



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**George Westinghouse High School**

**High School 605**

**105 Tech Place  
Brooklyn  
NY 11201**

**Principal: John Widlund**

**Dates of review: March 13 - 15, 2007**

**Reviewer: Chip Morrison**

# 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

George Westinghouse High School currently serves 1024 students in grades 9 through 12. Approximately 76% are Black, 19% Hispanic, 2% Asian and 1% White. About 10% are identified as special education students, and less than 2% are English language learners. The school receives Title I funding, with 57% of students identified as being Title I eligible. Average daily attendance is currently running at around 86%, a considerable improvement over previous years and significantly higher than attendance in similar schools.

As a career and technical high school, Westinghouse combines an academic program focused on preparation for the Regents examinations with technical courses that prepare students for various technology careers, including network administration, computer repair, computer-aided design, and vision care technology.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- School leaders have created a healthy, family-like culture with close, caring relationships among teachers, students and administrative staff.
- The current administration has made significant progress in improving the school including the climate and student attendance.
- The school does an especially good job of identifying students performing below expectations and providing them with a range of academic support services.
- A broad range of electives and extra-curricular activities strengthens student engagement in the life of the school and enriches learning experiences.
- The school has made progress in implementing a workshop-style instructional model, leading to good levels of student engagement.
- The 9th grade has been restructured around small learning communities and career paths, leading to improvements in teacher collaboration and alignment of curriculum, assessment, and instruction.
- The school offers a good mix of academically-oriented courses and technical courses, thus increasing options for students after graduation.
- The school makes good use of data from both the Regents examinations and interim assessments to track progress toward goals and identify student needs.
- Higher performing students have a good range of opportunities for additional challenge, including honors and Advanced Placement classes.

### What the school needs to improve

- Continue efforts to ensure that all students, at every grade level, have the literacy skills they need to be successful academically.
- Continue to promote independent reading and develop a more consistent, schoolwide system for measuring the quality of student written work.
- Further develop the use of specific interim goals for student progress by classroom, grade level, and subject area.
- Continue efforts to improve instructional quality in every classroom, with a special emphasis on differentiation, higher order questioning and accountable talk.
- Promote greater reflective practice, collaboration and improve instructional quality.
- Take a more inquiry-oriented approach to data analysis, so that data is used more frequently to explore specific issues and answer particular questions.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

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

With strong leadership from the principal and his cabinet, George Westinghouse High School has made considerable progress in recent years in improving school climate, student discipline and attendance. The school's special strengths include: effective programs to identify and assist students at risk of failing to meet the school's high expectations for academic performance; good use of interim assessments to track progress toward mastery of state standards; and a broad range of electives and extra-curricular activities, which enrich learning and strengthen engagement. Perhaps the school's most salient and valuable feature is a strong sense of family that is felt by students and teachers alike. This in turn leads to relatively low staff turnover, high student attendance and retention rates, a calm school climate, and good student-teacher rapport.

Partly through its association with the 'Talent Development High Schools', a national reform and assistance organization, the school has made considerable strides in aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment, beginning in the 9th grade. The plan is to extend this work through all four grades in the near future, eventually organizing the school into two small learning communities, each with two career pathways. These and other developments provide a solid foundation and potential for growth. Specifically, areas for growth include: more emphasis on establishing interim targets for progress for individual students, classrooms, subjects, and grades; a more systematic and extensive program for developing and tracking student literacy; and further refinement of the workshop model, with a special emphasis on promoting higher order classroom discourse, differentiation of instruction to the needs of individuals and groups, and better integration of academic and technical courses.

#### **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 makes effective use of existing student performance data to identify academic needs and track progress over time for individual students, grade-level cohorts, and the school as a whole. In addition to data from Regents examinations, the school uses interim assessments that are aligned with the Regents. Results are carefully analyzed to identify areas for improvement and these areas are emphasized in subsequent instruction.

Teachers receive frequently updated reports showing the progress of individual students over the course of the school year. Instructional leaders also have access to reports that show progress disaggregated by classroom, grade-level, subject area, ethnic group, and other relevant categories. Reports for some assessments are presented at the item-analysis level, so that teachers and instructional leaders can see exactly which skills and concepts need special attention. Teachers and instructional leaders look carefully at this data to track progress. They have been less likely to use data to answer specific questions, or to collect data of their own to answer such questions.

The leadership team also collects data on and pays particular attention to the following key performance indicators on a continuous basis: daily student attendance, course credit accumulation, percentage of students scoring at 75 or above on Regents Exams and projected graduation rates. This helps to focus the efforts of leadership team, faculty and larger school community on specific outcomes.

The school makes good use of data that shows how its students perform in comparison to students in similar schools. This information provides a useful context for looking at the school's own data. For example, the leadership team has noticed that a recent dip in its own attendance rates is consistent with a City-wide trend.

**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 strong commitment to helping each student move forward academically. The overall goal is for all students to graduate on time with a Regents diploma and to embark on a successful post-secondary career, whether academic or vocational.

While school leaders use the key indicators identified above to set overall annual targets for the school as a whole, they are just beginning to set measurable interim targets for learning gains by individuals, classroom, grade level, and other subgroups. The lack of aggregate interim goals for student progress has made it difficult for the leadership team to manage progress against benchmarks and make midcourse adjustments as necessary. The school does an especially good job of identifying struggling students and getting them the help they need to get back on track through a full range of academic support services including one-on-one and small-group tutoring during the school day, after school and as part of a Saturday Academy. Also, higher-performing students have a good range of opportunities for additional challenge, including honors and Advanced Placement classes.

The school works hard to elicit parent support for student learning and keep them informed about expectations and student progress. A small but active parent group makes a strong contribution to the quality of school life. However, barriers to more widespread parent engagement have not yet been fully overcome and this is viewed as an area for growth. The general goal of ensuring that all students graduate on time with a Regents diploma drives the work of the whole school. However, the absence of interim group-level goals has limited the feedback and learning opportunities that might otherwise accrue. This is viewed by the school as an area for improvement.

**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.**

School leaders have been largely successful in ensuring basic coverage of the tested curriculum in a way that is consistent from one classroom to the next. Time has been set aside in the schedule to provide teachers with a weekly common planning period, which is used for collaborative lesson planning and review of student progress.

Teachers are held accountable for the quality of their work, together with the outcomes of their students. This is achieved through direct classroom observation, as well through discussion and a review of the available data. The school has adopted a workshop-style instructional model, which has been established with some success in most classrooms, leading to secure student engagement. However, while students are often organized in groups, teachers tend to spend much of the available instructional time asking rapid-fire questions about facts and definitions. This is limiting the time for higher-order questioning, accountable talk and differentiation learning activities to meet the differing needs of individuals and groups.

The school has begun to address low student reading and writing skills with a testing program in the 9th grade that identifies student reading levels. This information is used to identify students who are reading far below grade level and provide them remedial instruction that is appropriate to their needs. As a result, some students have been helped to advance as many as two grade levels in a single term. So far, this program has only been implemented in the 9th grade. There is recognition that students need further encouragement and support for independent reading. Some classrooms have classroom libraries, but this is not yet widespread. Also, the school does not yet have a consistent framework for communicating standards for the quality of student writing across subjects and grade levels, and measuring progress toward these standards.

Budgeting, staffing, and scheduling decisions are focused on improving student outcomes. Staff retention is much improved over previous years. The school is in the process of moving toward a block schedule as a means of increasing the length of instructional periods. The plan, combined with strong coaching support, is to make it easier to implement the different components of the workshop model more fully.

In keeping with the school's family-like culture, teachers and staff are especially attentive to student needs. A full array of services, including counseling and social work outreach, is available for students in need. This is an area of special strength. School leaders have made considerable progress in improving student attendance in recent years. The average daily attendance is substantially higher than attendance in similar schools and is comparable to the City average for high schools. This is also an area of strength.

**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.**

Teachers are hired for their demonstrated instructional expertise and dedication to meeting the needs of children. The school's association with the Talent Development High Schools organization has focused professional development around alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, particularly in the 9th grade. There has been a special emphasis in many departments on "backwards design," meaning lessons are planned around particular outcomes. However, the impact of this is not always evident. Opportunities for better integration of academic and technical courses are also being explored.

The principal, assistant principal, and instructional coaches spend a considerable amount of time in classrooms doing formal and informal observations. However, the school has yet to develop a consistent framework for defining and measuring instructional quality. Also, as noted above, observations and professional development initiatives have not yet led to full implementation of the student-centered, results-oriented workshop model that instructional leaders envision for the school.

The principal is widely admired and held in great affection by teachers and students alike. Teachers perceive his leadership style as supportive and empowering. His open door policy is especially appreciated by students and parents.

With expert support and guidance from an assistant principal for school safety, the school runs especially smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all and generally followed. Students are for the most part well-behaved and respectful of teachers, staff, and each other. This is another reflection of the school's family like atmosphere, and is an area of special strength. An excellent student center, run by a highly experienced and effective long-time staff member, provides several programs designed to increase student engagement and to encourage student contributions to the quality of school life and community service. These include student-driven programs such as an anti-bullying committee, peer mediation, and a peer mentoring program that was initiated by the students themselves. The students are especially proud of their involvement in these programs, and stress the importance of these programs in building student morale and engagement. The school has numerous partnerships with outside community based organizations that support personal as well as academic growth for students.

**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 school has annual targets for the improvement of scores on the Regents examinations. The school has also done some useful work in setting up interim assessments based on the Regents exams that allow teachers to monitor progress on a regular basis. Information from these assessments is used by teachers to revise plans and identify students in need. In addition, school leaders closely monitor progress on other key indicators including attendance, course credit accumulation, and graduation rates. They monitor achievement of these targets on an annual basis, as part of the Comprehensive Education Plan process, making adjustments based on measured progress in critical areas.

An area recognized for further development is the setting of concrete interim targets for growth in student learning to guide teachers and give instructional leaders a way of managing continuous improvement and of holding themselves accountable for making these targets during the course of the academic year.

Generally, there is a strong, schoolwide commitment to self-reflection and continuous improvement for the sake of all students. The very significant progress the school has made in recent years is an indication of this commitment. Nevertheless, there remain opportunities for greater reflective practice in order to further improve instructional quality.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: George Westinghouse High School (HS 605)</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	