

Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

Final Report



BEDS Code	310500011499
School Name	Frederick Douglass Academy
School Address	2581 Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Blvd, New York, NY 10039
District Name	NYCDOE CSD 5
Principal	Ayisha Fullerton
Dates of Visit	June 3, 5, and 7, 2019



Purpose Of The Visit

This school was identified as needing additional support by the New York State Education Department (NYSED). Because of this identification, NYSED arranged for an Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) to visit the school. The visit is intended to help the school identify areas of need that are making long-term success a challenge and provide several visible Quick Wins that can be accomplished and demonstrate the school’s commitment to improvement.

The report provides a critical lens to help the school best focus its efforts.

School Performance

New York State uses multiple indicators to determine the identification status of schools across the state. For each of these indicators, schools receive a number of 1 (lowest), 2, 3, or 4 (highest) that corresponds with how the school performed in relation to either other schools and/or performance targets. More information about how these levels are determined can be found at: <http://www.nysed.gov/accountability/essa-accountability-designation-materials>.

The most recent results for the “All Students” group at the school are as follows:

Elementary/Middle School Performance Indicators

Composite Performance Achievement Level	Student Growth Level	Combined Composite and Student Growth Level	English Language Proficiency Level	Average ELA and Math Academic Progress Level	Chronic Absenteeism Level
1	2	1		1	2

High School Performance Indicators

4 Yr Grad. Rate <67%	Composite Performance Achievement Level	Average of 4-, 5-, and 6-year Graduation Rate Levels	Combined Composite Performance Achievement and Graduation Rate Level	English Language Proficiency Level	Average ELA and Math Academic Progress Level	Chronic Absenteeism Level	College, Career, Civic, Readiness (CCCR) Level
No	2	4	3	2	2	2	2

Frederick Douglass Academy serves 1236 students in grades six to twelve.

Information About The Visit

- The visit was led by an Outside Educational Expert (OEE) and a representative from NYSED. The team also included a district representative and a representative from the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN).
- The team visited a total of 28 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited 11 classrooms with the principal during the visit.
- Team members conducted interviews with students, staff, and parents.
- Team members examined documents provided by the school, including lesson plans, schoolwide data, teacher feedback, and student work.
- In advance of the visit, 35 staff members (33 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. During the 2018-19 school year, the Frederick Douglass Academy Alumni Association launched a crowdsourcing campaign to provide college scholarships for seniors. During the inaugural year of this campaign, the alumni association raised \$9,000. Three students received scholarships at a value of \$3,000 each.
2. During the 2018-19 school year, Frederick Douglass Academy formed a new partnership with a local theater company, Changing Perceptions Theater. Through this partnership, 25 students participated in drama classes and performed in a theatrical performance entitled *Harlem World Oz*. Teachers and students noted that this program has enriched the overall educational experience for students at the school.
3. During the 2018-19 school year, the head coach of the boys' basketball team coordinated programs to support and involve the players in various school programs including mandatory tutoring sessions, community service projects, and freshman orientation. School leaders noted that the team's participation in these programs empowered the players and provided opportunities for them to serve as positive role models for the greater student body. In March 2019, the boys' basketball team also won a city championship, which is a source of pride for the entire school.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **School leaders and deans should establish consistent responses to disciplinary actions.** Students and parents shared that the school staff members responsible for addressing disciplinary issues often apply different consequences for similar behaviors. For example, according to the school code of conduct, school uniforms should be worn by all students each day. However, both students and staff perceived that while some students are disciplined for not conforming to this policy, with consequences that sometimes include out-of-school suspension, other students are excused for the same behavior. Teachers noted that the enforcement of the code of conduct varies considerably and depends on which dean or school leader responds to an incident.
- **Teacher leaders should be identified for every department and used to lead professional development sessions and data meetings.** Teachers noted that they would like a larger role in leading their departments. The principal acknowledged that not all departments have a teacher leader and, in these cases, assistant principals lead data meetings. However, teachers expressed that since assistant principals do not work directly with students, they may not always possess the insight or urgency needed to immediately recognize and address students' academic needs and improve outcomes. The IIT found from discussions with school leaders and teachers that without a designated leader, department meetings are not always conducted on a regular basis. Teachers believed that staff would be more receptive to new instructional initiatives if teachers had an increased involvement in implementing and monitoring them.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The principal should establish a system to hold staff accountable for implementing schoolwide initiatives.** Teachers noted that they rarely receive direct feedback about their implementation of instructional initiatives.

The IIT found that while individual teachers are sometimes acknowledged for meeting the expectations of school leaders, school leaders do not usually identify and formally offer feedback accompanied by follow up to teachers who fail to implement agreed upon instructional initiatives. Additionally, the team found that instructional initiatives are not always fully implemented in all classes. For example, although the use of Hochman Writing Strategies is a schoolwide initiative for all subject areas, the IIT only observed it being fully implemented in English language arts (ELA) lessons.

- **School leaders should structure professional development time to ensure that it is consistently aligned with the professional needs of teachers.** Each Monday afternoon, teachers are provided with time to engage in an extended professional development session. Although professional development sessions are expected to provide teachers with opportunities to plan within their departments and grade-level teams, the IIT learned that this weekly whole group meeting is often used for activities such as sharing graduation data with staff rather than for team planning. Teachers told the IIT that they are supposed to plan with their grade-level teams and departments every week, but this only happens approximately one Monday per month.
- **The principal should refine the school’s organization chart to maximize the supervisory scope of all school leaders.** During the 2018-19 school year, four assistant principals were assigned to supervise all staff and student activities in the high school, with one assistant principal representing each grade level. Although data from the middle school showed greater needs, only the principal was responsible for supervising all staff and student activities for grades six through eight. The principal acknowledged that her schedule can be unpredictable and sometimes affects her ability to provide the level of supervision needed to consistently drive improvements in the middle school.

Learning at the School

- **School leaders should ensure that teachers plan and deliver lessons that are differentiated and accurately matched to the learning needs of different groups of students.** While teachers noted in their meeting with the IIT that the range of students’ academic needs continues to grow each year, of the 28 classrooms visited by the IIT, the team observed only two lessons in which teachers differentiated their lessons or provided additional instructional materials to support the learning needs of students. Students noted that lessons are generally delivered to the entire class without accounting for students’ prior performance levels. Students also shared that, if they finish their assignments prior to the end of the period, teachers do not typically provide them with extension activities.
- **Teachers should assess student skills based on learning objectives.** Frederick Douglass Academy uses a process called the three W’s to capture student understanding of the instructional objectives of lessons. The three W’s strategy consists of asking three questions that include, “What are we learning?” “Why are we learning it?” and “Where is it leading?” During class visits, the team noted that students’ mastery of concepts was not often assessed using these questions as a tool and lessons were not adjusted based on student needs. For example, IIT members observed the three W’s posted in 95 percent of classrooms visited, but only two teachers referred to these questions during their lessons.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Parents of middle school students would like more opportunities to interact with the school leader.** Some parents reported that most communications to middle school parents are sent by a guidance counselor. These

parents believed that middle school parents would benefit from increased communication with the school leader responsible for middle school issues.

- **Parents and students noted a need for increased cultural awareness training.** Parents and students reported that school staff are not always aware of student needs when dealing with cultural matters.
- **Parents and students would like classrooms arranged to support learning.** Parents and students noted that many classrooms throughout the school are often untidy or disorganized. They suggested that the quality of teaching and learning might be improved if rooms were better organized.