



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

John Wilson School

Intermediate School 211

**1001 East 100th Street
Brooklyn
NY 11236**

Principal: Buffie Simmons-Peart

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Reviewer: Cheryl Baker

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Overall evaluation

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

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The John Wilson School serves 769 students in grades 6 through 8. Students are grouped in three academies which constitute small learning communities. Four percent are English language learners and nearly 22% are special education students. Eighty-five percent are Black, 10% are Hispanic, 3% are Asian and other ethnic groups and 2% are White. Seventy-one percent of the students are Title 1 eligible, which is above similar and City schools averages. Attendance averages, which are above 93%, are on par with that of similar and City schools.

The John Wilson School is an empowerment school. Empowerment schools have more flexibility to make key decisions and control the resources for their school community. Empowerment schools are free to develop or purchase professional development services, choose which schools to affiliate with and benefit from reduced reporting and paperwork requirements.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal provides strong, focused, informed leadership for all aspects of the school.
- The school is a warm, orderly and welcoming environment for learning.
- Students' achievements are celebrated regularly through displays, awards and ceremonies.
- Students' educational experience is enriched through an extensive array of extracurricular activities and through trips to historic sites and institutions of higher learning outside of New York.
- Collaborative leadership and shared decision making empower staff to take responsibility for overall school improvement.
- Students and parents feel well known and respected by the principal and her staff.
- Administrators routinely use data to understand the progress of the school and its students.
- The school provides differentiated support for special education students, English language learners and for those needing academic interventions.
- Under the current administration, student achievement and attendance have continued to improve.

What the school needs to improve

- Provide professional development in differentiated instruction, classroom management and the workshop model to improve active engagement of students.
- Create a strategic plan for the school's continued improvement that specifies long- and short-term goals that are supported by actions, timelines and measures of incremental success and completion.
- Strengthen the focus on developing and refining curriculum and instruction in subject areas beyond mathematics and English language arts.
- Increase the use of the available computer technology in the course of routine instruction.
- Consider implementing academic enrichment programs or practices to ensure that the needs of high achieving students are met.

Part 3: Main Findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school with well-developed features.

The school has made noteworthy progress in improving its tone, increasing student achievement and decreasing absenteeism under the current administration. The principal, who began her tenure at the school in 2004, is highly regarded by all constituencies. The school has developed good practices with regard to using data to understand its students and is flexible with respect to changing practices to address needs as necessary. Teachers are well supported in their professional growth and have a voice in the school's decision making. The curriculum and instruction are increasingly aligned with City mandates. The school intends to refine and extend its planning practices to encompass more defined growth targets in the future.

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 well developed.

The school administration is vigilant with respect to gathering, analyzing and using data to understand its students, their classes and each grade. Results from State tests inform instructional groupings within each of the school's three academies and student progress is monitored within the context of their small learning community by their teachers and assistant principal. Results of formative assessments, such as standardized monthly content examinations, provide solid evidence of progress in the core tested areas. The Princeton Review sheds light on periodic progress in mathematics and English. The school also employs additional diagnostic measures of student progress relative to the attainment of skills in those primary disciplines. Teachers practice lesson study to analyze student work and learn more about their teaching and their students' learning.

The school monitors the progress of its English language learners through the mandated testing and through instructional groupings reflective of students' facility with the English language. These students have shown good progress in attaining proficiency. Special education students are monitored through the specifics of their individual education plans by an extensive array of programs and specialists who administer formative and summative assessments appropriate to the learning needs of students. As a barrier-free school with a large special education population, the range of student needs is quite varied and data regarding the progress of these subgroups is monitored and scrutinized routinely. The school is aware of the progress of its ethnic subgroups but has not typically compared the progress of one to another.

The school uses student achievement data, attendance data and incident reports to identify other categories of interest. For example, lower achievement among Black boys led to a study of their progress in mathematics relative to various small group

interventions. Benchmark and periodic assessments informed discussions regarding successful practices. Behavioral information led to the formation of support groups for girls and another for boys. The school is proud of its performance as compared to its past performance and relative to other middle schools and has received recognition for its recent steady improvement. Comparisons across classrooms, grades, academic subjects and academies are routine and regular as new assessment data emerges. The administration models data-driven decision making and provides staff with useful analyses and consistent access to information relevant to their instruction.

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.

The school leadership team has developed a Comprehensive Education Plan for the school’s improvement that supports the goals of the comprehensive school restructuring plan. While these plans specify targets and goals for long range improvement they are not specific with regard to short term measures of progress. Other plans such as those for professional development and mentoring do express monthly activities but lack specific indicators of success. The details of these and others such as those for attendance, suspension and safety plans are not routinely and universally shared with students, staff, parents and other partners. Beyond the administrative level these do not drive the activity of the school’s constituencies. However, the school has been successful in communicating annual themes such as, “On The Same Page” and “Using Data To Drive Instruction” which have been widely understood to be the chief rallying points for yearly improvement efforts.

The school groups students by academic achievement level in each academy to enable teachers to focus more narrowly on student’s instructional needs to good effect. Academy assistant principals reassign students to a more appropriate class if their performance warrants it. Specialized instruction and progress for the school’s special education students and its English language learners is monitored through the specific instructional plans developed for them. The school’s high achieving students are prepared for Regents examinations but the school lacks a comprehensive program to identify and address the diversity of students’ gifts and talents.

Students in greatest need of improvement benefit from interventions such as Wilson Reading, Read 180, Great Leaps, push-in and pull-out tutorials, after-school, summer and holiday academies and extended day and guidance support. The school is vigilant with respect to these students’ progress and effectively modifies interventions at meetings of academic intervention and pupil personnel team meetings. Program placement and revisions of pupil intervention plans are tracked carefully by grade and academy and spreadsheets are up-dated regularly. As a result, the group of students in greatest need changes constantly in response to data.

The school diligently communicates its high expectations to students, parents and the community through newsletters, newspaper articles, television coverage, monthly award ceremonies and well-attended parent association meetings that are often attended by hundreds of parents. Students’ expectations for their achievement are supported through annual goal setting. Trips to universities throughout the east coast provide students with

concrete examples of what is possible for them if they focus on academic excellence. Parents and students regularly collaborate with teachers and guidance personnel about academic achievement and plans for high school.

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 has implemented curricula in mathematics and English language arts which are aligned with City and State standards. Both of these well defined models, America’s Choice and Impact Mathematics, include practices and tools for interim measures of students’ learning and their delivery is well supported by staff coaches. Curricula for science and social studies are less well defined and supported. Teachers, many of whom are new to the profession, are held accountable for improving their instruction and student progress through rigorous monitoring of instruction and student report cards by the administrative staff. Differentiation of instruction is largely by program and activity rather than by individual student’s discrete learning needs. Instruction varies in engagement. Teachers have access to ample instructional technology but do not currently take full advantage of it in their lessons.

Decisions regarding budgeting, staffing and scheduling are effective and have been informed by student achievement data. For example, additional staff was hired to reduce class size at grade 6 based on a large number of incoming level 1 students. Interventions such as Wilson Reading and Read 180 were purchased and staff were reassigned and trained to implement these programs for students at risk of not meeting the standard. Students’ schedules were amended to allow them access to these programs. Teachers’ schedules are often adjusted to encourage inter-visitations in order to support their instructional techniques in writing, which has been identified as an area of weakness.

Students report that they feel well supported and known by their teachers and the principal and are confident that they could confide in several adults if needed. The school provides many avenues of support through counseling groups and advisories. Relationships amongst all members of the school community are excellent. Students like to come to school and most participate in after school, weekend and holiday programs. Attendance is nearly 92% and improving due to effective outreach by the school.

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 well developed.

The principal is widely credited and respected for the dramatic progress the school has made in improving its academic achievement, attendance and tone since she assumed responsibility three years ago. Her strong organizational skills and clarity of purpose ensure that the school functions smoothly and that procedures are followed. Her instructional leadership is evident in her hiring criteria which include the expectation that candidates possess an understanding of the workshop model and its inherent use of student assessment to plan instruction. She values collaboration and has structured the

school's governance to support team-based decision making at the content level, by grade and by academy which is then shared and evaluated through faculty conferences.

New teachers receive mentoring for three years in addition to the effective and extensive professional development provided to staff. Coaches in mathematics and English language arts effectively support the curricula through in-class coaching and weekly content meetings where lessons are demonstrated and student work is analyzed. Teachers attend workshops and courses and benefit from on-site access to the United Federation of Teachers professional development offerings. Teachers identify professional development topics to the comprehensive school reform team that differentiates offerings based on their requests. Teachers are also trained to use data effectively to improve student outcomes. Observations of teaching through formal and informal walk-throughs, and lesson evaluation by the administrative staff drive professional developed decisions. Additionally, it provides teachers with ample and useful feedback to improve their teaching. The principal often demonstrates lessons for teachers. Inter-visitations within and among schools provide teachers with demonstrations of best practice in instructional delivery.

Students benefit from an extensive menu of after-school, extended day and enrichment activities that are supported by relationships with numerous civic, athletic, cultural and academic organizations that have been nurtured by the principal.

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 well developed.

While most of the schools plans express goals on an annual basis rather than incrementally, structures such as the school leadership team, the comprehensive school restructuring team and the school's partnership with America's Choice ensure regular assessments of the school's progress. Actions, such as monthly learning walks, bi-annual quality reviews and regular meeting where discussions of emerging student achievement data inform decisions about the effective implementation of plans, results in flexible realignment of resources and successive goal setting. For example, when student achievement fell short in mathematics, the order of instruction was revised and additional mathematics interventions were devised. Science was revised to address deficiencies revealed by State tests. The school's overarching goal for the year, "Using Data To Drive Instruction" is revisited at every faculty conference and teachers receive regular achievement updates to maintain their focus on the goal.

Comparisons of progress within and among classes and grades are a routine focus of discussion and planning at content, grade, academy and faculty conferences. Collaborative planning, common content assessments and school-wide rubrics sharpen teachers' ability to diagnose progress and change instruction or interventions. Plans for special education students, English language learners and students needing academic interventions are routinely scrutinized and adjusted based on plenty of statistical and anecdotal data sources employed by the school. Information from periodic and diagnostic measures of student achievement is well used to modify interventions and instruction and has been a contributing factor in the school's recent upswing in State test scores.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: John Wilson School (IS 211)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score		X	

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.	∅	✓	+
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"> • each student, classroom, grade level, 			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"> • ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students* 		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"> • all other categories of interest to the school* 			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
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			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.

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.	∅	✓	+
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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2		X	

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.	∅	✓	+
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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3		X	
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.	∅	✓	+
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
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X
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.	∅	✓	+
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
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X