Quality Review
Report

2016-2017

Frederick Douglass Academy VII High School

High School 23K514

226 Bristol St.
Brooklyn, NY 11212

Principal: Tamika Matheson

Dates of Review:
May 23, 2017 - May 24, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Kevin Bradley
The Quality Review is a two-day school visit by an experienced educator. During the review, the reviewer visits classrooms, talks with parents, students, teachers, and school leaders and uses a rubric to evaluate how well the school is organized to support student achievement.

The Quality Review Report provides a rating for all ten indicators of the Quality Review Rubric in three categories: Instructional Core, School Culture, and Systems for Improvement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Celebration** to highlight an area in which the school does well to support student learning and achievement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Focus** to highlight an area the school should work on to support student learning and achievement. The remaining indicators are identified as **Additional Finding**. This report presents written findings, impact, and site-specific supporting evidence for six indicators.

Information about the School

Frederick Douglass Academy VII High School serves students in grade 9 through grade 12. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at [http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm](http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm).

School Quality Ratings

### Instructional Core

**To what extent does the school...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Quality Ratings continued

### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
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### Systems for Improvement

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<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that systematically communicates a unified set of high expectations for all students.

Impact

School staff provide clear, focused, and effective feedback and guidance supports to ensure that students own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders conduct frequent classroom observations to provide feedback utilizing the Danielson Framework for Teaching as the standard for professionalism, quality instruction, and high expectations. Teachers also receive a staff handbook from school leaders that reviews areas of schoolwide focus such as roles and responsibilities of staff, grading policy, Jupiter Grades, instructional expectations, Blackboard Configuration (BBC), daily learning routine, instructional focus, lesson planning, course outline, and curriculum map expectations. A professional development calendar makes clear that school leaders support teachers in their understanding of expectations in addressing topics such as curriculum review and revision, Heart of Change, and a schoolwide annotation guide. In addition, the principal conducts data chats with teachers to review student progress and inform goal setting.

- The school's culture for learning consistently communicates high expectations that help prepare students for their next level of education. Grade level assemblies are held and topics include PSAT/SAT, credit accumulation, internships/extracurricular programs, and transcript review. All seniors are required to apply to CUNY and SUNY schools. A student reported, “We have college tours, college fairs, and write essays for college applications.” Students and families receive individualized college admissions support from the school’s Director of College Admissions. Another student reported, “We have a College Advisor, and when we have questions, we go to her. I had to choose a college and she provided the information; I chose nursing. She chose a good nursing program for me.” Students reported that they are prepared for the next level, “At the end of the hall, we can look up our student ID number and it tells us if we are on track for graduation and Regents. The chart is green, yellow, and red to let you know your current status.” Another student reported, “We take an extra class for math, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, it would prepare us for a higher grade on the Regents for college ready.” Students also reported that they currently are enrolled in college classes, “Through College Now, we go to Brooklyn College. It's good for high school credits and transfer for three different classes for College Now.”

- The school focuses on gender initiatives to promote social-emotional development and instill high expectations along with the structures to support student success towards college readiness. Young men participate in Gentlemen Scholars and young women are in Girls Rock. The groups participate in various workshops and speaker series to promote character building, self-awareness and college and career development. Gentlemen Scholars and Girls Rock participants have mentor/mentee meetings, are required to complete independent community service, and their report cards are collected on a regular basis to monitor academic progress. One of the Girls Rock participants reported, “I like the vision board party because it help me to set my long and short term goals and focus on what I need to achieve in life.”
Area of Focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices reflect an articulated belief that students learn best when various strategies are employed and students are actively engaged during instruction. Teaching strategies provide multiple entry points into the curricula allowing students to be engaged in appropriately challenging tasks.

Impact

Although students demonstrate higher-order thinking skills, teaching strategies did not provide strategic use of multiple entry points for all learners limiting student opportunities to deepen their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best when various strategies are employed and students are actively engaged during instruction. During a Chemistry lesson on how to describe and model the complexity of organic chemistry through functional groups, students were engaged in a student-centered task working in groups. The teacher used checking for understanding opportunities to tailor instruction to specific groups and to clarify student questions and understanding. Students could articulate their learning during the lesson. During an Economics Tableaux lesson based on a video they had watched previously, *John Q*, the teacher introduced an assignment with references to the rubric that would be used for the assignment and students were called on to read the directions.

- Across classrooms, students had opportunities to be actively engaged. During an eleventh grade lesson on what are the required elements of an effective college admission essay, students were paired together to participate in a turn and talk on differentiated college and career resumes. Student discussion in pairs led to a class wide discussion prompted by the teacher to allow students to articulate the differences between the resumes. During a global studies lesson on how to describe four impacts of WWI on the nations involved, students used a graphic organizer and then discussed their findings with the teacher. In a Geometry lesson on using theorems about congruence transformations, a do now involved students submitting post it notes on the board, and writing what the black, red, and blue shapes represented on the screen diagram: rotation, translation, and reflection. However, after the student responses on post it notes for the do now, the teacher transitioned to a very teacher centered lesson on theorems. The lesson lacked engagement and collaborative tasks for all learners for the duration of the instructional time.

- Across classrooms, teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula. For example, during an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) living environment lesson on evidence of evolutionary relationships, students were working in groups with the content teacher, the ICT teacher, and a Teaching Collaborative teacher. Students were working on differentiated leveled tasks. One group with ICT teacher was working on content area writing, another group was working with the content area teacher to complete exhibits from the previous lesson, and the third group were students who were absent the previous day and were working on catching up on content knowledge. In another class, during a twelfth grade English ICT class, a literary analysis on *Things Fall Apart* took place. Teachers grouped students based on their choices. Students worked together to look for evidence from text. The teachers used guided questions to direct students in analyzing the evidence as they supported the learning for all learners. However, in one class, an Algebra I lesson on properties of exponents had students working individually with teachers rotating through the room and helping students individually. There was no group or paired work, nor was there any differentiation of tasks. The lesson did not strategically provide multiple entry points and high-quality supports and extensions for all learners.
### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills for all students.

### Impact

Curricula promote college and career readiness for all students and is accessible for a variety of learners.

### Supporting Evidence

- Review of curricular documents revealed alignment to the Common Core State Standards and New York State (NYS) content standards where applicable, as well as integration of the instructional shifts across grades and content areas. English unit plans and lesson plans are aligned to *Springboard* curriculum, and math unit plans and lesson plans are based on the *Big Ideas* as well as *Springboard* curricula aligned to EngageNY. The school also ensures curricula coherence with the New Visions social studies curriculum aligned with New York City (NYC) Social Studies Scope and Sequence and the science curriculum, from New Visions aligns with the NYC Science Scope and Sequence along with NYS Standards.

- Curricula documents across grades and content areas evidence consistent alignment with the Common Core Learning Standards and the integration of the math instructional shifts. For example, in a ninth grade lesson plan, students apply rules for exponents to simplify an expression by using reasoning skills to solve algebraic expressions. Curricula documents also included assignments evidencing integration of the English Language Arts (ELA) instructional shifts. For example, a ninth grade living environment lesson plan details “describing an argument using scientific evidence to support their claim about one of the following: genetically engineered foods, therapeutic stem cells, or cloning.” A ninth grade English curriculum map shows “extended paragraph writing analyzing character motivations using textual evidence and analysis to support the claim.”

- Lesson plans and curriculum maps consistently challenge students to utilize rigorous habits in the course of instruction. Learning objective statements in unit plans include, “IWBAT interpret textual evidence from *Things Fall Apart* in connection with my essay topic.” and “SWBAT apply rules for exponents to simplify an expression by using reasoning skills to solve algebraic expressions.” Additionally, students are to consistently write and connect their writing to evidence from the text. Lesson plans consistently detailed high-level questions. Examples of higher-order questions found in curricular documents are, “What conjectures can you make about a figure reflected in two lines?” “How can we use tableaux to analyze economic concepts seen in the movie, *John Q*?” “Which piece of evidence best supports the theory of evolution? Why?”
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school’s curricula. The school uses common assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas.

Impact

Assessment practices provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement and the results are used to adjust curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, samples of student work products showed teacher written actionable feedback directing students to the steps they should take to strengthen their work. One example includes, “Your essay structure is correct and your writing starts off strong. However, please work on developing the counterclaim and conclusion paragraph. Defend the counterclaim fairly and provide just as much evidence as you did for the claim.” Another example reads, “This newsletter does a good job at telling the events. However, there are many grammatical errors and your photos don’t match the text.” Another example is, “You used most of the terms and you clearly demonstrated that you understood the terms. In future, try to work on your language (make it more formal) and don’t forget to include a concluding sentence.” Finally, another example reads, “Your counterclaim paragraph would be stronger if you went more into detail about how money was lost because students did not graduate.”

- Across classrooms, rubrics and checklists are used as tools of support for student growth. Rubrics that are aligned with the curricula, along with checklists, are used across grades and content areas. Examples that were seen during the two-day visit include, an Academic Vocabulary Quick Write Rubric with Checklist, a group work rubric, a product commercial video project rubric, a tableaux (freeze frames) rubric, and a tableaux peer rating rubric. The English department uses a newspaper article rubric and a newspaper peer revision and edit checklist. The science department uses a rubric for science performance tasks. Evidence of students’ use of these tools is posted on student work examples, and reported by the students themselves. A student shared, “My teacher always gives me feedback. I struggle sometimes with my Earth Science, and my teacher would put on a sticky note how you can improve, what you did well, and what can be fixed. They know what kind of ability you have.”

- The Academic Vocabulary Quick Writes are used as common assessments across grades and content areas to build literacy skills in students. In a pre-calculus class, a student used the Quick Write to develop a well-written paragraph describing the similarities and differences encountered while solving a regular quadratic equation versus a quadratic double angle trigonometric equation. In a science class, a student used the academic vocabulary words to explain whether mutations are good or bad. In an English class, a QuickWrite is used by a student to write about what steps a writer takes to develop themes. Students are presented with content specific academic vocabulary as they write their response. The Academic Vocabulary Quick Write Rubric with Checklist, including topic sentence, paragraph structure, and academic vocabulary is included for students to follow and self-assess as they work on their writing task.
Additional Finding

**Quality Indicator:** 4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision  
**Rating:** Proficient

**Findings**

School leaders support the development of teachers with effective feedback and next steps from frequent cycles of classroom observation. Feedback to teachers accurately captures strengths, challenges, and next steps using the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

**Impact**

Schoolwide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection. Feedback articulates clear expectations for teacher practice and supports teacher development.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Frequent cycles of classroom observation provide feedback utilizing the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Each rated item on observation reports includes specific language from the rubric, evidence from the classroom observation that supports the rating. Next steps for teaching improvements are included throughout the class-specific evidence directed to specific categories of the Danielson Framework for Teaching and at the close of each observation report. For example, one observation feedback included, “Provide a purpose for annotation and complete a mid-summary review of student comprehension of assigned text and task. This can be done through a focused turn and talk or think-pair-share.” Another example of effective feedback reads, “Include opportunities for student to engage in discussion with the peers about content. As you continue to plan consider strategies to involve all students in the discussion (e.g., response cards, dry-erase boards, clickers, table hop/pass, hand signals). Additionally, utilize turn and talks to help students verbalize ideas before sharing whole group or writing independently.”

- Teachers participate in scholarship reviews following the end of each marking period during the school year. Along with grade level leaders, teachers identify at least eight students, two per class, who have failed one of their core area classes and outline next steps for success to support those students moving forward. The teacher created action steps for the identified students are also reviewed by school leadership.

- Teachers reported that the support and supervision they have received from school leaders has supported their development as teachers. One teacher reported, “It’s challenged us to reflect on certain parts of our practice. I’ve seen things that I can strengthen more, working with the admin.” Another teacher reported, “Using Danielson, I refer to their examples, clearer attributes and look at the examples within the rubric. It’s helped me to become a better teacher especially in the area of questioning, and developing higher-order questions for my students within my lesson plans, it’s helping students to access the material.”
Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations. Distributed leadership structures are in place.

Impact

Teacher teams promote the achievement of school goals and strengthen the instructional capacity of teachers. Teachers have built leadership capacity and have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- The observed inquiry team meeting involved the ninth grade teachers looking at an end of year quick write protocol. Group roles included a timekeeper, a facilitator, and a recorder. The presenter shared the old quick write sample and team members looked at student writing and feedback. Team members discuss the feedback and are able to ask questions. The presenter shared the current quick write sample without feedback. The team members looked at the student writing and on post it notes jot down two feedback points based on the areas the student was told to focus on. Team members then shared out their feedback. The presenting teacher revealed the original feedback. Team members discussed the presenter’s original feedback looking at growth, including comparison of feedback, did the student grow? Why? Why not? Scaffolds/modifications, what questions can be raised about their growth? The protocol then restarts with another presenter. During the wrap-up, moving forward what suggestions can be made for these two students academically to make them better writers?

- Teacher teams are organized by grade level and department level. Teams meet weekly or bi-monthly based on professional development topics. Grade level teams focus on skills, quick write progress and individual student study conversations. Department teams focus on instructional shifts in content and assessments and common core aligned activities based on student need. Teachers reported, “I think it’s more of creating a support, we get to bump ideas off someone and in your particular area knowing you have someone to go to is helpful.” Another teacher added, “In our department team, using science as an example, working with the science team, I know the specific skills they are learning in the first two years and he builds on this, living environment and earth science and further those and add new ones.” Another teacher added, “In graphing, working with the ninth grade math teacher, we get to identify what strengths and weaknesses students have.”

- Distributed leadership was evidenced by teacher leaders’ representation on the Talent Team. The Talent Team meets two to four times a month to discuss progress in implementation of the instructional focus to plan professional development activities for the staff. The Talent Team includes both teachers and administrators. Professional development (PD) topics are identified via student needs data analysis; staff surveys conducted two to three times per year; teacher PD feedback and class observation data. The PD calendar is adjusted routinely based on the needs of students and staff. Professional development topics have included differentiated learning, leveraging paraprofessionals in class, collaborative teaching, Webb’s Depth of Knowledge (DOK), crisis intervention, master teacher-15 minute PD topics, annotation, and writing strategies. A teacher reported, “The Talent Team meets and develops the PD, they are open to entire staff. We have a voice in PD, teachers have opportunities to do and turnkey PD to staff.”