



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Washington Irving High School

High School 460

**40 Irving Place
Manhattan
NY 10003**

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Reviewer: Clive Parsons

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Washington Irving High School has over 2,500 students enrolled across grades 9 through 12. The school has seven small learning communities. The school had a 'house' model which was reorganized in 2004-05 into these semi-autonomous communities. Each community has a distinctive program, including external business and arts links, and is supervised by an assistant principal. The school has a central administration which supports and leads on whole-school aspects such as guidance, security and organization, as well as special education students and English language learners.

Approximately 60% of students are Hispanic and 30% are Black. Three percent of students are White and 5% are Asian and other ethnic backgrounds. There were fewer recent arrivals into the country in 2005 than in other schools across the City. Most of these new arrivals were born in the Dominican Republic, with others from China and Mexico. Twenty percent of students are English language learners and 13% are special education students. Both of these figures are above those of similar schools and schools across the City. The school receives Title 1 funding, with a much higher proportion of eligible students than in similar schools. Student attendance, at around 75%, is significantly lower than in similar schools and schools across the City.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Effective relationships with a range of external partners are having a significant impact on the opportunities and experiences available to students, which they appreciate.
- The principal, who has good capacity to effect change, leads and manages a complex organization well, so that it functions effectively on a day to day basis and is improving the quality of its work with students.
- The school has taken great strides in recent years to implement an effective discipline code, so that students are safe, secure and able to learn.
- Focused and targeted interventions, based on the available data, are leading to steady improvements in attendance rates.
- The principal knows the school well, as a result of effective monitoring and candid evaluation, and has a clear direction for the school's sustained improvement which is increasingly based on the available data.
- Professional development is based on student needs and is aligned well with the school's goals and objectives.
- Guidance and counseling are efficiently managed and, through strengthening links with the school discipline code, are increasingly targeted and focused on students with the greatest needs.
- Parents feel able to approach the school and appreciate the resources made available to them in developing a partnership with the school.
- The school makes every effort to get to know every student as an individual and to cater for their academic as well as personal development.
- The school has focused much energy into improving the induction and entry of grade 9 students into their new school, so that their needs are being met with increasing effect.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to develop the capacity of the school's cabinet, both individually and collectively, to ensure that the school's goals and objectives are met.
- Continue the transformation to a more learner-centered approach in the classroom.
- Ensure that all teachers use fair and reliable grading systems that are based on the standards for that subject and are known and understood by the students.
- Continue to develop strategies to ensure that grade 9 students are inducted into the school's systems and expectations and that 'sensitive triggers' give rise to targeted interventions to maintain their motivation, engagement and attendance.
- Capitalize more strategically upon the good and very good practice evident in some classrooms.
- Strengthen further the range and effectiveness of academic interventions available following the identification of students' needs.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

Significant steps have been taken over the last few years to establish an environment in which students feel safe and secure. This is helping to lay the foundations for continued improvements in the students' academic as well as personal development and in their attendance. Improved links between the school's discipline and guidance and counseling systems are producing a more rounded view of students and enabling more focused packages for their support.

The principal works hard to maintain the balance between the benefits of small learning communities in terms of the knowledge of individual students and the problems that arise with scheduling and the curriculum that can be offered. The impact and effectiveness of this work, however, are being limited by variations in the quality of implementation. The principal has recognized that the key task for individual members of the school's cabinet is to ensure the effectiveness of their teams, both individually and collectively. The principal's task is to ensure the same for each member of the cabinet.

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.

Teachers collect a suitable range of data about students' academic performance and progress. This includes outcomes from quizzes and tests, as well as class and homework assignments. There are opportunities for teachers to discuss students' work, sometimes within grade teams and within subject teams at other times. This supports teachers in developing a broader understanding of individual students as well as making consistent judgments about the quality of their work. However, the principal has identified that inconsistencies remain and that not all teachers use fair and reliable grading systems that are based on the standards for their subject. Students want feedback on the quality of their work in a timely manner from all teachers, as well as knowing and understanding the systems used to make the judgments.

An overview of academic data is taken at appropriate points, such as at the end of each marking period. This enables comparisons to be drawn between classes and subjects within and between communities, so that the impact of the school's work is evaluated. The performance of key groups is reviewed, such as their performance in Regents examinations and their graduation rates. This includes the performance and progress of special education students and English language learners, as well as the main ethnic groups. Attendance and discipline data is reviewed alongside academic data, providing opportunities to identify connections and possible causes and effects. The principal is also concerned to compare current performance with the school's own previous performance,

as well as with that of other schools. A new computerized data system is starting to provide access to even more detailed analysis of academic 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.

Different groups in the school’s community work collaboratively to construct the Comprehensive Education Plan. Data is used appropriately to identify the major aspects to be addressed and to establish goals and objectives. Individual goals are constructed annually between teachers and the appropriate assistant principal. House and department meetings are used to plan goals and the developments required to achieve them. The school has targeted improving pass rates in Regents examinations in general and is focusing more specifically on improving the graduation rate of English language learners. The goals and plans established for improving student performance, especially in key areas, do drive all members of the school’s community. The impact and effectiveness of this work, however, are being limited by variations in the quality of implementation.

A number of strategies and programs have been put into place to support those students identified as being at risk of not making adequate progress. This includes, for example, Ramp-Up and after school tutoring in English language arts and mathematics for 9th graders and a new credit recovery program for 11th and 12th graders who need to make up seat time to pass a class. Diagnostic programs are used to identify and address specific difficulties, especially with literacy. Given the high proportion of students with identified needs, it remains a focus for the school to further strengthen the range and effectiveness of academic interventions available to improve their outcomes.

The school has identified the need to ensure that students’ early experiences in the school are as positive as possible and to diagnose and address problems and difficulties in the timeliest manner. Much energy has therefore been put into improving the induction and entry of grade 9 students into their new school and their needs are being met with increasing effect. The principal’s discussions with specifically targeted students are proving a valuable tool in helping to focus the school’s work further. While this aspect of the school’s work is now strong, it remains a key area for sustained effort and further improvement to enable the school to achieve its stated goals. The school conveys its high expectations to students and their families at every opportunity. Parents feel able to approach the school should any issue arise and they appreciate the resources made available to them in developing a partnership with the 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.

Students are enrolled in a good range of electives that are tied directly to the theme of the learning community to which they belong, in addition to the courses required for a Regents diploma. There are several school-wide advanced placement courses made available to

higher achieving students. The school also offers an International Baccalaureate diploma. Students' experiences are extended further through a wide range of additional, high quality activities. Most notable are the extensive after-school program provided through the Union Square Partnership and the array of internships associated with each community.

Teachers are held accountable for the quality of their instruction, with formal and informal observations and data analysis forming key parts of this accountability. Although proficient overall, the degree to which teachers plan and differentiate their instruction remains variable. Consequently a more learner-centered approach in the classroom is not always evident. Opportunities are sometimes missed to use data to scaffold the support provided to students and to ensure that they are all challenged at the most appropriate level. Similarly, group work, including peer and self assessment are not used consistently to support learning. Consequently, while students do participate in the activities provided in lessons, they are not always consistently and fully engaged in learning.

Budgeting, staffing and scheduling are all securely based upon the needs identified through the data and to support the school's established goals and objectives. The school has taken great strides in recent years to implement an effective discipline code, so that students are safe, secure and able to learn. Guidance and counseling are efficiently managed and, through strengthening links with the school discipline code, are increasingly effectively targeted and focused on greatest need. The school places great importance on trying to get to know every student as an individual and to cater for their academic as well as personal development. Students confirm that there is a range of adults to whom they could turn, should the need arise.

Focused and targeted interventions, based on the available data, are leading to steady improvements in attendance rates. There is a determination within the team responsible to raise this further still. There is also the recognition that a substantial increase of 4% or 5% is required quickly.

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 school-based option to recruit staff has been used in recent years and this has enabled the school to take greater ownership of the requirements for recruitment. Care is taken to appoint staff with the potential to grow professionally and to support the school's overall aims. Professional development is based on student needs, identified by the data, and is aligned well with the school's goals and objectives. There are an increasing number of examples, including in science and through developing literacy in content areas, of effective collaborative and collegiate activity leading to improved practice. This includes some opportunities for inter-visitations between classrooms. The good and very good practice evident in some classrooms is not yet capitalized upon fully, however. There remain opportunities to strategically spread the most effective practice to more teachers within and across the small learning communities.

The principal routinely visits classrooms. Increasingly this is through less formal walkthroughs which are providing a quicker, but broader evaluation of the impact of activities to improve student performance. Assistant principals also visit classrooms regularly, as do the newly appointed lead teachers. Consequently the administration

knows the strengths and weaknesses of the team well and this is enabling further targeted support. The principal leads and manages a complex organization well, so that it functions effectively on a day to day basis. The quality of the school's work with students is improving. The principal has the capacity to continue to effect change at the pace required.

Effective relationships with a range of external partners are a key strength of the school. They are having a significant impact on the opportunities and experiences available to students, which they appreciate. Activities support all aspects of the school, including attendance, guidance and counseling, as well as academic support for both higher and lower achieving 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 cabinet, school leadership team and community based organizations are all involved with teachers in developing and implementing the instructional plan for the school. Meetings and retreats are held to work on and evaluate the Comprehensive Education Plan, which has appropriate goals and objectives. There is congruence between school-wide plans and the plans of individual partners and groups within the school's community. Evaluation of the current plan is used to underpin future plans. Data increasingly drives evaluation and subsequent planning. Access to new, computerized systems is enabling easier and more rigorous interrogation of the data, so that comparisons can be more extensive and interventions timelier and better focused.

The principal knows the school well, as a result of effective monitoring and candid evaluation. She has a clear direction for the school's sustained improvement which is increasingly based on the available data. However, there remain inconsistencies in practice and effectiveness in this large and complex organization that are impeding the pace of improvement. The cabinet does not yet act fully coherently as a team to ensure that the school's goals and objectives are met. There also remain inconsistencies in the effectiveness of individual members of the team. Continuing to develop the capacity of the school's cabinet, both individually and collectively, remains the key task for the principal.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Washington Irving High School (HS 46 0)	∅	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
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	