



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Frederick Douglass Academy V

12X273

**2111 Crotona Avenue
Bronx
NY 10457**

Principal: Deborah Cimini

**Date of review: December 10, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Richard Cintron**

The School Context

Frederick Douglass is a middle school with 258 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 32% Black, 65% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 27% special education students. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 89%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
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	Additional Findings	Proficient
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	Focus	Developing
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	Additional Findings	Proficient
School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	Additional Findings	Proficient
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	Celebration	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based collaborations. Distributed leadership structures allow teachers to have a voice in key decisions across the school.

Impact

The work of teacher teams has strengthened teacher collaboration resulting in improvements to pedagogical practices and a stronger voice in key decisions affecting supports for student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers articulated how they share best instructional practices connected to targeted areas of focus identified by the examination of student data and how these collaborative meetings have helped to create a culture of intervisitation which has led to more targeted feedback from peers and improvement in practice. The principal provided evidence of how best practices shared during team meetings are collected and regularly shared with the entire staff during monthly whole school professional development sessions. For example, the special education team shared best practices connected to differentiation while department teams collaborated to share best practices regarding close reading of text, accountable talk and drawing connections to real-world situations.
- Instructional strategies, determined by teacher teams and related to school-wide areas of focus, were seen in all classrooms. For example, in all classrooms visited, students were using Accountable Talk during whole class and student to student discussions and were annotating text.
- Teachers spoke to how the principal meets weekly with all teacher teams to discuss student data and observation trends and to collaboratively plan professional development connected to those findings. Teachers spoke to how this regular practice of seeking teacher input has been instrumental in providing targeted professional development to staff on a school, small group and individual basis. Teachers also explained how regular conversations with the principal about best practices observed during intervisitations has supported a culture of teacher leadership beyond just teacher team leaders and has contributed to all staff members feeling empowered. For example, teachers commented that they played a very large role in helping to restructure the school schedule this year to ensure additional time for literacy and math support for all students and that their input is continuously sought for ways to improve the new schedule based on student results from these classes.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies and scaffolds inconsistently provided multiple entry points into the lesson and student discussion reflect uneven levels of student understanding

Impact

Across classrooms, there are missed opportunities to engage all learners in consistent challenging tasks and higher order thinking, thus hindering students from exhibiting their work at high levels and being integral to their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Although students were asked to work collaboratively across all classrooms visited, not all students were actively engaged in the discussions within their groups. While conversations with teachers indicated that student groups were heterogeneously mixed, and the use of other scaffolds such as leveled texts or the identification of key vocabulary words were used; this was not consistently seen across classrooms. Some students were unable to articulate the work of the group and show a full understanding of the material being covered.
- In classrooms visited, questioning strategies to promote higher levels of students thinking and discussion were inconsistent. Some teachers asked only low level recall questions that did not ask for students to strategically think or to extend their thinking. In other classrooms, when students asked questions, instead of redirecting these questions back towards the class to promote student thinking and discussion, teachers simply answered the questions and moved on. For example, in an science class, as the teacher circulated the room to speak with groups who were working on an assignment related to, the Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA), several students asked questions to the teacher and instead of redirecting these questions back to the group or to the entire class, the teacher just answered them and then moved on.
- Although in all classrooms visited students were given time to read text and answer specific questions in their groups, teachers inconsistently asked students to cite evidence from the text to defend their answers during whole class or students discussions. When asked, some students could not clearly explain why they believed their answer was correct or could defend their position beyond their own belief.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Academic tasks are consistently planned and refined using student work emphasizing rigorous higher-order thinking skills to allow access to curricula to all learners.

Impact

Academic tasks are regularly designed and developed based on student data outcomes to expose students to deeper levels of thinking, encouraging comprehension of curricula and cognitive engagement for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Unit plans in all content areas illustrate multiple designs of academic tasks, with numerous scaffolds and entry points for all students. For example, a seventh grade math unit on ratios and proportional relations identifies multiple differentiation strategies such as differentiated grouping and assistive technology, or identifying potential student misconceptions, such as students believing that a unit price is the price of one item. A sixth grade social studies unit of study written on Ancient River Valley Civilizations also identifies multiple differentiation strategies as well as multiple forms of assessments that will be used throughout the unit including oral and written reports, the creation of a web site and a Document-Based Questions (DBQ) essay.
- Teachers meet once a week in department and grade team meetings to create and modify tasks to ensure they emphasize rigorous higher order thinking skills. End of unit tasks and samples of student work displayed in the hallways and found in student portfolios were aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards.
- Lesson plans are written to cognitively engage learners, requiring students to cite evidence to support a claim, analyze information, hypothesize, draw conclusions, and apply concepts to solve real-world problems. In a social studies lesson plan, students are required to cite specific textual evidence to support the analysis of primary and secondary documents. In an English language arts (ELA) lesson plan, students are required to identify a claim made by the author and evaluate the evidence that supports the claim. In a science lesson plan, students are required to hypothesize about the impact of physical traits on survival.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teachers create assessments and use rubrics aligned to the school curricula providing students and one another with actionable feedback. Data from common assessments is used to adjust curricula and instruction.

Impact

The school's use of common assessments, data analysis and feedback allows teachers to determine student progress toward goals and adjust curricula and instruction accordingly to meet the needs of all students

Supporting Evidence

- New York City Performance Based Assessments and Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) were administered in all classrooms to determine student baselines and develop additional support classes for students. An analysis of baseline data resulted in all students receiving an additional literacy Wilson, Just Words, strategic reading groups and math intervention class to help support identified skill deficiencies.
- The use of rubrics accompanied by specific targeted actionable feedback from teachers to students is an established ritual for improving student achievement across the school that the principal, teachers and students were able to speak about. Student work displayed in hallways included rubrics and targeted feedback from teachers. Students spoke to how they regularly use rubrics in class and with homework assignments and how teachers confer with them to provide next steps. Students were also able to show samples of student work from their portfolios that included specific feedback from teachers and explain how receiving regular feedback has made them better writers.
- Common end of unit performance assessments are administered in all core subject areas and the data is used by teachers to adjust curricula and instructional strategies. An instructional adjustment made during a sixth grade teacher team meeting included, a discussion of how certain students were struggling with reading questions containing academic vocabulary. Teachers then agreed to implement the same close reading strategy and visit each other's classrooms to observe how each teacher would implement the strategy and assess its effectiveness

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

High expectations are consistently communicated to the staff via the use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching during professional development and through other forms of communication. Leadership and staff successfully communicate expectations connected to college and career readiness with families to support student progress.

Impact

Collaboration between all community stakeholders fosters ongoing communication of high expectations and accountability linked to supporting student achievement in understanding and meeting those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- During a parent meeting, parents shared how the school does an excellent job of informing them of all upcoming events and provides regular updates about their children's academic progress. Parents mentioned how teachers regularly call them to inform them of how their teens are doing in class, remind them of upcoming exam dates, alert them of missing assignments, and inform them of when their teen has outperformed expectations. Parents also spoke to how teachers provide parents with on-line resources, regularly answer emails and phone calls, and provide sample answers to difficult problems in order to help them support their children at home.
- The principal meets with staff as a group and individually to discuss school-wide and individual expectations for classroom teaching practices. Monthly professional development in all areas of the Danielson Framework for Teaching is provided collaboratively with staff and lists of "Best Practices" in all domains are collected and shared with staff to ensure coherence in understanding school wide high expectations for teaching and learning.
- A review of the school's very detailed student and parent handbook, which was created collaboratively by the school leadership and is regularly reviewed every year to ensure relevance, clearly outlines all student and parent expectations, identifies resources and supports available to students and parents, as well as informs parents on the multiple ways they can communicate with all staff members to discuss concerns or to set up case conferences with teacher teams.