



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

Frederick Douglass Academy IV Secondary School

High School K393

**1014 Lafayette Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11221**

Principal: Elvin Crespo

**Date of review: May 5, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Claudette Essor**

The School Context

Frederick Douglass Academy IV Secondary School is a high school with 79 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 0% Asian, 84% Black, 16% Hispanic, and 0% White students. The student body includes 1% English Language Learners and 33% students with disabilities. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 78.9%.

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 <i>Framework for Teaching</i> , aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	Additional Findings	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	Celebration	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	Focus	Developing

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders communicate high expectations for learning to all staff members and students' families and provide supports to help them work with students to meet the expectations.

Impact

Ongoing communication of and support for high expectations for teaching and learning foster accountability for improving achievement by staff and students. Communication with families contributes to an understanding of student progress in meeting high expectations for learning.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders set clear expectations for learning and support all teachers towards success in meeting or exceeding the expectations through school-based professional learning activities, intervisitations, and off-site professional learning opportunities. The staff support team includes three school-based coaches and a staff developer from Teachers College, all of whom collaborate with teachers and school leaders to strengthen instructional practices across the school. Teachers stated that the principal constantly reminds them of instructional expectations through weekly memos and conversations at staff meetings. Teachers also reported that they work with each other in implementing best practices across content areas, and a few have turn-keyed training from offsite workshops.
- The professional development plan indicates that all teachers receive ongoing training in planning and delivering student-centered instruction, using assessment during instruction, effective questioning, and designing learning activities that allow all students to “engage, explore, explain, elaborate on and evaluate” information as they respond to learning tasks. Teachers also receive training in using *EngageNY* math curricula and *Collections* literacy curricula, as well as in the ongoing integration of *Teachers College Reading and Writing Project* (TCRWP) curricula in literacy-based tasks across content areas. Additionally, strategies for the successful implementation of Common Core Learning Standards, as well as Regents-aligned instruction and co-teaching practices, are part of professional learning for all staff. School leaders use classroom visits, reviews of unit and lesson plans, and analyses of student work to hold staff accountable for meeting all expectations.
- School leaders and staff provide families with information about high expectations for student learning through information sessions on topics such as Common Core Learning Standards, assessments, web-based resources for learning at home, and reading and homework strategies. Families also learn about high expectations for their children through student-teacher-parent goals contracts that are sent home, newsletters, course syllabi with overviews of curriculum, and outreach activities. Parents indicated that they are kept abreast of their children’s progress toward those expectations via interim progress reports, report cards, phone calls and texts, and information on online student data portals such as *Engrade* and Edmodo. One parent added that families have access to a guidance counselor who advises them about college fairs, tours, application and admission requirements, and other college and career related activities for their children.

Area of Focus

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

Teachers meet with peers to examine student work and data, and school leaders are beginning to create additional structures to include teachers in decisions about school priorities.

Impact

Although collaboration among teachers is beginning to promote the achievement of school goals, distributed leadership structures do not yet consistently facilitate effective teacher leadership.

Supporting Evidence

- During meetings with two groups of teachers, teachers of general education students indicated that they meet routinely with their special education co-teacher to plan for instruction in the applicable content areas. In addition, the entire staff meets as a whole to engage in professional learning with peers and/or with consultants who are part of the staff support team. In collaboration with school leaders, Borough Center staff, consultants, and a few peers who attend and turnkey off-site professional learning content, teachers work collaboratively on academic and social-emotional learning initiatives and supports for all students. There are plans to incorporate teacher leadership structures to facilitate inquiry-based professional learning activities within the weekly whole staff meeting.
- Teachers collaborate on activities such as designing interim assessments, analyzing student work and data, and using administrator-supplied lesson and unit planning templates to create unit maps aligned to the Regents and Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. Teachers reported that some peers are focused on implementing Writing Is Thinking with Strategic Inquiry (WITsi) literacy practices to improve student performance in writing across content areas. However, although teacher work is contributing to school goals, such as ongoing refinement of curricula and delivery of professional learning activities for all staff, formal and discrete measures of the impact of teacher work on student achievement were not noted.
- A group of teachers was observed examining samples of student essays from a mock English Regents assessment. Using the rubric linked to the New York State English Regents exam and a gap analysis worksheet, one staff member led the other meeting participants in a review of characteristics of student responses. After silently reading the student essays, the participants shared noticing's and tried to norm their findings about gaps in the work. However, the discussion emerged mainly as a disagreement among the participants with little specific reference to the criteria on the rubric, so it was not clear what skills would be targeted in subsequent instruction. In a disagreement about whether a student's work illustrated a "hook," one participant said, "The rubric doesn't ask for that." There was another dispute about whether a counterclaim was evident in a sentence from one of the essays, as participants questioned the accuracy of findings articulated by peers.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

All curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and illustrate integration of instructional shifts. Teachers collaborate with peers to create curriculum units with demanding tasks for all learners across grades and content areas.

Impact

Ongoing alignment of curricula to relevant standards results in academic tasks designed to deepen student thinking and learning in all content areas.

Supporting Evidence

- Curricular documents highlight lessons linked to pacing calendars with cross-discipline outcomes for writing, reading, listening, and speaking across classrooms and content areas. There are units and tasks derived from modules of *TCRWP* curricula, with Common Core-aligned tasks, that incorporate Regents and other applicable content standards and provide for the infusion of literacy-based tasks across content areas. Additionally, across content areas, there are projects requiring students to delve into academic vocabulary in writing informational essays or describing problem-solving steps. For example, a Global Studies task required students to create an argumentative essay with claims, counterclaims and evidence about religious practices and beliefs of Muslims versus Hindus.
- All teachers work to design curricula that incorporate rigorous tasks grounded in Universal Design for Learning strategies to address the needs of all students. Unit maps, lesson plans, and student work show academic tasks linked to complex texts and applications of *Collections* and *EngageNY* curricula to design intellectually demanding learning activities. For example, a task for grade 9 students involved describing applications of technological inventions in their lives and presenting arguments about the pros and cons of specific innovations. Further, during the student meeting, some students displayed samples of high quality work products.
- In addition to units of instruction for day-to-day core content, curricula include topics and skills related to a newly implemented Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) program, a computer science course linked to a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) program and a trigonometry course. Curricula also incorporate use of specific instructional materials such as visuals, sentence frames, manipulatives, and interactive white boards to support all learners in completing rigorous tasks. In addition, there are tasks linked to technology-based curriculum resources such as Edmodo and Google Classroom applications, which offer all students, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, additional exposure to challenging learning experiences.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Teaching practices in some classrooms incorporate multiple entry points to challenging learning tasks and engage students in high-level discussions.

Impact

A majority of learners do not benefit from lessons that provide for consistent engagement in tasks that culminate in high quality work products and participation in high-level discussions across grades and content areas.

Supporting Evidence

- During a few of the lessons observed, teachers provided guiding questions that required students to think deeply about concepts and skills taught and cite textual evidence to explain and justify answers during discussions. For example, through a partner turn-and-talk and small group and whole class discussion in an English class with students with disabilities, the teacher asked students to read two articles and then respond to the question, “Is the war on terror a just war?” Students used information from the texts to answer additional questions on a guided writing template distributed to them. By contrast, in a class with grade 9 and 10 students, groups of students were seen using a laptop to research a topic, but several students were unable to say what question(s) they were trying to respond to.
- In most classrooms visited, teachers provided visual supports and scaffolds for students to be highly engaged in learning. In a grade 11 English class, the teacher posted differentiated tasks at six learning stations around the room, and students rotated across the stations while working with a partner to explore “the context and background of the play, *Fences*, by August Wilson.” Each station required students to read for details that responded to four different questions about the play. Although the questions were challenging and all students engaged in the task, most students were not able to produce responses to questions at more than one station before having to move to another station. In a grade 9 math class, groups of students also rotated across stations with similar outcomes. While most students were highly engaged in the task, many were not able to complete the task at one station before being asked to move to the next station.
- In some classrooms visited, tasks and lessons facilitated high level student-student discussion. In a grade 9 integrated co-teaching (ICT) class, the teacher engaged students in reading and discussing information from a text about Frederick Douglass. Students shared their findings in groups as they collaborated to create an “empathy chart” to reflect some of the character’s feelings, words, actions, and thoughts. Students took turns sharing their contributions to the chart while a peer wrote their ideas and prepared for a presentation of their work to the whole class. Practices, such as students answering clarifying questions from peers, listening to ideas from others, and sharing their work in a lively discussion, were evident in this lesson but were not typical in other lessons observed. In one of those classrooms, most students spent the observed period silently trying to complete the assigned task of solving math problems about “arithmetic sequences.”

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

All staff members gather data from assessments aligned to curricula and use the data to provide feedback about student performance. Across classrooms, checks for understanding are evident, and all students engage in self-assessment.

Impact

Assessment practices result in adjustments to curricula and instruction that meet students' diverse learning needs and generate actionable feedback that makes students aware of next steps for improving their performance.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leader presented an assessment calendar that illustrated how teachers use assessments such as mock Regents and Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) assessments to evaluate student performance across disciplines. The school leader also displayed data from a *New Visions* tracking tool in outlining student deficits, especially in credit accumulation. Further, teachers utilize Common Core-aligned rubrics, checklists, and a school-wide grading policy, aligned to the curricula, to evaluate progress in student writing across grades and content areas. Teachers use the data to provide students with individualized feedback, including actionable next steps. On one work sample, the teacher commended the student for correctly identifying claims and evidence in an article entitled "Children: Victims of Trafficking." The teacher recommended the addition of "more notes to show your thinking" on the wide margin of the Cornell note-taking handout.
- During the meeting with students, students pointed to task-specific rubrics attached to some of their work samples in their folders which illustrated rubric-based feedback with next steps to improve the work. Several students stated that they use rubrics and teacher feedback to critique their work or determine what should be included in the work for them to get a high score. Students also stated that they go online to look at their performance data on *Engrade* and self-assess every day because teachers conference regularly with them about assignments and scores. Some referred to a goals contract that requires them to monitor and reflect on their own progress and chart next steps for progress to all learning goals set at the start of the school year.
- In most classrooms visited, teachers were observed using checks for understanding such as beginning, middle and/or end of lesson reviews, use of focus questions outlined on lesson plans, individual and small group conferencing, exit tickets, and hand signals. Some teachers follow up immediately on findings. In a class where students were analyzing aspects of different election processes, after checking in on students working in their groups, the teacher paused the lesson to point out that students should not just tell what happened but extend their response to explain how the election processes impacted citizens.