



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

**Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning**

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2014-2015**

**Frederick Douglass Academy VII**

**High School K514**

**226 Bristol Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11212**

**Principal: Tamika Matheson**

**Date of review: April 23, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Joan Prince**

## The School Context

Frederick Douglass Academy VII is a High School with 319 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 86% Black, 13% Hispanic, 1% White, and 0% Asian students. The student body includes 0% English language learners and 24% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 81.0%.

## School Quality Criteria

<b>Instructional Core</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
<b>School Culture</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	<b>Celebration</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

A culture of learning is established that communicates and embeds high expectations shared by staff, families and students that is connected to a path to college and career readiness. Teacher teams and staff communicate high expectations for all students and offer ongoing feedback and support.

### Impact

The entire school community understands and receives feedback around students progressing toward college and career readiness. Ongoing supports from guidance/advisement along with teachers support and prepare students for the next level.

### Supporting Evidence

- The principal has clearly established an atmosphere of high expectations where all teachers believe building student content mastery through strong and rigorous lesson structures will lead to student success in career and college. Teachers have set long-term goals at the beginning of the year focusing on professional development increasing rigor in pedagogy. A process of frequent classroom observations, peer visitations and feedback creates a culture of mutual accountability. School leaders provide teachers with detailed feedback outlining the support that is available to them to improve their practice.
- Parents/families are involved with meetings and the principal, who knows each student by name, expects a strong family-school partnership. As evidenced through discussions at the Parent Meeting, the school is in constant contact through email, Google docs, Jupiter, Program which tracks grades and provides progress updates along with phone calls giving constant feedback. There are conferencing visits with the principal and teachers that reinforces and supports parents as partners in their child's progress. Parents at the meeting shared that the school has a College Now program on Saturdays, a program on Careers with Pencil to improve student achievement by developing long-term partnerships between businesses and the school.
- Students spoke to a strong culture of "believe in yourself" with a focus on college and career preparation. Students participating in grade level assemblies to engage in conversations around academic progress, behavioral expectations, college and career planning. Students also spoke to the ongoing feedback that is given to them such as rubrics with teacher giving instructions for revising and next steps and work products at the meeting had actionable feedback on it.
- Teacher Teams discussed the school culture as reinforcing all academic goals through constant monitoring and feedback, looking at behavioral issues, updating and revising the curriculum to meet the high expectations around career and college. The school has established an Office of College Admissions Counseling staffed by an on-site College Advisor that helps to educate students and families about the admissions process. As stated in the parent meeting, workshops are conducted and are well attended. The Baruch College Science and Technology Entry Program is a pre-college program giving FDA students the opportunity to participate in various workshops and college courses in Math and Science as well as SAT Preparatory.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

Pedagogy is aligned to the curricula and reflects a coherent set of beliefs about student learning informed by Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts. Teaching strategies provide multiple entry points into the curricula for all students.

### Impact

The alignment of pedagogy to curricula and the use of scaffolding and effective questioning techniques, along with multiple entry points enable all learners to be engaged in appropriately challenging tasks.

### Supporting Evidence

- As evidenced in all classes visited, teachers are using strategies to provide multiple entry points that engage all learners. Teachers stated at the Team meeting that they are exploring academic vocabulary strategies, including the Frayer Model which uses a visual reference for building vocabulary words and concepts. I saw teachers using flash cards and quick writes to 'check-in' on how students were doing. The school emphasizes the usefulness of 'quickwrites,' as a method of promoting comprehension and self-reflection on content learned, with a rubric aligned and areas for teacher/peer feedback. Teachers are crafting questions based on the level of Depth of Knowledge (DOK) in the Webb model to strengthen strategies around critical thinking skills. As seen in several lessons observed, students are engaged in the process and self-assess or peer assess after the writing is complete.
- Multiple entry points and scaffolding techniques have been examined at various professional development opportunities where teachers are engaged in conversations on how to use visual aids, accountable talk, strategic grouping and multimedia to scaffold and actively engage students in the leaning process. Engage NY high school English language arts (ELA) modules have been critiqued as presented by the New Visions ELA coach with further discussion around reading strategies and where they fit across all content areas.
- Teachers are formally and informally observed with feedback both verbally and written on the use of aligned curricula and instructional shifts in their lessons. In classes viewed, there was a gradual release of responsibility allowing students to work independently or in groups, demonstrating their understanding of the learning target. Professional development sessions have been devoted to training on multiple entry points for all students including students with disabilities (SWDs) and English language learners (ELLs). Students were using graphic organizers, exit slips, and other techniques to support and extend learning.
- Lesson plans templates reflect activities designed with strategic groupings, questions to activate thinking and multiple entry points embedded into the plan. The ninth grade Living Environment class studying photosynthesis had students in leveled groups answering questions and drawing equations to explain the process. There were Word Stems to scaffold group writing and conversation. The teacher pushed making connections to the real world by connecting student responses to every day experiences.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

All curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. Higher order skills are consistently emphasized for all learners across grades and content areas.

### Impact

The school's curricula decision builds coherence and promotes college and career readiness for all learners. Across grades and content areas, academic tasks push student thinking.

### Supporting Evidence

- The curriculum is aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts, along with planning and revising to ensure access to more rigorous and cognitive engagements for all learners. The school's Planning Committee and Professional Development Team have worked on revising the curriculum for more engaging, rigorous higher order skills. These teams have planned academic tasks for lessons that promote rigorous habits, high level of thinking and cognitive engagement. The lesson template used across subject areas has embedded Common Core Standards, academic vocabulary and DOK essential questions.
- The curriculum binders provide evidence that the school develops rigorous academic tasks and to ensure vertical and horizontal coherence. Engage NY for English Language Arts, and often the Kahn Academy are used to provide on-line support in Math. Lessons are designed to encourage individual, partner and group work that generate meaningful work and promote authentic student discussions to further inquiry and higher level thinking.
- The use of Socratic Seminars has begun along with analyzing student work to guide discussions and prepare students for college work. There is a High Achievement Bulletin Board where students are acknowledged for their work. There is support to students through peer mentoring where upper class students are paired with lower class students to support both academically and socially. This is facilitated to supports provided by the college office and the guidance departments. The school has participated in three day college tours to provide students an opportunity to consider potential school prospects and prepare for their academic future.
- Tasks within units binders were consistently rigorous and asked students to cite evidence, make inferences, synthesize information, defend and argument and show thinking. In several classes students were seen annotating documents and providing evidence to support their claims using a graphic organizer to support their learning.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### **Findings**

Assessments, including common assessments and ongoing checks for understanding are aligned to the school curricula and used strategically to drive instruction, make adjustments and push students to think critically.

### **Impact**

Teachers assess student learning effectively leading to targeted interventions, varied scaffolds, and shared instructional planning to meet all students learning needs.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- The school has a school-wide grading policy to determine student progress toward meeting subject specific benchmarks across grades and subjects. Baseline and diagnostic assessments are used at regular intervals. Gathering data and presenting this information to monitor each students progress over time is embedded into Team practices. Teachers use curricula aligned assessments in all subject areas as a source for actionable feedback regarding student's strengths and areas of need.
- The Talent Team and administrators share the student sorter in Google drive with teachers, teams and guidance. This sorter has identified performance trends, subgroups for strategic programming and planning. Other data reports and tools are utilized for classroom instructional planning and revising. PSAT, Regents reports and Castle Learning along with other formative and summative protocols are used to examine student work and make adjustment to push student to high levels of discussions and critical thinking.
- The school uses Wizard Eduware Testmaker and Khan Academy to assist with assessments to generate rigor and resources that have actionable feedback for student work.
- Across classrooms, there was consistent evidence that teachers were using checks for understanding at various junctions throughout the lessons. All teachers frequently circulated around the room and provided individualized support and asked students to self-assess, leading to effective lesson adjustments. Teachers stated that as needed, they modify their assessments and focus on the needs of SWDs, ELLs and struggling learners. Most teachers had multiple entry points embedded into their lesson plans, such as graphic organizers, visuals, journaling/quickwrites and flash cards, as well as exit slips to check for understanding. This common approach to reviewing assessment provides teachers with a clear portrait of student progress towards mastery of content areas.
- Students spoke knowledgeably about their goals and achievements and next steps. They were clear about where they are and where they wanted to go.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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**Findings**

Distributed leadership structures are embedded so that there is effective teacher leadership. Teachers engage in structured inquiry based professional collaborations that strengthen teacher capacity.

**Impact**

Student outcomes and teacher pedagogy are strengthened and teachers have a key role in the decision making processes in the school.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teacher Teams engage in collaborative inquiry that supports goals and strengthens teacher capacity. The principal stated that there are structures to create distributive leadership opportunities within the staff. Teachers are part of all planning and curricula decisions are made by them. Professional development and the Teams are led by teachers. Teacher Leaders offer mentoring of best practices. The Teams are organized by grade levels and department and all paraprofessionals are members of the Teams. Grade Teams meet weekly, Department Teams meet every other week and there are times during the day/week for Teams to meet informally.
- Teachers have determined how roles and responsibilities would be shared among team members, encouraging teachers to be leaders. Teams use Google docs to maintain team agendas and minutes and send out information to support the work of other teams. The school is a recipient of a grant via the Digital Ready Office. As a result, the school has created a Google domain to promote communication between staff and students. The 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Team meeting spoke to how teams examine student work, look at the rigor of the lesson and use success of the students. The Talent Team that meets regularly after school hours to plan and discuss professional development includes teachers from across grades and subjects. At the meeting, they spoke to the increasing shelter population of the school and how this has affected attendance data and their approach in the classroom to support all students both academically and emotionally.
- Staff surveys after every professional development meeting and or workshop have areas for teacher to give suggestions and give feedback to further inform the work of various teams. All teachers stated that they have been working on differentiated instruction and support for the struggling learner, which in turn has strengthened their own teaching abilities. Teachers agreed that the collective efforts of Teams have a direct impact on their approach to instructions, teacher leadership and student collaborations as a mirror to what they are doing.