



# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**The Willoughby School**

**Intermediate School 162**

**1390 Willoughby Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11237**

**Principal: Ms Barbara DeMartino**

**Dates of review: May 17 - 18, 2007**

**Reviewer: Chris Andrews**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Willoughby School is an intermediate school with 783 students enrolled from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population is composed mainly of Hispanic students (88%) but there is also small number of Black (7%), Asian (4%) and White (1%) students. There are 87 (11.1%) special education students and 156 (19.9%) English language learners, but the majority of students do not use English in the family home. The school receives Title 1 funding for all of its students, which is above similar schools and well above the average for all City schools. Average attendance at between 92% and 93% is comparable to all City schools but above that for similar schools.

The school is a 1:1 technology school as all students have access to laptops. There are two small gymnasiums, although only one can be effectively used for its main purpose. Science is taught in classrooms. There are no self-contained laboratories with the provision of the necessary utilities.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- There is a strong and growing sense of community within the school, shared by teachers, students and parents alike.
- The school generates a wide range of data for all its teachers and there is clear evidence of its increasing use in the classroom.
- Support for students in the greatest need of improvement is very good.
- Expectations for students are shared with parents and students, and teachers endeavour to set realistic and differentiated expectations.
- The deployment of resources is very well aligned to the needs of the data and resources are targeted to secure student progress.
- Instructional programs largely engage students who enjoy the majority of classes.
- Relationships within the school are generally good, and students feel safe and able to bring any problems to an adult in the school.
- Professional development is aligned to the needs of the curriculum and of teachers.
- The principal is dynamic, is respected and has the capacity to manage change.
- Partnerships with community based organisations are chosen to reinforce the achievement of goals in respect of student progress and personal development.

### Areas for Improvement

- Ensure that there is consistency between teachers in the collation and use of data to allow more effective monitoring of progress.
- Implement a range of teaching strategies to enable boys to make faster progress.
- Ensure that students and their parents are clearly informed as to what short -term goals students have to move them to the next level of performance.
- The provision of additional opportunities to allow teachers to make formal intervisitations and to develop skills in peer and self -evaluation.
- Ensure that in future planning there are clear benchmarks and time frames for the evaluation of progress towards objectives.
- Ensure there are clear links between the school goals and those of the departments through a shared understanding of the Comprehensive Education Plan.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a proficient school.**

The Willoughby School is a school in transition. The principal and three of her assistant principals have been in the school for two years or less. Many of the teachers are new, and although well qualified are inexperienced. The stability in the staff over the most recent two years has not been typical of the school. As a result, the principal has been faced with some serious challenges in terms of developing continuity of instruction and in creating a school where the use of data is commonplace. What is very apparent now is that there is a strong and growing sense of community within the school, shared by teachers, students and parents alike, where the environment is now recognized as one more conducive to learning and teaching.

The academy structure allows the assistant principals to monitor school developments both vertically and, because of their subject responsibilities, across each grade. This gives them an excellent perspective on the school and their role has been central in moving children forward and in developing home-school relationships. They are also vital for establishing high expectations for students. The school's declared mission is to develop well-rounded, mature young adults capable of fulfilling their potential. The Willoughby School is clearly addressing this mission with vigor and enthusiasm.

### How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

**Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.**

#### **This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The school generates a wide range of data for all its teachers and there is clear evidence of its increasing use in the classroom. The school's test scores over the past three years bears witness to this. All teachers use Teachers' Assessment Notebooks to collate the data they collect and are able to show evidence for any child when asked. However, the format for recording that data is not standardized as yet- with the result that effective monitoring of progress across classrooms and grades is made difficult.

Data for the students with particular needs is well collated and there is a developing transitional program to move English language learners from bi-lingual to general education classes if possible during their time at the school. The school has begun to disaggregate the data for its majority Hispanic population and is aware of differences in the performance of students from the various national groups. Students with interrupted formal education (SIFE) are a particular group which the school has targeted this year, and their progress is specifically monitored by an assistant principal. They are enrolled into the Saturday program and have two after school sessions. The impact of this is yet to be fully evaluated but initial analysis is optimistic. The gender difference in test scores has been identified as an issue for the next Comprehensive Education Plan and the school has

recognized that the implementation of a specific range of teaching strategies designed to focus on the significant gender difference will enable boys to make faster progress.

The principal meets regularly with two local schools to compare progress and compares the school's own scores with its past record, but the current 7<sup>th</sup> grade is the only one with any history of data in the school, so this area is a developmental one.

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

There is a range of teams which operate to set goals for the school and the students. The Comprehensive Education Plan is the main source of goals for the school, and the key inputs here are from the School Leadership Team and the Instructional Cabinet. Each subject area aligns its curriculum map to address the goals in the Comprehensive Education Plan but the principal recognizes that not all departments share these goals with department members. As a result, the links made between the whole school goals and those of the departments are indistinct.

Bi-weekly academy meetings track student progress and focus on identified students in need of support. Teachers set short-term goals after unit test pieces which can be seen to enhance progress. The school recognizes that it is important to ensure that students and their parents are clearly informed as to what short term goals students need to move them incrementally to the next level of performance. Support for students in the greatest need of improvement is very good. The Academic Intervention Service team monitors all students with Individual Education Plans, but also helps track any other students, such as potential 7<sup>th</sup> grade holdovers, who are clearly struggling. In this way the school can react quickly to students who either cause concern or begin to progress at a faster rate. There is clear evidence of bi-lingual and special education students making such progress.

Expectations for students are shared with parents and students, and teachers endeavour to set realistic and differentiated expectations, beginning at the 6<sup>th</sup> grade orientation meeting. The improvement of student progress is the main driving force behind school activity, and the developing planning process is linking the different teams more closely together.

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The school provides excellent support for many of the staff who are relatively new to teaching. A new mathematics program has been employed which accommodates well the Spanish speaking students and has performance standards built into the tests. The introduction of new resources and programs outlines not only that the principal has made her mark upon the school quickly but also provided curriculum approaches best suited to the needs of her school and teachers.

This is reflective of her deployment of resources which are very well aligned to the needs of the data and which are targeted to secure student progress. An example of this is her investment in laptops and Smartboards. While teachers are still developing the skills to use the latter effectively, the use of laptops throughout the grades and content areas is marked, and students regard them as vital to their own learning. Teachers know that they are accountable for their students' progress to their assistant principal in the first instance. They discuss individual students with ease from the data and to show the differentiated strategies they use with their classes. Instructional programs engage students who enjoy the majority of their lessons, particularly those with a 'hands-on' element.

Relationships within the school are generally good, and students feel safe and able to bring any problems to an adult in the school. They comment very positively about the changes in the last two years and the impact of the introduction of peer mediation on behaviour in school. Attendance, and more significantly, lateness are important issues for the school, but data shows attendance is improving as the result of the strategies employed by the school. There are awards for perfect attendance but the work of the support team for attendance is having the main positive impact.

**Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

When hiring new teachers the principal has some key criteria. The appreciation of the potential use of data is one of these, but equally important is a commitment to the vision of the school and flexibility to meet the challenges of this school. Professional development is aligned to the needs of the curriculum and of teachers, who are surveyed as to their interests and concerns, and who are well supported by coaches and lead teachers. Teachers are able to suggest areas for their own development, and the principal will support these, but training is also directed to meet goals which benefit the whole school.

The impact of professional development is monitored through formal and informal classroom observations by the principal and the assistant principals, and there is developing a collegial culture in which the sharing of ideas and strategies is natural. There are intervisitations with a local similar school to share expertise particularly in English language arts and science, and teachers visit each other's classrooms, but there is recognition that the provision of additional opportunities for this and to develop skills in peer and self evaluation would be valuable. Teams meet regularly and provide opportunities to discuss students' progress and to plan for individuals, grades or the whole school. The instructional cabinet has a particular impact as it acts as the key link between the wider goals and their effective delivery at classroom level. In all cabinet meetings discussions are candid, and it is clear that the principal is prepared to consider a wide range of ideas in search of the best possible outcomes.

The principal is very dynamic, is respected and has the capacity to manage necessary change. Parents appreciate the range of communications home about school events and about how they can help their children progress. Partnerships with community based organisations are chosen to reinforce the attainment of goals in respect of student progress and personal development. The students particularly enjoy those with a sporting content, and the Road Runners club members take part in competitions as well as fun runs. Art, music and drama allow them access to activities they might well not follow otherwise, including American Ballroom Dancing which is especially popular.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

Planning is firmly based on the analysis of data, although the relative lack of data initially created some difficulties for the new administration. The Comprehensive Education Plan is developing as the key document which drives school improvement. Its different sections are reviewed monthly by departments focusing on their own content areas, and unit tests are used to check progress towards numerical targets for student improvement. The administration is aware however that not all teachers are familiar with the Comprehensive Education Plan and the overarching goals of the school. The principal recognizes that there should be very clear links between the whole school goals and those of the departments, so that all grades and content areas within the school have a common set of focuses. In this way, the goals for grade teams and at classroom level will be seen as contributing directly to the achievement of the overall Comprehensive Education Plan.

The assistant principals monitor their sections of the Plan through observations and the review of teachers' planning and student portfolios. They discuss the outcomes of this monitoring frankly in the supervisory cabinet and the results of these discussions impact on teachers' practice. The marking periods currently act as the points in the year where review takes place, although Individual Education Plans are kept under constant review so that support can be added or removed as necessary. Students are advised as to what they need to do to move forward in terms of their individual goals, although this is not yet consistent amongst all teachers. Within the Comprehensive Education Plan there are, however, no clear benchmarks for each objective, nor time frames for the evaluation of progress towards these objectives. This is recognized by the administration as an area for development.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: The Willoughby School (IS 162)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>		X	

<b>Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.</b>	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• each student, classroom, grade level,</li> </ul>		X	
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students*</li> </ul>		X	
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>		X	
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.		X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>		X	

\* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

<b>Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.</b>	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.		X	
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject, and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area.		X	
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			X
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.		X	
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.		X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>		X	

<b>Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.</b>	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.		X	
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.		X	
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.			X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>		X	
<b>Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.</b>	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.		X	
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.		X	
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.		X	
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.		X	
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>		X	
<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.		X	
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.		X	
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.		X	
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.		X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>		X	