



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**W.E.B Du Bois**

**High School 489**

**402 Eastern Parkway  
Brooklyn  
NY 11225**

**Principal: Catherine Hartnett**

**Dates of review: June 1 and 4 , 2007**

**Reviewer: Denis Pittman**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

W.E.B. Du Bois is a 'transfer' high school that serves 278 'over-age' and 'under-credited' students from all areas of Brooklyn. The ethnic composition of the school is 92% Black students, 5% Hispanic, 2% White and 1% Asian. Relatively few students (5%) have special educational needs and there is only one English language learner. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with eligibility at 65.3%. Attendance levels (65.2%) are significantly below similar and City schools.

There are organizational characteristics which are unique to the school. In order to be admitted, students have to be 16 years old and have earned at least five high school credits; or 17-year-olds and have earned at least 10 high school credits; or are 18 years old and have earned 20 high school credits. Students are organized into 'official classes' according to credits earned. In order to address the credit accumulation issue the school operates a four-cycle schedule. Each cycle is approximately 9 weeks long. Students are programmed for five classes each cycle and can earn up to three credits. Typically, students are scheduled to take two double period classes in core academic areas (mathematics, science, English language arts and social studies) and three single period elective or required classes each cycle. In consequence students have the opportunity to earn credits four times per year instead of twice.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal has a clear purpose for the school, is well respected by students, parents and staff and leads by example.
- The school effectively collects summative data to monitor and provide for the diverse needs of its students.
- Relationships between students and staff are very good which is reflected in the effective mentoring program.
- The curriculum is enriched with programs which reflect student interests.
- Students value the guidance they receive in relation to their graduation requirements.
- A strong collaborative team ethos exists in the school which supports better instructional practice.
- The school operates efficiently which promotes an ordered learning environment.
- Staffing and budgetary decisions reflect the learning needs of students.

### What the school needs to improve

- Enhance procedures for the monitoring of interim goals and specifically develop teacher competencies in systemizing the collection of formative data.
- Develop suitable programs, organization and staff training for teachers to raise the quality of differentiated instruction across the school.
- Continue to develop strategies for improving goal setting and in particular introduce more structured ways of recording the outcomes of common and developmental planning.
- Focus on developing strategies for engaging students in self-evaluation of their learning outcomes.
- Continue to work on measures for improving student attendance.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

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

The principal gives a clear direction to the school. She has worked energetically and purposefully to promote its goals and values. A supportive community has been created which emphasizes respect for the individual as students seek to redress a disconnect with their previous high school experience. The number of students who are successfully earning a high school diploma and graduating is increasing year on year. The curriculum scheduling is uniquely structured to accommodate the students' specific needs for credit accumulation. Although poor attendance of students sometimes militates against this objective of acquiring credits, staff members work well together in order to meet the specific needs of this cohort of students. Relationships between students and staff are very good. Instruction has an individualized dimension; it focuses on the learning requirements of specific students. In consequence the school monitors the progress of individual students well. Parents are very appreciative of the staff commitment to providing a viable, alternative educational opportunity for their children. Productive partnerships from within the community are extending the learning experience of students. The school has established a stimulating learning environment for previously disengaged students to acquire confidence and be successful.

### 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.**

Given the context in which the school operates in, the focus of data gathering is primarily centered on the individual student. In order to establish an effective understanding of prior achievement the school conducts a detailed interview before enrolment. Students' transcripts are appropriately evaluated to determine their progress towards meeting graduation requirements. The school also has other effective benchmarking procedures. These include mathematics and reading assessments to determine student's current proficiency. Staff members have appropriate access to this information in order for them to plan their instructional programs for individual students. The periodic cycle of courses determines the form of assessment procedures. Teachers regularly administer diagnostic, formative and summative classroom assessments to gather data about individual students and the performance of the class as a whole. This information is appropriately distributed to teachers and mentors. However, the sharing of formative data is insufficiently systemized. An analysis of data based on ethnicity is not a specific focus since the vast majority of students are Black. The single English language learner receives appropriate support during their English language arts lessons. All students with special educational needs and individual education plans are effectively monitored for progress as part of the general class structure.

The school does not have subgroups of specific interest because the school focus is dealing with disadvantaged students who are 'overage and under-credited'. However data which is applicable to all students and is of particular interest is that on attendance. All

students have a history of poor attendance. Attendance data is systematically and rigorously analyzed in order to achieve maximum levels of continuity. This information is regularly shared with staff. There is a clear correlation between inconsistent attendance and insufficient credit accumulation.

The school effectively collates data on past performance relative to classes and overall graduation rates to identify trends and highlight areas for improvement. This comparative analysis not only focuses upon pass rates for Regents examinations but also the level of dropout rates. The school's data indicates an increasing number of students who are achieving graduation. The comparison with similar schools is rather tenuous since there are very few which have this organizational framework and very specific objectives.

**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 has effectively implemented a range of collaborative meetings to promote planning for short-term and long-term goals which drive the work of the whole school community. The school's Comprehensive Education Plan effectively reflects database goal setting and planning. Faculty meetings provide an appropriate context for broader discussions about the curriculum and how to meet the specific requirements of students within particular classes. This data gathering is supplemented by conferences about individual students who become a particular focus for intervention support. For example, students who have been identified as needing additional instruction in literacy and numeracy are scheduled for a 10-week academic intervention program dealing with basic skills classes in writing and mathematics. These classes are given during the regular school day and during an extended day program. These arrangements are illustrative of an effective goal setting strategy where every student in the school is planned for individually and their individual plan is revised on an ongoing basis. Given the constraint of the short instructional cycle there is, however, insufficient setting of interim and benchmark goals takes place in order to monitor student progress more regularly.

Students with special educational need are a relatively small proportion of the total school enrolment. They are a specific focus in the school, as their progress, across-the-board, is in greatest need of improvement. Although students with special education need are absorbed into general classes their individual education plans make appropriate provision for them to receive resource room services. Each student is scheduled to receive one period per day of resource room support. This affords more opportunities for one-to-one interaction and in consequence promotes the learning and progress of the students.

The school's high expectations of individual responsibility are reflected in a student contract. The school expects students to take ownership of their learning by making a commitment to continuity through regular attendance and conformity to community rules. The foundation of this contract is built upon mutual respect between students and adults. The school effectively supplements its communication about its expectations of student achievement through newsletters and parent conferences. However, parental involvement with the school is not strong. To some extent this is a function of family's previous experience with the high school system. Where contact has been effectively established parents are very appreciative of the work of the school and become actively involved in supporting their children to meet mutually agreed targets.

**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 curriculum is appropriately aligned with mandated requirements. For example the school has implemented the mandated Balanced Literacy curriculum where level 1 and level 2 students are enrolled in the program. In addition the Mathematics A students are taught using the Prentice Hall curriculum and all use the Carnegie Math Cognitive Tutor program. These curriculum choices are effectively based on their capacity to generate interim data so as to monitor the progress of students.

The principal has clear guidelines on teacher accountability. The responsibilities of staff in relation to improving teaching and student outcomes are appropriately documented. The focus on individualized instruction highlights the centrality of differentiated instruction. This aspect has been the focus of professional development. However in some classes there is insufficient use of assessment data to underpin the differentiation of activities to meet the range of requirements of students. Expertise which exists within the school is increasingly being shared to good effect through staff development activities. Given the age profile of students, they are insufficiently involved in the self evaluation of their learning outcomes.

The school makes creative budgetary, staffing and scheduling decisions which clearly impact upon student progress. For example, the financial commitment to providing a low teacher to student ratio means that class sizes are small in order to promote the individualized approach to students. Because students are afforded more individual attention this is being reflected in improved passing rates for courses. Scheduling decisions also very effectively reflect student requirements. The four cycle program significantly enhances student opportunities for credit accumulation. The effective end of day programs, the Hip-Hop Academy and ‘Brooklyn Bridge’ which are financially supported by the school, enable students to engage in activities which are of an intrinsic interest to them. These activities are promoting a positive identification with the school and are reflected in an improving engagement with regular school day lessons. The introduction of a mentoring program has provided an important support structure for students. Students strongly endorse the value they place on being able to relate to a member of staff in order to deal with academic as well as social issues. Relationships between adults and students are very good. The school places a very high priority on securing good attendance. Systematic and rigorous administrative procedures are in place to follow up and encourage attendance. However the procedures are only achieving incremental changes. The school is working hard to change attitudes and elicit a greater parental commitment to the importance of attendance.

**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 has clear criteria for selection of staff. Staff are expected to have appropriate subject expertise, a strong personality and a confidence to be able to analyze data. The expectations of being able to work together as part of a team, in a potentially challenging environment, are seen to be an important characteristic. It is strength of the school that there has been very little mobility of staff with the most recent staff appointment being three years ago. The staff have been given appropriate guidance, through professional

development programs, on how to assess writing tasks through the development of rubrics. The collaboration between staff is seen in the frequent planning activities which takes place in subject meetings. The support for each other is reflected in the sharing of ideas on the teaching of curricular related themes. However, the formal recording of the outcomes of these meetings is not sufficiently rigorous to provide coherence in action planning. The principal assumes total responsibility for classroom observations. She uses these observation outcomes to drive professional development decisions, identify and share good practice and monitor closely the impact on student progress. These elements are part of her focused strategy for improving instruction.

The principal is highly respected by staff, parents, and students. She has shown a good capacity to affect change. Parents recognize the significant efforts she has made to improve the general environment of the school but particularly the opportunities she has created for their children to have a 'second chance' at meeting graduation requirements. The school is well ordered and efficient administrative systems ensure that the school runs smoothly.

The school works hard at developing its relationships with community-based organizations. The most significant of these are the Hip-Hop Academy which provides a substantive range of opportunities related to the creative and technical aspects of music and the 'Brooklyn Bridge' program. The latter offers support and guidance for students in relation to careers or transition requirements to college. These programs have a positive impact on student attitudes and achievement.

**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 outcomes of improvement plans appropriately inform the direction of the next. The school regularly evaluates its central goal in relation to students' needs and progress to accumulating graduation credits. The instructional cabinet meets weekly to discuss instructional plans, review student work and analyze student data. For example, the outcomes of such a review indicated the need to increase the amount of reading that takes place in English language arts and mathematics. Previous solutions to address this issue had included providing intervention support at the beginning and at the end of the day. These had proved unsuccessful. The school has now appropriately amended its strategy to focus upon providing reading opportunities in all lessons. To that end the school is providing professional development training for every teacher to enable them to become a reading coach. The school has shown itself to be adaptable in realigning its teaching programs and professional development activities to meet the needs of students.

The principal conducts periodic reviews and comparisons with the assistant principals and teachers to provide a measure of the effectiveness of the school's work. The regular reporting schedules allied to the course cycles provide effective evidence of students' progress. These reviews indicate where interventions are introduced to address issues. For example, the school effectively identified a trend of low passing rates in subjects which were scheduled for lessons at the start and the end of the day. The correlation with variable attendance at these sessions was clearly identified. The school creatively realigned its scheduling so as to stagger the effect upon Regents examination classes. The net effect has been to increase passing rates and promote student achievement. The use of data as a diagnostic tool to evaluate the progress of students is being appropriately

established through regular assessment. Staff who have mentor groups are regularly updated with information so they can identify where extra tutoring and support may be needed. Teachers have a clear understanding of the goals and core purposes of the school which drive its work. The outcome of this is shown in the help staff give each other, the involvement with extended day activities and the extracurricular program. The school has the capacity to promote the academic achievement of students and enhance their life chances.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: W.E.B Du Bois (HS 489)</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	