



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

William Cullen Bryant High School

**High School 445
48-10 31 Avenue
Queens
NY 11103**

Principal: Christopher J. Pellettieri

**Dates of review: May 8 - 9, 2007
Reviewers: Chip Morrison and Maggie
Hollingsworth**

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

William Cullen Bryant High School is a large comprehensive high school located in the Long Island City neighborhood of Queens. The school currently serves more than 3,200 students in grades 9 through 12, of whom approximately 47% are Hispanic, 28% Asian, 15% White and 10% Black. About 7% are identified as special education students and more than 20% as English language learners. About 26% of students have been registered as Title I eligible, which is considerably lower than the average for similar and City schools. Average daily attendance over the past three years has been consistent at around 84%. This is above the average for similar schools and about the same as City high schools. While the most common home language is Spanish, many other languages are spoken.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is an astute instructional leader, expert manager of a large budget, and successful steward of a historically high-performing school.
- The principal is ably assisted by an experienced leadership team who share his high expectations and commitment to excellence.
- The school has made especially good use of its professional development funds to build capacity for helping students in need.
- The leadership team has assembled and retained a staff of experienced and skillful teachers with a shared commitment to students.
- The principal and his cabinet make good use of data on school and student performance to identify needs and track progress toward goals.
- The school has been successful in helping the many students who enter with challenging academic needs make up ground as quickly as possible.
- Curriculum, instruction and assessment are well aligned with State standards.
- The school has especially effective systems for helping English language learners develop the skills they need to be successful academically.
- Teachers present carefully focused lessons that make good use of their own content knowledge and are for the most part highly engaging and interactive.
- Students are generally well-behaved, fully acquainted with classroom routines, attentive, focused on successful learning and appreciative of their teachers.

What the school needs to improve

- Expand and refine systems for documenting and reporting progress toward specific interim goals for academic achievement disaggregated by classroom, grade, subject area, and other areas of interest.
- Continue exploring the relationship between what is taught and what is actually learned during each lesson, thus making learning as transparent as possible.
- Consolidate existing practices into a uniform system for analyzing student writing across grade levels and subject areas.
- Expand opportunities for teachers to design, observe and critique lessons together, with guidance from a more experienced coach or mentor.
- Develop a system for quantifying data from school walkthroughs to provide a regularly updated profile of schoolwide instructional practices.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school with well-developed features.

William Cullen Bryant High School provides a variety of academically rigorous opportunities for advanced students, including an honors program in mathematics and science, a new business entrepreneurship major and advanced placement courses in five different subjects. Simultaneously, the school has been successful in helping large numbers of students with low performance scores make up ground and eventually meet or exceed State academic standards.

Factors that contribute to the school's success include an especially skillful leadership team led by a principal who combines strong instructional leadership with expert management skills. There is a school-wide emphasis on positive behavior and well-established systems for identifying and helping students in need, especially English language learners. A legacy of academic excellence and commitment to children is passed down from previous generations of teachers and leaders at the school. There is a commitment to continuous improvement and the school is developing a number of approaches to improving its systems to achieve even higher standards.

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

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

This school makes good use of data on student performance to understand student needs, tailor instruction to meet these needs and monitor progress over time. Data on individual student performance is collected from feeder schools. Incoming students are given an extensive set of screening assessments, including assessments of language proficiency, and this data is used, alongside previous test results, to identify students at risk of not meeting the standard. A program of remediation is then customized to their specific needs. Working in subject-area teams, teachers regularly conduct item-level analyses of the results of State examinations. This information is then used to identify specific areas of weakness and modify instruction accordingly. In addition, the principal and his subject-area assistant principals scrutinize the teachers' scholarship reports each marking period, looking across classes for problem areas. As a result, instructional leaders have a very clear picture of progress for individual students, classes and grade levels and can intervene where necessary.

Instructional leaders look carefully at test results disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, special education and language proficiency. This has helped the school identify groups with disproportionate numbers of struggling students and focus attention on these groups. For example, as a result of the school's attention to the needs of English language learners, the number of students requiring English as a second language services has been cut in half.

The school also monitors students in other categories of special interest. For example, the principal has collected data to help understand the impact of the freshman seminar program on passing rates for State assessments. The school has recognized the need to

take an even more evidence-based approach to monitoring the impact of curriculum innovations.

Instructional leaders are adept at using data to make useful comparisons. This includes comparisons with other schools, comparisons across subject areas, ethnic groups, grade levels and classrooms and year to year comparisons of both grade levels and age cohorts.

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.

Instructional leaders, working with the school leadership team, set goals for annual progress at a school level as part of the Comprehensive Education Plan process. Typically these goals are incremental goals, for example, a 5% improvement, in line with mandated Adequate Yearly Progress targets. During the year, pacing charts identify sub-skill goals for student learning in several of the subject areas, and unit tests are used to monitor progress toward these goals. In some classes, teachers give daily quizzes. Generally speaking, individual classroom teachers have a good sense of how their students are doing against year-end goals. However, systems for setting specific, measurable goals for interim progress are not consistent across all subject areas.

The school pays particular attention to the needs of struggling students through a combination of push-in and pull-out academic services, small-group and individual tutoring, an after-school program, and a Saturday academy. With a large number of students recently arrived to the country, the school pays special attention to the needs of English language learners, providing a large number of English as a second language classes at different levels to meet identified needs. Performance on the State assessment for English language learners is used to measure the progress made by students and the success of these programs and services.

Some parents believe that there is excellent communication with teachers about homework and other expectations. It is clear that teachers take pains to contact parents when there is a problem, such as, failure to pass in homework assignments. Also, the school has been successful in attracting large numbers of parents to the school on occasions such as a family science night. Overall, high expectations for student achievement drive the efforts of teachers and instructional leaders. This is reflected in improved passing rates on State tests, promotion rates, the progress of English language learners and the number of students admitted to post-secondary institutions. Systems to set interim goals are not fully established.

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 well developed.

Teachers and leaders work effectively together to align curriculum, instruction, and assessment with State standards. Pacing charts are used in core subject areas, including English as a second language and these are revisited regularly, based on measured performance. The school has been especially successful at establishing connections across subject areas and modifying the curriculum based on analysis of test data. For example, finding that pass rates on the State test in United States history, which students

were taking at the end of grade 11, were lower than expected, instructional leaders decided to have students take the test at the end of 9th grade, when the history they had learned in middle school would be fresher. As a result, passing rates have improved.

Teachers are held accountable, and hold themselves accountable, through agreed structures for helping students master targeted skills on schedule. Monthly departmental meetings are held to review student progress, plan instruction and share problems and successes. Classes are differentiated to the needs of groups of students, such as English language learners or incoming students with low academic performance levels. The school has started to explore the relationship between teaching and learning to bring about further improvements.

The principal has demonstrated special skill at managing the budget, schedule, and staffing in a way that improves outcomes based on a careful analysis of needs. In order to better meet the needs of English language learners, English as second language training has been provided for teachers in all departments. A considerable amount of work has gone into organizing and reorganizing the schedule to give the best possible fit between changing student needs, curriculum offerings and academic support services. This has included creating double periods for the ramp up classes in mathematics and language arts.

There are consistently high levels of student engagement. Teachers demonstrate solid content knowledge and classroom management skills. In some classrooms, notably the virtual enterprise classroom, in which students operate a “virtual” business selling bicycles online, lessons were found to be especially interactive and engaging.

Students and parents report that the teachers and leaders are keenly attentive to student needs. Teachers are quick to notice when students are in difficulty and arrange for help when necessary. The school benefits from an especially knowledgeable and skillful group of academic intervention teachers, counselors, family workers and other specialists who work together in teams to identify and meet the complicated needs of students at risk of not meeting the standard.

The school works diligently to improve attendance, for teachers as well as students. Although average student attendance, at approximately 85%, is better than at similar schools, the school hopes to improve attendance in the coming year through the hiring of an additional attendance teacher.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

School leaders have been successful in hiring and retaining a committed group of teachers who care about children and share the school's vision for academic excellence. Staff turnover is low. More than two dozen staff members are alumni of the school. New staff are increasingly selected on their commitment and capacity to use data. In recent years a number of teachers have been hired with technical data analysis skills.

The school invests regularly in professional development opportunities for teachers in a way that is clearly leading to improved test scores. As noted above, there has been a special emphasis on training as many teachers as possible in how to modify their instruction for English language learners. New faculty members praise the level of support they have received from the principal, assistant principals, and colleagues. The principal

and assistant principals are in classrooms daily and arrange for teachers to visit each other's classrooms on a regular basis. However, the observations are not used to inform a profile of school wide instructional practices. The school has begun to experiment with a lesson lab model in which groups of teachers collaboratively design and observe lessons, examine resulting student work and reflect together on how the lessons could be improved.

Department teams meet regularly to review the item-level results of State assessments, plan instruction, adjust the curriculum and share problems and successes. There is also a high level of collaboration and informal sharing across departments.

The principal is a highly respected change agent, resource manager, and instructional leader. As a result of his long history with the school, he knows it well, and has long-standing working relationships with his staff. The principal places special emphasis on school climate and safety. It is a large school with a small-school feel. Transitions between classes are smooth and well-organized and students feel safe.

The school has been especially successful in aligning support services with academic goals. As a large school, it has a large number of resources for meeting the needs of struggling students and these are effectively deployed. Partnerships with organizations such as LaGuardia Community College provide additional opportunities for academic enrichment, for example, enabling students to accumulate college course credits.

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.

Being well grounded in their subject specialties, teachers have a good understanding of State standards and thus are able to monitor progress of the students in their classrooms and change plans when necessary. For their part, the principal and assistant principals monitor progress at the class level through careful review of report cards, direct observation of teaching and learning during their daily classroom visits, and analysis of passing rates on the State examinations. Comparisons across classrooms are used to identify potential areas of weakness and the need for additional coaching or professional development. As a result of the good use of comparative data, the school is able to evaluate the impact of changes to instructional programs, make changes as necessary, and hold individual teachers accountable for the progress of the students they are responsible for.

The school is effective in its self-evaluation and has determined that some systems are not as efficient as they could be. It has recognized the need to expand and refine systems for documenting and reporting progress towards specific interim goal for academic achievement. Currently there are inconsistencies across subject areas and in reading and writing across the curriculum. There is no uniform system for analyzing student writing across grade levels and subject areas, for example.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: William Cullen Bryant High School (HS 445)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score		X	

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> each student, classroom, grade level, 			X
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students* 			X
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> all other categories of interest to the school* 		X	
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X

* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.		X	
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject, and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area.		X	
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			X
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.		X	
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2		X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.			X
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.			X
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X
Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.			X
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.			X
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.		X	
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.		X	
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.		X	
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.		X	
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.		X	
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5		X	