beliefs into her pedagogy was detrimental to the learning taking place, and resulted in low participation and performance, which can be frustrating to students who are very aware of the high expectations the school has set forth for them. As a result, this variability in teaching, all students do not benefit from instruction that prepares them for college and careers.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Frederick Douglass Academy III Secondary School	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