



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**The George E. Wibecan Preparatory Academy**

**Public School 309**

**794 Monroe Street**

**Brooklyn**

**New York 11221**

**Principal: Rebecca Fonville**

**Dates of review: April 18 – 19, 2007**

**Reviewer: Carmen Jimenez**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The George E. Wibecan Preparatory Academy is an elementary school in the Bedford-Stuyvesant area of Brooklyn. It currently serves 459 students from pre-K to grade 5, which reflects a gradual fall in student numbers since 2003. Seventy six percent of the students are Black, 16% Hispanic and 6% Asian and 2% are White. There are 7% special education students and 6% of the students are English language learners. Ninety one percent of students are Title 1 eligible. Attendance has increased to 90.1% which is lower than similar and City schools.

The school offers a Friday Club Day with extension classes in drama, dance and chorus. The administrative team consists of the principal and one assistant principal.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Students behave well and have positive attitudes to learning.
- The school has high expectations for students in school and extra-curricular activities.
- Students enjoy the opportunities for active learning in classes and extra-curricular activities.
- The school has created effective working relationships with community-based organizations to extend and enhance learning opportunities.
- The school is making significant progress in gathering data to provide up-to-date information on students.
- In some classrooms data is used well to influence instruction.
- The school has established systems to sustain improvement in attendance.
- The administrative team has successfully implemented changes in school organization, instruction and the curriculum.
- The parents hold the school in high regard and are welcomed as partners in their children's education.

### What the school needs to improve

- Establish uniform collection and analysis of formal and informal data to give accurate information on students in all classes.
- Make more consistent use of assessment data to inform the planning of instruction.
- Define interim goals in all plans and use these to monitor progress against through the year.
- Ensure that the content of professional development links to feedback given to teachers following classroom observations.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

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

The school has seen many changes in recent years through adopting the workshop model for instruction, gathering data to evaluate students' progress and using this to match instruction to their needs. Whilst this is not yet fully established in all classes, some teachers collect and use data well and share this good practice with their colleagues. Staff are generally attentive to the needs of all students and intervention programs support students experiencing difficulties in learning. The staff members work hard to engage parents as partners in their children's learning, for example, through regular hands-on workshops, as well as working with them to improve student attendance. Students enjoy active learning in classes and extra-curricular activities and feel safe at the school.

High value is placed on improving professional practice, through formal development activities and informal methods of learning from each other. The link between feedback from observations and the content of professional development is not clear, which means that some staff needs are not addressed promptly. The school has a wide range of partnerships with community organizations, which are positive additions to the curriculum and pastoral support for students. Whilst monitoring progress against defined plans is not yet carried out with rigor, the school informally evaluates the effectiveness of interventions to support students and adapts these where necessary.

### **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 collects data from standardized tests and informal assessments to provide a full picture of each student's performance. In order to obtain up-to-date information on students as they enter the school, assessments are routinely carried out in reading, writing and mathematics so that teachers have baseline data on new students. Teachers maintain portfolios of formal and informal test results and work samples of writing and mathematics to show progress made each year. However, there is no consistency in the data in these records and how the information is used. Where they are well-organized, information is broken down at subject and strand level and this is used to compare the progress made by students in different classes. There is no distinct information on the progress made by English language learners or other groups of learners.

Data is also gathered on behavior, which is effectively used to inform class groupings and extra-curricular programs. The administrative team is consistent in comparing the performance of students and whole classes at the end of each school year. These comparisons are clearly presented in easily read graphs, which show variations in progress and performance.

**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 consistent approach to planning as teachers use an agreed template and have time allocated for common planning. However, the analysis of the student data from standardized tests and the teachers’ portfolios is under-used in planning lessons and longer term planning. The child study team provides additional information to teachers’ planning meetings, to give a wider picture of individual student needs.

Data is used effectively to make decisions on how students are grouped as is information on individual students causing concern. The school is responsive to the needs of students and shares information and concerns sensitively and responsibly, so that intervention is provided without unnecessary delay. After-school programs and Saturday schools are clearly focused on the needs of their students.

The school has high expectations of its students. These expectations are openly shared with students and their parents at the start of each year, through the open house events. Data on each student’s performance during the previous year is used as the basis for the expectations for the coming year. Outreach visits to students’ homes are made where families do not attend school-based events. The school welcomes parents and works hard to keep them well-informed about events at the school, student progress and how families can help students to learn at home. Practical workshops provide parents with opportunities to gain insights into the curriculum and how they can provide meaningful learning activities for their children at home.

There are many programs both academic and social which involve all students in the life of the school. The school provides many special events and has an extensive art, a music program and a dance program. The school participates in city wide dance competitions. Students also make meaningful contributions to the community, for example, through their work in the community garden.

**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 is making significant changes to the curriculum and how it is delivered by moving from didactic instruction and a test-based curriculum to one focused on student activity. The Teachers’ College model is in the process of being established as the basis for the English language arts curriculum and there are clear links between the school curriculum and the Teachers’ College units for writing. The mandated curriculum is imaginatively extended by extra-curricular activities, for example, the dance teacher explicitly links social studies and Spanish to teaching Latin-American dances.

Some teachers make good use of student portfolios and conference notes in their short-term planning for students’ needs. Teachers use notes from observations and conferences with students to group students within classes. However this is not yet applied routinely by all teachers and also reflects the lack of consistency in the collection

and use of data collection. The principal holds teachers to account for their attendance as well as performance, which has led to a significant reduction in staff absence.

The administration ensures that all resources are fully-utilized and monitors spending carefully. The additional space created as a result of reduced classes is well-used to provide for curriculum enrichment activities. A range of information, including observations, teacher preference requests and learning outcomes is effectively used by the administration in assigning teachers to classes. As a result of evaluating how to use instructional time most effectively, the administration recently implemented a schedule to allow longer instructional sessions and cohesive blocks of planning time in the lunch recess. The impact of this change has yet to be evaluated.

The instructional programs actively engage students in learning. Students confirmed that teachers engage them in instruction through practical activities, co-operative learning, giving them feedback about the quality of their work and encouraging them to improve. These opportunities are extended in the wide range of extra-curricular activities. The school is well-equipped with computers, however teachers do not yet make full use of technology for instruction and learning.

The school has defined structures in place for students to express any concerns or anxieties. Expectations for respect towards each other are made clear to all students, which leads to them feeling safe and secure at school. Effective systems are in place to monitor student attendance. Family workers monitor attendance, visit students' homes and routinely follow up lateness and absence.

**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.**

The principal and the administrative team use agreed criteria when hiring teachers and make clear to new staff how data is to be gathered and used to inform instruction. Newly-hired teachers receive bespoke professional support from coaches and buddy teachers for their first year. Surveys gather teacher's perceptions of their development needs routinely, which is aimed at addressing individual needs. The information these surveys generate relates to subject areas, rather than sub-skills or particular areas of understanding. Professional development is little-used to improve the use of data, which contributes to the variability in how this is used across the school.

Staff share good practice in a variety of ways, but this is not yet fully established as part of professional development. Some teachers share good practice in their classes and others support their colleagues in developing student portfolios. All teachers receive common planning time weekly; however some of this time is devoted to clerical issues rather than planning instruction and sharing good practice, which limits its value.

The administration routinely evaluates teacher performance through walk-throughs, formal and informal classroom observations and consideration of learning outcomes. All teachers receive verbal or written feedback promptly after observations, with an agreed template used to provide a consistent framework for the written feedback. This feedback is not used to influence the content of professional development, which means that teachers' needs are not always addressed promptly. The school has introduced a uniform structure to define specific support for individual teachers and monitor its impact, which ensures that

the teacher, administration and coaches follow an agreed approach to support improvements.

The principal, assistant principal and staff are respected by parents and the community, for the care and instruction provided for students and their families. The administration has implemented extensive changes to the curriculum and has successfully managed changes related to falling student numbers. Staff are clear about their responsibilities, which are clearly set out in the staff handbook.

The school is successful at establishing and maintaining partnerships with community-based organizations to enrich and extend the curriculum. These include an extensive arts program with visiting artists, a gallery of art work, dance and participation in city-wide dance competitions, health clinics with Woodhull Hospital Corporation, Learning Leaders, Friday clubs, Saturday academy and a Big Brother program. This innovative collaboration with volunteers from the local police precinct provides boys with effective support in taking responsibility for their behavior and actions. Police department officers establish and sustain lasting and effective relationships with students, provide them with positive male role models and support them in changing behavior.

**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.**

The Comprehensive Education Plan is shared with all teachers, but the goals are insufficiently measurable for teachers to be clear about their part in achieving the school's goals. The school identifies priorities for each year and ensures that actions address these priorities in each class. The current priorities are to improve student outcomes in writing and mathematics and for teachers to differentiate instruction more clearly. These priorities are not congruent with the goals in the Comprehensive Education Plan but are recognized as in need of improvement. There is a lack of clarity in how the goals link with these priorities.

The school collects data to ensure that students are making progress, but this is not aligned to school-wide plans. This progress made by pupils is evaluated regularly through monitoring of information within student portfolios and student intervention plans. However, the present inconsistency in gathering information affects the formal monitoring of progress. This results in some limited knowledge of the effectiveness of intervention. Systems are in place to strengthen monitoring but the impact is not yet apparent.

Whilst monitoring against formally defined plans is not yet fully established, teachers, coaches and administrative do use the information that is available to ascertain that progress is being made. They amend plans and intervention strategies promptly to ensure that students are met and learning continues.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: George E Wibecan Preparatory Academy PS 309</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 knows 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 are 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	